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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Wednesday, October 17, 2018

Speaker: The Honourable Geoff Regan

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, October 17, 2018

The House met at 2 p.m.

Prayer

• (1405)

[*Translation*]

The Speaker: We will now have the singing of the national anthem led by the hon. member for Hochelaga.

[*Members sang the national anthem*]

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*Translation*]

SUPPLY MANAGEMENT

Mr. Simon Marciel (Mirabel, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives would have us believe they stand by our dairy producers. They get all worked up in front of the cameras slamming any and every breach in supply management and saying what an abomination it is, but yesterday, they voted in favour of a breach in supply management.

That is right. They voted for the trans-Pacific partnership, which gives up as much of the dairy market to foreign interests as the pact with the Americans, which they are at such pains to condemn. They voted for it even though they all know Quebec producers will get no compensation. They will not get a penny, and furthermore, there is no plan to give them anything.

Not only did they vote for that, but they were in such a rush that they themselves suggested shutting up the opposition, including their own members, to put the question even sooner.

The Conservatives profess to be on our farmers' side, but we must never forget how two-faced they are. They say one thing in French when they are in Quebec and the exact opposite in English everywhere else.

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[*English*]

LESA ZOERB

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to share my deepest condolences to the family, friends and colleagues of Lesa Zoerb.

Lesla served as a correctional officer and was killed in a motor vehicle accident on October 7. She was returning to a corrections institution in Saskatchewan after supervising an offender in hospital.

Colleagues are remembering Lesa for her courage and depth of commitment to her profession and dedication to public safety. Ms. Zoerb's tireless 20 years of service to Correctional Service Canada is to be applauded.

I add my appreciation for the difficult work she did every day to keep Canadians safe. I know she will be missed.

* * *

DON MCALLISTER

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this past weekend I was saddened to hear of the passing of Don McAllister.

Don served valiantly with the Royal Canadian Air Force, nationally and internationally, from 1941-1972. His leadership skills continued in various positions with the Royal Canadian Legion, including speaking in schools about remembering veterans and championing the Legion poppy fund each year. As an exemplary member of our community, it was my honour to present Don with The Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medal in 2012, as well as a medal marking Canada's 150th last year.

A strong family man, Don was married to Bessie since 1944. Don was a father of two, grandfather of two, great-grandfather of five and great-great-grandfather of six.

I am grateful to have known Don and Bessie. I have had many opportunities to interact with them, and I consider them dear friends.

I pray that Bessie and the family will experience God's peace and care as they walk this valley of grief. Don will be greatly missed.

Lest we forget.

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SMALL BUSINESS WEEK

Mr. Wayne Long (Saint John—Rothesay, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on this Small Business Week, it is time to take stock of some of the amazing things happening in my riding of Saint John—Rothesay. As anyone who has recently visited our uptown core will know, it is bustling, and not just during big events. This was even highlighted last week by the CBC.

Statements by Members

Indeed, we are back in the game. Our economy is growing again. Since the spring, our riding's unemployment rate has fallen below the national average, our community has gained hundreds of jobs and hundreds of people have joined our workforce. This is a direct result of the growth of incredible small businesses in our uptown core.

This private sector growth is also being complemented by historic federal and provincial investments, which are helping to jump-start the growth of these small businesses and our overall economy. Our riding starved for these sorts of federal investments for decades, and our government has delivered.

We are back, we are thriving and our resurgence will continue to drive the economic and industrial heartbeat of New Brunswick.

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POVERTY

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today, on the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty, we recognize that poverty in Canada has many faces. Many of them indigenous, recent immigrants, racialized people and often women.

While Canada is one of the wealthiest countries in the world, over one million children live in poverty. Shockingly, almost 40% of first nations children live in poverty.

Today we recognize that poverty does not just happen. It is the result of a system that is broken, a system that seeks to enrich the wealthy and exploit the many, a system that is governed by Liberal or Conservative governments that time and time again prioritize profits over people.

It does not need to be this way. We must push for system change; for true respect of indigenous rights; for housing; for universal programming like pharmacare, dental care and child care; for free tuition; for fair taxation, ensuring that the wealthy pay their fair share.

Today, let us not just talk about poverty. Let us join those who are pushing for fundamental change, change so no one has to live in poverty again.

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• (1410)

JAMES DE ZEN CENTRE OF ABILITIES

Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Vaughan—Woodbridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, lights, colours, sounds and sensory objects to explore without risk and to learn how to adapt to the world around us are normal things that you, Mr. Speaker, or any MP in this chamber might take for granted.

I rise today in honour to speak about the opening of the James De Zen Centre of Abilities in my riding of Vaughan—Woodbridge. Yesterday, this incredible forward-thinking centre opened its doors and arms to our community.

Since 1992, the Meta Centre has been providing programming for adults with developmental disabilities and is now adding the James De Zen Centre of Abilities to its support services.

James De Zen fiercely advocated and defended the inclusion of those challenged by developmental disabilities, and his compassion lives on through this centre.

[*Translation*]

In honour of Mr. De Zen and his unique ability to push the envelope, I ask everyone to join me in congratulating all those involved in this project to build a world that values inclusion and compassion.

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[*English*]

CANADIAN CITIZENSHIP WEEK

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last week was Canadian Citizenship Week. To celebrate, I delivered, as I often do, commemorative scrolls to the new Canadians in Barrie—Innisfil who recently took the oath of citizenship.

I love hearing their stories of where they came from, why they chose Canada, how they found the process of going through Canada's immigration system legally and legitimately and whether life in Canada was what they expected, and in every case it is.

There are many groups who are active in Barrie—Innisfil to welcome newcomers, the Barrie-Innisfil Russian speaking group, the Innisfil Latin organization, Latinos en Barrie, the Bayanihan Club of Simcoe County and the South Asian Association of Simcoe County to name a few. As proud as these groups are to be Canadian, they are also proud of their heritage, hosting many festivals and events that I am honoured to attend.

In Barrie—Innisfil, we welcome new Canadian Citizens and we thank them for sharing the richness of their cultures and embracing their love of Canada and the values we cherish as Canadians.

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[*Translation*]

MARGUERITE D'YOUVILLE

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Marguerite D'Youville was certainly a forward-thinking woman. Born in the early 18th century, she founded the religious order of Grey Nuns, who ran the Montreal General Hospital, among other things.

Under her leadership and expertise, the Grey Nuns purchased the Saint-Bernard Island seigneurie in Châteauguay in order to farm the land and run a mill, while at the same time respecting the environment and maintaining harmonious relationships with the first nations and the settlers.

[*English*]

In 1990, she was the first native-born Canadian to be declared a saint. In 2011, the Grey Nuns arranged, with the City of Châteauguay, for Île Saint-Bernard and its buildings to become an ecological and educational centre for all.

All of this is because of an exceptional woman, Marguerite d'Youville, whose beautiful vision of life has left us with this wonderful legacy.

Statements by Members

[Translation]

LAKE MEMPHREMAGOG

Hon. Denis Paradis (Brome—Missisquoi, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Lake Memphremagog is one of two transboundary lakes in my riding of Brome—Missisquoi. Most of the lake's surface area is in Canada. Nearly 200,000 people, including residents of Sherbrooke and Magog, rely on it for their drinking water.

There is a huge landfill in Coventry, Vermont, in close proximity to Lake Memphremagog. Last Friday I was very disappointed to learn that the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources has granted final approval for the expansion of that facility by an additional 51 acres.

The waste disposal limit will increase from 250,000 to 600,000 tonnes annually over the next 20 years. If there were to be any leaks from the landfill, even 30 years from now, this could have very serious repercussions on the water quality of Lake Memphremagog.

I urge all levels of government, including authorities from the neighbouring municipalities, to work together to stop the project. It is high time that we recognized what a precious resource our lakes are.

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MARIJUANA

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when the Prime Minister was a teen, he dreamed of leading our beautiful country, just like his father.

In 2015, he became leader of his party. As a federal election approached, his admirers were holding their breath waiting to hear this young leader's priorities. What would be his first proposal for Canadians?

To the disappointment of many, he announced the legalization of marijuana, a bill that was rushed through for purely political reasons. We ended up with a law that makes marijuana more accessible to young people, when we were promised the opposite. We ended up with a law that does not reflect the concerns raised by those who will have to deal with the consequences of his decision. We ended up with a law that does not take into account the impact this legislation will have on occupational health and safety.

This bill will have an incalculable impact on the physical and mental health of Canadians, today and in the years to come.

Quebeckers, like all Canadians, remember Pierre Elliott Trudeau. In 2019, Quebeckers, like all Canadians, will remember his offspring.

* * *

● (1415)

[English]

SPECIAL OLYMPIANS

Mrs. Bernadette Jordan (South Shore—St. Margarets, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this summer, Nova Scotia hosted the national Special Olympics at Saint Francis Xavier University University in Antigonish. Many athletes, coaches and volunteers from my riding

of South Shore—St. Margarets spent days competing, making friends, having fun and saw plenty of success in the standings.

I would like to highlight two athletes and two volunteers from my riding who have earned the opportunity of a lifetime. Ben Theriau in athletics; golfer Krista Stockman, along with caddie, Jim Stockman; and chef de mission, Mike Greek, have been chosen to be part of Team Canada at the 2019 World Special Olympic Games in Abu Dhabi.

I ask all members of the House to join me in wishing the best of luck to Ben, Krista, Jim and Mike as they compete in Abu Dhabi. We congratulate all the outstanding athletes and volunteers for a very successful summer games.

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HOSPICE PALLIATIVE CARE

Ms. Pam Goldsmith-Jones (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to commend Denis Fafard, Lura Osborne-Smulders and all the volunteers at the Sunshine Coast Hospice Society for their leadership and vision to increase access for those on the coast who are coping with grief, bereavement and their end of life.

Home care and community care, and mental health and addiction services are top health priorities for Canadians, which is why our government invested an additional \$11 billion over 10 years with our provincial and territorial counterparts.

From the great work of the medical assistance in dying panel, we learned that Canadians agree on the need for better access to palliative and end-of-life care, which the World Health Organization defines as meaning the best quality of life for people.

Canadians do not want to die in hospitals, but most do. Nearly half of Canadians receiving palliative care in a hospital die before they can be discharged for hospice support.

I thank all Canadians for making hospice support a health care priority and for our government's leadership in making it happen.

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MARIJUANA

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in a rush to meet his self-imposed political deadline, the Prime Minister failed to address the concerns of municipalities, law enforcement, employers, scientists and doctors about his cannabis legalization.

Last week, the government confirmed there is no scientific test to determine if someone is driving high. The safety concerns of employers, workers and indigenous communities have also not been addressed. Even worse, the Prime Minister has failed to explain how his plan will keep cannabis out of the hands of children and profits out of the hands of criminals.

Oral Questions

The lack of public education has left many Canadians unsure of the new rules and how this will impact border crossings between Canada and the United States. The consequences of the failure on the cannabis file have resulted in uneven rules for every province, municipality and territory, creating uncertainty and confusion from coast to coast.

Thankfully, the Conservatives will protect public safety and our young people. We will come with a plan to clean up this mess and will continue to hold the Liberals accountable.

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[Translation]

ASSOCIATION OF RETIRED QUEBECKERS AND CANADIANS OF HAITIAN ORIGIN

Mr. Emmanuel Dubourg (Bourassa, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a delegation from the association of retired Quebecers and Canadians of Haitian origin, or AROHQC, is visiting the nation's capital today.

These retirees helped Quebec and Canada prosper. For more than 20 years, this association has fostered the social, economic, cultural and political advancement of seniors of Haitian origin. The association has an information service for its clients, organizes seniors' gatherings and promotes intergenerational exchanges. AROHQC also helps people who live alone.

I would like to take this opportunity to extend a warm welcome to the delegation led by Ms. Thérèse Dorsainvil and Mr. Edgard Belfort. I will tell them this:

[Member spoke in Creole]

* * *

[English]

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Ms. Georgina Jolibois (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today I stand to support the work of women in northern Saskatchewan who are doing great things to support at-risk women and children in my riding; women like Marilyn Mannix at Healthy Babies Right from the Start, and Benita Moccasin at North of 54 in Meadow Lake, or Karen Sanderson of the Piwapan Women's Center in La Ronge. While these people do great work, the Government of Canada can do so much more to support them.

We must do better for the Athabasca Health Authority, which is still fighting for promised funding for a women's shelter in Black Lake. It has to fight bureaucracy at every level to get what it was promised.

I call on the Liberals to listen to women's organizations and to create a national action plan so that northern and indigenous women can have access to well-funded shelter services wherever they are.

* * *

• (1420)

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, no one in recent memory has shown the same horrific disregard for human life as the so-called Islamic State.

These terrorists have revelled in torturing their victims, raping young girls, and launching mass atrocities in cities around the world. And now, the Liberal government is standing idly by as dozens of these terrorists return to Canada.

This past week, we learned that the Liberal government is not just coddling returning ISIS terrorists in Canada, but is actually helping imprisoned ISIS terrorists return to our communities from Syria.

These are terrorists who have gloated about playing soccer with the heads of their victims. These are barbaric terrorists who willfully travelled across the world to join a group of ISIS executioners, rapists and fanatics. And the Liberal government is asking them to fill out passport applications and helping them come back to Canada.

The Liberals have made a choice. They say welcome to Canada. Conservatives say no way. That is because we care more about the safety and security of Canadians and not the comfort of ISIS terrorists.

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[Translation]

WORLD DAY FOR ORGAN DONATION AND TRANSPLANTATION

Mr. Ramez Ayoub (Thérèse-De Blainville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on World Day for Organ Donation and Transplantation, let us acknowledge one of the greatest possible gestures of human solidarity, organ and tissue donation. Let us celebrate those who are alive today thanks to organ donation. Last week, I had the privilege of meeting with the families of organ donors and recipients in my riding, such as Carole Du Paul, whose husband died a few years ago and donated his lungs and liver, Joe Hajj, who was the recipient of a heart in 2009, and Yves LeBlanc, who has a new lease on life thanks to a tissue transplant. By talking with them, I realized once again how important it is for all Canadians to have access to an effective organ donation and transplantation system. That is what Motion No. 189, which I moved here in the House, seeks to accomplish.

On World Day for Organ Donation and Transplantation, let us be part of this life-giving chain.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

JUSTICE

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister's Office has wound up in court over its refusal to release documents that would give Vice-Admiral Mark Norman a fair trial. Charges have been laid, and both the prosecution and the defence have a job to do.

Why is the Prime Minister concealing potentially relevant documents? Why is he denying this distinguished officer his right to a full and fair defence?

Oral Questions

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the opposition leader for his question. However, as everyone knows, it would be inappropriate for me to comment on this affair because it is before the courts.

[*English*]

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it was not inappropriate for the Prime Minister to comment to the media before the trial even began. He predicted that Vice-Admiral Norman would be charged and that this would be sorted out in court, so he had no problem commenting on this outside the House. All we are asking for is an explanation as to why he will not release documents that would give Vice-Admiral Mark Norman a fair trial. Why?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the member should well know, it would be inappropriate for me to comment on this affair because it is before the courts.

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are not asking the Prime Minister to comment on the case. We are asking him to release documents that would allow justice to be served.

Vice-Admiral Mark Norman has a right to a fair trial. His legal team needs to have access to documents that could prove or disprove his defence. Will the Prime Minister allow those documents to be released?

• (1425)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the member opposite well knows, it would be inappropriate for me to comment on an ongoing court case.

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are not asking him to comment on the case. We are asking him to comment on his decision not to release these documents. Previous prime ministers have done exactly that, making these sorts of documents available to judicial proceedings. What is he trying to hide by not following the same practice as previous prime ministers when they were faced with the same type of situation?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the member opposite well knows, it would be inappropriate for me to comment on this ongoing court case.

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, he can try to hide behind the same bogus answer. This is not about commenting on the case. This is about his decision not to release documents that Vice-Admiral Norman needs in order to have a fair trial. If he believes that accused individuals in this country have that right, will he release those documents?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is somewhat interesting that this is what the Leader of the Opposition has chosen to ask about today. As the member opposite well knows, it would be inappropriate for me to comment on this ongoing case.

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MARIJUANA

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, just imagine years ago someone who was

convicted and given a criminal record for possessing a small amount of cannabis. Today, that person might have a family and wants to coach his or her kids' soccer team. If the school asks, "Have you ever been convicted of a criminal offence", the individual is legally bound to answer, "Yes, with a pardon". With an expungement, a person can honestly answer no because under the law that is deemed never to have happened. Parents should not have to sit on the sidelines for something that is now completely legal.

Why do the Liberals not understand this?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, marijuana is now legal in Canada because the previous approach, prohibition, failed to adequately protect our kids and allowed criminals to make massive profits. By controlling and regulating the production and sale of marijuana, we will be able to better protect our communities, protect our kids and ensure that public safety and public health are properly protected by our country.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, that answer has nothing to do with the question. The Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness has dismissed the possibility of expunging criminal records for the simple possession of marijuana. He does not see the historic injustice. Let us look at the numbers: three times as many black people in Toronto and five times as many black people in Halifax have criminal records for simple possession. In Regina, nine times as many indigenous people have criminal records for the same thing. Indigenous and racialized individuals have historically suffered systemic injustices in Canada and have been saddled with more criminal records for similar consumption.

Why, then, will the Prime Minister not adopt the solution proposed by the member for Victoria to eliminate—

The Speaker: The right hon. Prime Minister.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we recognize that the old prohibition approach had a greater negative impact on marginalized and racialized communities. We know that it is important to offer them free and fast pardons so they have every opportunity to succeed in the workforce and in the community. That is why we are moving forward on a pardon system that will be free and fast.

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Beloeil—Chambly, NDP): Mr. Speaker, that is interesting, because if the Prime Minister truly recognizes that the old system was not working, he also needs to realize that suspending criminal records created under that system is very different from expunging them. Expungement would enable people to travel more easily and obtain visas, instead of living under a system where these records could easily be reactivated under certain circumstances.

The member for Victoria and the NDP have done the work for the Liberals. There is already an expungement bill on the Order Paper. Will the Liberals support us, yes or no?

Oral Questions

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): No, Mr. Speaker. We were in favour of expungement for the LGBT community, which had suffered extraordinary discrimination on the part of the government. We have always recognized, and still recognize, that it is important to protect our communities and youth from marijuana. That is why we are still controlling and regulating marijuana. In this case, pardons are an appropriate way to help anyone who has a criminal record for this type of offence.

• (1430)

[English]

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Beloeil—Chambly, NDP): Mr. Speaker, by taking action to legalize, and by stating clearly that he believes that the war on drugs failed, he must recognize a historic injustice when it has been pointed out so clearly that the war on drugs is racist. The fact is that we see vulnerable Canadians, racialized Canadians, and indigenous people more disproportionately affected by this.

I will ask the question again. Knowing full well that the Prime Minister knows the difference between a record suspension, which was once called a pardon, and expungement, will the Liberals, yes or no, favour expungement over pardons and finally really end this discrimination?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we recognize the unfair impact the prohibition had on marginalized and racialized communities across this country. That is one of the reasons why we are moving forward with a system that will control and regulate the sale of marijuana.

That is also why we are moving forward on a pardon system that will be free and fast, in order to make sure that the stigma of a criminal record does not follow these disproportionately marginalized people for the rest of their lives.

* * *

JUSTICE

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, months before any charges were laid against Vice-Admiral Mark Norman, the Prime Minister told the media that the case would end up in the courts. In fact, he said this a number of times prior to any charges being laid.

How did the Prime Minister know, months before the investigation was completed, that charges would be laid against Mark Norman?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the member opposite well knows, it would be inappropriate for me to comment on this ongoing court case.

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it sounds like that answer was prepared for the Prime Minister by a lawyer.

Clearly, the Prime Minister had no problem commenting on this case prior to an investigation even being completed. Yesterday the government was answering some questions about this.

We are asking the Prime Minister about his behaviour, not about the case. Again, how did the Prime Minister know, before the investigation was completed, that this case would go to court? What is he hiding?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House, we believe that the independence of the justice system matters deeply. That is why it would be inappropriate for me to comment now on this ongoing criminal case.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister often accuses us of playing politics, but he is the one playing now. Every Canadian has the right to access the information about his trial. Again, the Prime Minister twice said that Vice-Admiral Norman would end up in court before any charges were even laid.

How did the Prime Minister know that the RCMP would press charges against Vice-Admiral Norman? What is he hiding?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): As I have said, Mr. Speaker, I find it interesting that this is what the Conservatives have chosen to ask about today.

Again, on this side of the House, we always have faith in the independence of our judicial system. That is why it would be inappropriate for me to comment on this case, which is before the courts.

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Indeed, Mr. Speaker, if we want to have absolute faith in our courts, they must have everything they need to do their work. Vice-Admiral Norman has the right to have the documents.

Back in the day of the sponsorship scandal, prime minister Paul Martin suspended cabinet confidentiality and gave information to the courts to aid the investigation. The Prime Minister has the authority to do that. If he wants to help Norman, he can.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the member well knows, it would be inappropriate for me to comment on this matter while it is before the courts.

[English]

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC): Mr. Speaker, well, it did not stop the Prime Minister from commenting on this case months before charges were even brought or the investigation was even completed.

In order to defend himself in court, Mark Norman needs access to the cabinet documents the Prime Minister has regarding this case. The Prime Minister has the authority to turn them over today, but instead, he is concealing this evidence in his office.

This reeks of a cover-up. Why will he not do the right thing and release the documents today?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, rather than playing politics, the way the Conservatives always do, we will continue to respect the independence of the judiciary and their ability to do their job, and because of that, it would be inappropriate for me to comment on this ongoing court case.

Oral Questions

● (1435)

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC): Mr. Speaker, demanding a fair trial is not playing politics; it is the right of every Canadian. The Prime Minister has the authority, he has the ability, to release these critical documents for Mark Norman's defence. He could do it today. He will not do it. He is concealing that evidence in his office. Unless he has something to hide, why will he not do the right thing and release the documents today?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we deeply respect the independence of the court and that it is necessary that the judiciary is independent from political machinations. That is why we feel it would be inappropriate for me to comment on this ongoing court case.

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THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, based on the feedback members are receiving on the emergency debate on the IPCC report, it is clear that strong support exists for deeper action by the government. Canadians are calling for concrete action to address climate change, including deeper greenhouse gas reduction targets to match our Paris commitments. Canadians want deeper cuts to methane, support for worker transition funds, an end to perverse fossil fuel subsidies and restoration of eco-energy retrofits.

Is the government going to act?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yes, we are going to act, and we are acting. We are moving forward with putting a price on pollution. We are moving forward with a pan-Canadian framework that will reach our Paris targets, and we continue to understand that protecting the environment and growing the economy must go hand in hand in the 21st century.

The Conservatives have no plan. The NDP is continuing to pit the economy against the environment. We know that the only way to build a better future for our kids is to both protect the environment and grow the economy responsibly at the same time.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the latest report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the IPCC, is devastating. If we do not do something right now to tackle climate change, we are literally done for.

Just wait. The Prime Minister is going to spout the same nonsense as usual: we do not have to choose between the economy and the environment, and so on and so forth. That is not true. We must choose between a green economy and a dirty economy, and we know what the Liberals have chosen.

Will the Prime Minister do something or will he continue to lecture 6,000 scientists who have better credentials than he does? Arrogance is weakness disguised as strength.

The Speaker: I urge the hon. member from Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie to be judicious in his comments and to choose his words carefully. In this place we try to avoid insults.

The right hon. Prime Minister.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House we understand how important it is to protect the environment and to reach our Paris targets in a way that creates a cleaner and more prosperous economy for tomorrow. That is what Canadians expect. They know that our Conservative and NDP opponents are still claiming that we need to choose between the economy and the environment.

We know that we must ensure that the economy and the environment go hand in hand, and that is exactly what we are doing.

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JUSTICE

Mr. Richard Martel (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Vice-Admiral Mark Norman is a man of honour. He is a brave naval officer who was appointed Commander of the Order of Military Merit for outstanding meritorious service in duties of great responsibility. All of the information must be made available so that he can defend himself.

Will the Prime Minister help to ensure that he has a fair trial?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as members well know, I cannot comment on this matter while it is before the courts. It is clear, however, that the Conservatives intend to continue asking that question. I will continue to give the same answer and that is that I cannot comment on the matter.

I will give them the option of asking questions about other things that may be of concern to Canadians. Otherwise, they should know that I will be repeating the same answer throughout question period today.

Mr. Richard Martel (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we do not want details. We want documents.

The Prime Minister is hiding documents that are essential to Vice-Admiral Norman's defence. Everyone knows that nothing is more essential to a democracy than the truth.

What is the Prime Minister hiding? Why will he not immediately release the documents in question?

● (1440)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the member well knows, we will continue to respect the independence of our justice system. I cannot comment on this matter while it is before the courts.

*Oral Questions**[English]*

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Vice-Admiral Norman served this country with dignity and honour. He is a respected leader in the Canadian Armed Forces, and he has the right to a fair trial. He deserves a fair trial, but that does not matter to the Prime Minister. He has tainted the admiral's case twice by saying that this case would end up before the courts, even before the charges were laid. This is despite the fact that two other individuals have been linked to these documents and have never, ever been charged.

Will the Prime Minister hand over the documents Mark Norman needs to have a fair trial so that he can properly defend himself?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the member knows, it would be inappropriate for me to comment on this ongoing court case, and that is the answer I am going to give on every single question members ask on this case, because we believe in the independence of the judiciary.

I offered them an opportunity. They can ask questions of the Prime Minister on anything they like. They know what my answer is going to be on that particular question, and I am happy to continue to give it, but Canadians might wonder why they do not want to talk about anything else, like climate change, like growing the economy, like dealing with the kinds of issues that matter to Canadians and future generations.

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are demanding a fair trial, but the Prime Minister is sitting here playing politics instead. If the Prime Minister has nothing to hide, why is he running scared? Paul Martin waived cabinet privilege and turned over documents to the courts in the past.

The current Prime Minister first interfered by musing publicly, about Vice-Admiral Norman, that his trial would end up in court, even before he was charged. Now the Prime Minister is sitting on the very evidence Mark Norman needs to defend himself.

Will the Prime Minister finally release these documents and quit obstructing justice?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, having confidence in our judicial system means having confidence that it is able to do its job without needing political support from the members of the opposition. As I have said a number of times, it would be inappropriate for me to comment on this ongoing court case.

* * *

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Abraham Donkey was 58 years old. Ten days after getting heart surgery, he needed to travel 900 kilometres to Winnipeg for follow-up. Indigenous Services refused to provide him with an escort and to put him on the plane. That night, Abraham died, alone, on the bus. Other passengers heard him take his last breath.

Systemic racism kills. Systemic underfunding kills.

Abraham's family is seeking justice and to ensure that this never happens again. Will the minister meet with Abraham's family, and

will the government commission an inquiry into this inexcusable tragedy?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I can assure everyone that we express our sincere condolences to the family of Abraham Donkey and his community. I can assure all members that the Department of Indigenous Services is looking into the details of this matter.

This affirms the need for improved health services designed, managed and delivered by and for indigenous communities. We will continue to work with partners to support indigenous-led health transformation and improved health outcomes for indigenous communities.

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, first nations, Métis and Inuit peoples in this country have suffered and continue to suffer from racial discrimination. In fact, this systemic form of discrimination is the oldest form of racism in this country, yet the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Multiculturalism stated that systemic racism somehow does not even exist in Canada. Oh yes, that is what Harper used to say.

Will the Prime Minister apologize to indigenous peoples, on behalf of his minister, for this ignorant statement?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government recognizes that no relationship is more important than that with indigenous peoples, and that is why we have made historic efforts to invest and partner with indigenous peoples across this country in terms of creating solutions and also changing the rights framework that oversees the relationship between the Government of Canada and indigenous peoples. We know we have much more work to do, but we will continue to focus on bringing indigenous peoples into a position of empowerment and full partnership with all Canadians on the future we are building together.

* * *

● (1445)

HOUSING

Mr. Stephen Fuhr (Kelowna—Lake Country, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in my riding of Kelowna—Lake Country and across Canada, homelessness presents a real and constant challenge. Our government has made fighting poverty and homelessness a priority, as we have seen in the first-ever poverty reduction strategy, the first-ever national housing strategy and reaching home, the redesigned homelessness partnering strategy.

Could the Prime Minister please tell this House more about what the government is doing to help fight homelessness in this country?

Oral Questions

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to begin by thanking the member for Kelowna—Lake Country for his work in fighting homelessness. I know that his City of Kelowna recently released its strategy for fighting homelessness, and I want to thank both the member and Kelowna mayor, Colin Basran, for working to combat a problem that affects every community. Thanks to both our homelessness strategy, reaching home, and our national housing strategy, we are improving the lives of Canadians and building communities that benefit everyone.

* * *

JUSTICE

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, since the Prime Minister is making a mockery of the Prime Minister's questions, I do not want him to respond to this next one. My question is for the Attorney General of Canada. In her mandate letter, the Prime Minister said that she should never take legal positions inconsistent with the government's commitments, the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, or Canadian values.

How does denying Mark Norman the right to defend himself against scurrilous charges line up with the charter? How does bringing legal charges to cover up Liberal insider deals align with the Canadian charter? Would the Attorney General of Canada, as our top justice official, stand in this House and commit to releasing all documents?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as Prime Minister, I am happy to stand in this House and continue to say how we will always respect the independence of our judicial system. Because of that, we will not comment on this ongoing court case.

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is shameful. We saw the Prime Minister before, not allow the finance minister to respond to a question. Now, we are seeing him not allow Canada's top legal official to respond. All we are asking for is for the due process rights of a Canadian to be respected, and he cannot commit to that in this House.

Therefore, please, Prime Minister, through you, Mr. Speaker, stay down; I want to hear from our Attorney General. Will the rights of Mark Norman be respected?

The Speaker: I know the member is saying, "through the Speaker," but he is effectively still addressing the person across the way. I know the member is generally trying to direct his comments to the Speaker, and of course it is important that he do so.

The Right Hon. Prime Minister.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the situation we are in right now is that the Conservative Party is running out of things to ask this government about.

We are succeeding in growing the economy. We are succeeding in lifting Canadians out of poverty. We are succeeding in creating jobs right across the country. We have a plan to fight climate change. We are moving forward on helping our seniors, helping youth, and helping Canadians and the middle class and those working hard to join it succeed.

The Conservatives are running out of things to ask about. We will not comment on this ongoing court case, but we are happy to talk about everything else we are doing.

Ms. Leona Alleslev (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as an air force officer, I served this country confident in the belief that my government would honour the rule of law. Canadians were promised a transparent, accountable and open government but the government has betrayed me and all those who serve. The Liberals are using political games to hide the truth.

Mark Norman is an honourable officer and is entitled to a fair trial. However, the Prime Minister is refusing to release critical documents central to his defence. When will the Prime Minister give this man a fair trial and release these documents?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we, of course, believe in the independence of the judicial system. We believe in the right to a fair trial and that is why as Prime Minister I will not comment on this ongoing court case.

● (1450)

Ms. Leona Alleslev (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister did not believe in the independence of the justice system when he tried and convicted Vice-Admiral Norman before he was even charged.

It is clear that from the start of this case that the prosecution of Vice-Admiral Mark Norman was politically motivated. The Prime Minister is hiding documents and refuses to release them for Vice-Admiral Norman's defence, jeopardizing his right to a fair trial, documents that will reveal the truth.

If the Prime Minister has nothing to hide, why will he not release these documents?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will not be commenting on this ongoing court case.

* * *

[Translation]

AIR TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, an Air Canada flight en route to San Francisco narrowly avoided what could have been the worst disaster in aviation history. According to the United States National Transportation Safety Board, the pilot had been at the controls for 19 hours straight, something that is unthinkable anywhere other than Canada.

A study on air safety launched by the NDP and the NTSB report are calling on Transport Canada to review its rules.

Will the Prime Minister do something about this or will he continue to sing the same old song with the Minister of Transport that safety is their top priority?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government is working on the rules that apply to pilots in order to ensure better safety for all travellers. That is exactly what we are going to do.

We will have more to say on that shortly.

Oral Questions

[English]

SMALL BUSINESS

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this Small Business Week, the Liberals continue to betray small business owners by siding with credit card companies in a dispute over merchant fees.

Canada already has some of the highest credit card merchant fees in the world, costing consumers and merchants billions of dollars a year. Now, instead of actually reducing these fees, the Liberals announced a voluntary .1 % rate decrease, offering no relief and no certainty for small businesses.

Will the Prime Minister stop siding with Visa and Mastercard and cap merchant fees once and for all?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a great pleasure for me to stand up to talk about the great work we are doing for small businesses. We are lowering small business taxes as of January 1 to 9% because we know that small businesses are at the heart of this country's success.

On top of that, regarding interchange fees for credit cards, we are pleased to announce that we are moving forward with lowering interchange fees for small businesses as of 2020. This is a real tangible element of progress for small businesses that this government will always support.

* * *

JUSTICE

Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in 2004, former prime minister Paul Martin responded to a Conservative request and released hundreds of pages of cabinet committee records related to the advertising scandal.

The documents requested today are clearly essential to the legal defence of Rear Admiral Norman in a case that reeks of political interference. If the Liberals have nothing to hide, why will the Prime Minister not simply release the documents?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it would be inappropriate for me to comment on this ongoing court case.

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Milton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister asked most recently why the Conservative Party is continuing to ask these questions as it is not the right place for it. I want to let him know exactly why it is.

When a cabinet exercises its power to withhold documents from the court, the court has no power. The only place left to hold a Prime Minister accountable is in this place. Therefore, we are going to keep asking the questions. I will start right now.

Why is the Prime Minister withholding the documents and why will he not allow Mark Norman to have a fair trial?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the utmost respect for this House. Indeed, that is why we moved forward with the Prime Minister's question period every Wednesday, so that we can answer questions from members that they may have about what the government is doing.

However, as everyone in this House knows, we respect the independence of the judiciary. Therefore, I will not comment on this ongoing court case.

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Milton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if the Prime Minister truly respected the independence of the judiciary, he would respect the fact that they should make the call through evidence rules as to what is inadmissible instead of putting cabinet decision-making on top of it, preventing the court from calling these documents into evidence.

Mark Norman needs to put forward a defence that is going to help them prove that these allegations are incorrect. If he cannot, he could go to jail for five years.

Why are we not having the government release these documents?

● (1455)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it would be inappropriate for me to comment on this ongoing court case.

* * *

[Translation]

STATUS OF WOMEN

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos (Saint-Laurent, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, groups of women across the country are not just calling for gender equality. They are also providing essential services and working to make changes for women in their communities every day. However, these organizations need resources to continue their essential work.

Can the Prime Minister explain to the House how the government is supporting women's groups so they can continue their work and help sustain the women's movement?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Saint-Laurent for her question and for her tireless commitment to gender equality.

The progress we have made toward gender equality would not have been possible without the work of women's groups and indigenous organizations. The capacity-building fund provides up to \$100 million for women's groups and indigenous organizations whose objective is to advance gender equality. We realize that gender equality helps drive Canada's economic growth and creates safer communities for all Canadians.

* * *

JUSTICE

Hon. Steven Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians have reason to be disappointed today because the Prime Minister is obstructing justice in the case of a man who was prepared to risk his life for his country and is facing serious charges. He needs access to information for his defence, and there is only one person who can release that information.

We are not asking the Prime Minister for comments; we are asking him for information. If he refuses, we will be justified in thinking that he wants to protect his Liberal cronies, that he is scheming, and that he is putting his friends' interests and his own ahead of justice.

Routine Proceedings

The Prime Minister should be helping Vice-Admiral Norman.

The Speaker: I would urge the hon. member to choose his words with care. A member must not accuse another member of a crime such as obstructing justice in the House.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it would be inappropriate for me to comment on this matter while it is before the courts.

* * *

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the NDP and Canadians have long been calling on the government to stop selling arms to Saudi Arabia. Today, Republicans and Democrats introduced a bill in the U.S. Congress to have the United States suspend their arms sales to Saudi Arabia until more information comes to light about the death of journalist Jamal Khashoggi.

Is the Prime Minister prepared to do the same?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we remain very concerned about the disappearance of Mr. Khashoggi and about reports implicating Saudi Arabia. The Minister of Foreign Affairs has spoken with her Saudi counterpart to express our concerns and to call for a thorough, credible, and transparent investigation.

We fully support the joint statement issued by France, the United Kingdom, and Germany calling for a credible investigation. All those involved in the disappearance of Mr. Khashoggi need to be held responsible for their actions.

* * *

[*English*]

SMALL BUSINESS

Mr. Ramesh Sangha (Brampton Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as part of Small Business Week, it is important to note that 99% of tourism are small and medium-sized businesses. They are a real economic driver for Canada and certainly in my riding of Brampton Centre. The income of thousands of middle-class families depends on the growth and success of these SMEs, which make our communities strong.

Could the Prime Minister inform the chamber of the steps our government has taken to grow these businesses?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Brampton Centre for all the work he does in supporting small businesses in his riding. Permit me to wish a good Small Business Week to entrepreneurs across the country.

In the tourism sector, small businesses already provide 1.8 million good jobs for middle-class Canadians, but we want to grow that number. That is why I have asked the Minister of Tourism, Official Languages and La Francophonie to develop a national tourism strategy and to create even more opportunities and jobs for the middle class.

Also, we are indeed lowering small business taxes to 9%, as of January 1, right across the country.

● (1500)

JUSTICE

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to put the Prime Minister's mind at ease. I am not asking him to comment on the case. I am asking him to explain why he has chosen not to release documents to the court.

If he truly believes in an independent judiciary, if he truly believes in the right of a Canadian admiral to a just defence, then he will do what previous prime ministers have done and make these documents available. If he does not, then what on earth is he trying to hide?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will always uphold the independence of our judicial system and that is why I will not comment on this ongoing court case.

* * *

[*Translation*]

MARIJUANA

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the legalization of cannabis was botched. The Government of Quebec had just been elected and barely had the time to introduce its own legislation when pot became legal. The result is that an 18-year-old can buy it today, but by all indications will no longer be able to do so in three months.

Is it one, two or four plants? We do not know. Will there be a legal challenge? We do not know. That is what happens when we do not have sovereignty.

What was the point of legalizing pot on October 17 when, clearly, no one was ready?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have been working with experts across the country, the provinces and municipalities for three years in anticipation of this day.

The provinces, including Quebec, asked for eight to 12 weeks to legalize cannabis after the entry into force of the bill, and we gave them 17 weeks. We continue to work with them on this process, but we know that protecting our youth and preventing organized crime from profiting is everyone's priority.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[*Translation*]

PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURE

The Speaker: I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the *Selected Decisions of Speaker Andrew Scheer*. This reference work on parliamentary procedure is the ninth volume in a collection of Speakers' decisions and contains 101 decisions.

*Routine Proceedings**[English]*

Mr. Scheer brought considerable experience to the position of Speaker. First elected to Parliament in 2004, he served as Assistant Deputy Chair of Committees of the Whole during the 39th Parliament and Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees of the Whole during the 40th Parliament. He was the fourth Speaker to be elected by a secret ballot of his peers. At the age of 32, he became the youngest Speaker of the House of Commons, as well as the first Speaker to represent a Saskatchewan riding.

Many of his rulings have already become firm precedents for the House, and I enjoy citing them.

[Translation]

In addition to a print copy which members will receive, the volume will also be accessible online.

I would like to thank the dedicated individuals from across the House administration who contributed to the drafting and publication of this book. This truly collaborative effort stands as a proud example of the dedication and expertise of those who, on a daily basis, support the work of members.

[English]

On this auspicious occasion, I am also pleased to announce the unveiling of the official painted portrait of Mr. Scheer by Saskatchewan artist Juan Martinez. Note that we do not speak of the hanging of Speakers, thank goodness. This work will take its place in the collection of portraits of the Speakers of the House of Commons.

I invite all hon. members to join me in room 237-C at 4:00 p.m. for the unveiling ceremony, followed by a reception in honour of the Hon. Andrew Scheer, the 35th Speaker of the House of Commons.

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●(1505)

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Hon. Andrew Leslie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): ‘Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 32(2) I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the treaty amendments, entitled “Amendments to Annex I of the International Convention against Doping in Sport”, notified on October 1, 2018; and “Amendments to Annex II of the International Convention against Doping Sport”, notified on October 1, 2018.

* * *

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

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

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CROWN-INDIGENOUS RELATIONS

Mr. Marc Miller (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to

Standing Order 32(2) I have the honour to table, in both official languages, copies of the new Inuvialuit Final Agreement Consolidated Report of the Implementation Coordinating Committee, 2013-2014 to 2015-2016.

At the same time, pursuant to Standing Order 32(2) I have the honour to table, in both official languages, copies of the annual report of the Tlicho Implementation Committee: Tlicho Land Claims and Self-Government Agreement, 2010-2011 to 2014-2015.

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE**HUMAN RESOURCES, SKILLS AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND THE STATUS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES**

Mr. Bryan May (Cambridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 12th report of the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities, entitled “Experiential Learning and Pathways to Employment for Canadian Youth”.

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

Mr. Ted Falk (Provencher, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives are pleased to support the final report from the HUMA committee on Experiential Learning and Pathways to Employment for Canadian Youth. Also, the Conservatives have further contributed to the work of the committee through the addition of a supplementary opinion.

For a 2018 iteration of the Canada summer jobs program, the Liberal government added an attestation requirement for all applicants, a values test, that drew significant backlash from Canadians from all walks of life. Many Canadians agree with the positions of the Liberal Party as a condition of receiving federal funding represents a marked departure from previous practice, whereby all Canadians would have equal opportunity for a public benefit regardless of their personal beliefs or values. The Conservatives believe that the rights of freedom, thought, belief, opinion and expression must be respected by the federal government and not undermined.

The Liberal government deemed 1,559 applications incomplete in relation to the attestation, a twelvefold increase in rejections the previous year. Therefore, students across the country were deprived of their opportunity to gain work experience in upwards of 1,500 potential job placements as a direct result of the Liberal government's values test.

We urge the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour to ensure that employer attestation is not a requirement of an application in the Canada summer jobs program going forward and not a requirement for application in developing new programs to support youth employment in Canada.

Routine Proceedings

[Translation]

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Hon. Denis Paradis (Brome—Missisquoi, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 13th report of the Standing Committee on Official Languages entitled, “French as a Second Language Learning Programs in Western Canada: Enhancing Availability”.

I would like to thank the clerk, Christine Holke, the analyst, Lucie Lecomte, and my colleagues from all parties for their contributions and the wonderful chemistry we enjoy.

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

• (1510)

PUBLIC SAFETY AND NATIONAL SECURITY

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 26th report of the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security entitled, “M-124, Automated External Defibrillators”.

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

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 71st report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

The committee advises that, pursuant to Standing Order 91.1(2), the subcommittee on private members' business met to consider the order for the second reading of a private member's bill originating in the Senate and recommended that the item listed herein, which it has determined should not be designated non-votable, be considered by the House: Bill S-234, an act to amend the Parliament of Canada Act with regard to the parliamentary visual artist laureate.

The Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 91.1(2), the report is deemed adopted.

Mr. Matthew Dubé: Mr. Speaker, in light of the discussions that occurred during question period, I seek the unanimous consent of the House to move a motion.

[English]

That given the important difference between record suspension, also known as pardons, and expungement and recognizing the government wishes to address this issue through legislation, that notwithstanding any standing order or usual practice of the House, Bill C-415, an act to establish a procedure for expunging certain cannabis-related convictions, be deemed to have been read a second time and referred to a committee of the whole, deemed considered in committee of the whole, deemed reported without amendment, deemed concurred in at the report stage and deemed read a third time and passed.

[Translation]

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

Some hon. members: No.

* * *

[English]

PETITIONS

MATERNITY BENEFITS

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions to table today. The first one has 2,070 signatures. It is by my constituent, Lindsey Salloway, who is an adoptive mom.

She points out in the petition, as signed by the petitioners, that adoptive parents in Canada face a 15-week difference in eligible benefits compared with those who give birth to their children. The petitioners are asking for equal treatment for all parents, newborn or adoptive. The petitioners are also asking for benefits for adoptive parents to be equal to those currently received by biological parents. The petitioners are calling on the Government of Canada to allow adoptive parents to be eligible for an equivalent amount of maternity benefits and leave to bond with their children.

HEALTH

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my second petition is on behalf of two of my constituents, Shailynn and Jessica Olstad. It is signed by 2,599 petitioners.

The petitioners are asking for equal treatment for those suffering from SMA. The petitioners are drawing the attention of Health Canada to the fact that 50 other countries, such as the U.S., France, Germany, Sweden, Italy, have already approved Spinraza for the treatment of SMA.

The petitioners are calling on the Government of Canada to support overturning the decision of CADTH and to ensure that Spinraza is approved for all types of SMA, so that provincial governments can negotiate a price for all Canadians suffering from this rare chronic condition.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am rising today to present a petition from citizens who point out that the federally owned Chalk River Laboratories are releasing radioactive and other toxic substances into the Ottawa River, in particular from the Perch Lake Basin, where three reactor cores and other radioactive toxic waste has been dumped in the sand, and that a multinational consortium contracted by the federal government to operate the Chalk River Laboratories proposes to create a giant mound of radioactive waste in the Perch Lake Basin that would be exposed to rain and snow, and would release additional contaminants, and that technical criticisms of this proposal are causing major delays in the environmental assessment process.

The petitioners are calling on the Government of Canada to abandon the project to build a radioactive waste mound at Chalk River, identify a site for a new facility that could protect the Ottawa River, and prioritize putting into this new facility the waste of radioactive releases into the Ottawa River.

Routine Proceedings

●(1515)

JUSTICE

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a petition about Bill C-75, which proposes to lighten the sentences on some very serious crimes.

The petitioners are calling on the Prime Minister to defend the safety and security of all Canadians, and to withdraw Bill C-75.

PARKS CANADA

Hon. MaryAnn Mihychuk (Kildonan—St. Paul, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions today. The first one is calling on the government to commit to keeping historic objects in their context, so that they can be readily available to scholars, scientists, and the members of the originating communities; cancel plans to centralize the historic artifacts and resources held by Parks Canada in one facility; and to commit to maintaining regional facilities for artifact storage and curation in Manitoba.

VISITORS' VISAS

Hon. MaryAnn Mihychuk (Kildonan—St. Paul, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my second petition is related to Ukrainian nationals who have biometric passports, and allowing visa-free travel to Canada for periods of stays up to 90 days, given Canada's longstanding relationship with Ukraine.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have five petitions today, all directed to the Hon. Jane Philpott, Minister of Indigenous Services—

The Speaker: Order, I would remind the member, and I think she knows, not to use the names of members in the House.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: Mr. Speaker, the petitioners, who are residents, business owners, and cottage owners of Round Lake, Saskatchewan, and those concerned for the well-being of the body of water known as Round Lake wish to draw attention to the extreme low water level of the lake due to the uncontrolled outflow of water.

The uncontrolled outflow is affecting business, the environment, families and the future of Round Lake. The uncontrolled outflow of water from the lake is the result of a disagreement between the Government of Canada and the first nations of Ochapowace and Piapot. Controlled structures and compensation agreements were reached between the Government of Canada and first nations communities on lakes upstream in the Qu'Appelle Valley. The Round Lake issue has remained unresolved since 2008.

The petitioners are calling on the minister to use her authority to re-establish communication with Ochapowace and Piapot first nations to work towards a resolution on this matter.

CANADA POST

Ms. Sheri Benson (Saskatoon West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions to table today. The first is from petitioners drawing the attention of the House of Commons to the nearly two million Canadians in desperate need of alternative to payday lenders, whose crippling lending rates affect poor, marginalized, rural and indigenous communities, whereas 3,800 Canada Post outlets exist in rural areas where there are few banks and credit unions. Canada Post already has the infrastructure to make a rapid transition to

include postal banking. These petitioners are calling on the government to enact Motion No. 166 to create a committee to study and propose a plan for postal banking under the Canada Post Corporation Act.

VISION CARE

Ms. Sheri Benson (Saskatoon West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is from petitioners who are asking the government to table a national framework for action to promote eye health and vision care. They call attention to the expected doubling in the number of Canadians with vision loss in the next 20 years. There is an emerging crisis in eye health and vision care, which affects all segments of the Canadian population, but Canada's most vulnerable populations, children, seniors and indigenous people, are at particular risk. Therefore, they are calling on the government to commit to acknowledging this and to tabling the development of a national framework for action to promote eye health and vision care in Canada.

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am tabling the final petition, with 2,600 signatures, on the Liberals' unilateral decision to close the immigration processing office in Vegreville. In June, I asked the Prime Minister to reconsider and stop the cold-hearted closure because of its massive impact on workers, families, the town and the region, but the Liberals proceeded with that closure on September 1.

The workers want Canadians to know that contrary to the Prime Minister's suggestion that processing times were not up to par, the fact is that Vegreville employees consistently far exceeded targets and backed up other offices. It will cost millions more to operate in the new office, for little gain. Even after the office's closure, thousands of signatures from across Alberta and Canada have kept arriving in support. open. Vegreville workers, Albertans and rural Canadians know that the Prime Minister failed them, and they will not forget it.

Government Orders

● (1520)

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to table a petition on behalf of constituents from Nanoose Bay, Qualicum Beach and Parksville, calling on the government to work with the provinces, municipalities and indigenous communities to develop a national strategy to combat plastic pollution in and around aquatic environments. In light of the threat plastic pollution poses to our waterways, they are looking for regulations aimed at reducing plastic debris discharge from storm-water outfalls, industrial use of microplastics, consumer and industrial use of single-use plastics, permanent dedicated and annual funding for the cleanup of derelict and ghost fishing gear, community-led projects to clean up plastics and debris from our shores, education and outreach campaigns on the root causes and, of course, to redesign the plastic economy.

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to rise today to present a petition from residents of Saanich—Gulf Islands. They are speaking in particular of the threat of militarism in the world. They are asking Canada do more to pursue non-violent and peaceful solutions in conflicts around the world, and in this effort call for further work for nuclear disarmament. The specifics of their petition are for the creation of a department of peace as a step toward reaching this goal.

TEMPORARY FOREIGN WORKERS

Mr. Kerry Diotte (Edmonton Griesbach, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour today to present a petition with hundreds of names on it, regarding the temporary foreign worker program. I would like to acknowledge Ken Charbonneau for collecting all of these signatures. The petitioners are calling on the House of Commons to do a better job stopping companies that abuse rules around the temporary foreign worker program.

HUMAN ORGAN TRAFFICKING

Mr. David Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition here from Canadians who are increasingly concerned about international human trafficking. There are currently two bills before Parliament proposing to impede the trafficking of human organs obtained without consent or as a result of a financial transaction, and so they are urging the Parliament of Canada move quickly on this proposed legislation to amend the Criminal Code and Immigration and Refugee Protection Act to prohibit Canadians from travelling abroad to acquire organs removed without consent or as a result of a financial transaction, and to render inadmissible to Canada any and all permanent residents or foreign nationals who have participated in this abhorrent trade in human organs.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am tabling a petition about Bill C-350 and Bill S-240. This is a petition that deals with the trafficking of organs. The petitioners are calling on the government to pass these bills, Bill C-350 and Bill S-240, as quickly as possible to end this scourge of organ harvesting without consent.

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

The Speaker: Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

MOTIONS FOR PAPERS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I ask that all notices of motions for the production of papers also be allowed to stand.

The Speaker: Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

CANADA LABOUR CODE

The House resumed from October 16 consideration of amendments made by the Senate to Bill C-65, an act to amend the Canada Labour Code (harassment and violence), the Parliamentary Employment and Staff Relations Act and the Budget Implementation Act, 2017, No. 1.

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am rising today to speak to Bill C-65, an important bill dealing with harassment in the federal workplace. It is important to understand that this bill did not come out when it did by pure coincidence. For context, I will recount some of the incidents that happened around the time the bill came out.

All members of the House will, I am sure, remember that the #MeToo movement touched a wide segment of society around the world last autumn. Then in January, just before the House sat, we had a number of revelations within Canadian political circles as well. One of them affected the Liberal government. Allegations about misconduct, about a decade ago, by the hon. member for Calgary Centre were made known. At that time he was the minister of sport and persons with disabilities. However, that did not continue because he was asked to leave the cabinet, and a secret investigation was launched later.

I do not cite these facts to be disrespectful or rude toward the hon. member. This is important context that will help to explain the Prime Minister's many quotable statements during this narrow window of time. For example, as news of the former minister's past actions were being reported, the Prime Minister, then at the World Economic Forum in Switzerland, said:

We must each have a well-understood, established process in place to file allegations of workplace harassment. And when we receive those complaints, we must take them seriously.

Government Orders

As women speak up, it is our responsibility to listen, and more importantly, to believe.

Those were the Prime Minister's words. That is quite clearly the government's policy as well.

It is not just the words in the Prime Minister's speech that matter, but establishing a complaints process, including in our own offices on Parliament Hill, that is very much at the heart of Bill C-65.

Upon his return to Canada, the Prime Minister said days later to the CBC, "The standard applies to everyone. There is no context in which someone doesn't have responsibility for things they've done in the past." Therefore, it is quite clear. As I mentioned earlier, a wave of revelations and probing questions were sweeping Parliament Hill that week. That is why it is not at all surprising that the CBC would, in that same interview with the Prime Minister, quiz him about his own past. When asked, the Prime Minister answered, "I've been very, very careful all my life to be thoughtful, to be respectful of people's space and people's headspace as well".

Therefore, the Prime Minister laid down the law about sexual harassment and misconduct allegations when he stated that we should always: one, believe complainants; two, hear out retrospective complaints, without time limit; three, apply one standard to all; and four, do not worry, just know that he is squeaky clean, apparently.

With respect to this final point, it turns out that there were previous allegations of impropriety made against the Prime Minister that surfaced. Late this spring, copies of the Creston Valley Advance from August 2000 surfaced. An editorial, penned by a reporter on staff, informed readers, "I'm sorry. If I had known you were reporting for a national paper, I never would have been so forward." Those were the words spoken to an Advance reporter by the son of former prime minister Pierre Trudeau on August 4. He, the now prime minister, was in Creston to celebrate the Kokanee Summit festival, put on by Columbia Brewery. He apologized a day late for inappropriately handling the reporter while she was on assignment not only for the Advance, but also for the National Post and Vancouver Sun.

The editorial went on to say:

shouldn't the son of a former prime minister be aware of the rights and wrongs that go along with public socializing? ...Didn't he learn, through his vast experiences in public life, that groping a strange young woman isn't in the handbook of proper etiquette regardless of who she is, what her business is, or where they are?

"Groping" is her word not mine.

Applying the edict from the Prime Minister, I assume we are to believe her story that she was groped by the Prime Minister, disregard the date no matter how far back the complaint went, and apply the same standard that applies to the hon. members for Nunavut, Calgary Centre, and Calgary Skyview, which was removal from cabinet and/or the Liberal caucus. Is that not right?

Members will remember that things did not quite turn out as one would have expected based on the Prime Minister's own rules. Part of the problem was that the Canadian media paid virtually no attention to the groping allegations about the Prime Minister. If only they had given just a fraction of their coverage to this issue here in

Canada as they did to the Kavanaugh story in the United States. However, that is wishful thinking.

● (1525)

Despite that, back in July, the Prime Minister went on record defending his groping by saying, "I had a good day; I don't remember any negative interactions that day at all."

He said, "...I am confident—that I did not act inappropriately.... But part of this awakening that we're having as a society...is that it's not just one side of the story that matters"; and, "That the same interactions could be experienced very differently from one person to the next."

The Prime Minister went on to say, "often a man experiences an interaction as being benign or not inappropriate and a woman, particularly in a professional context, can experience it differently and we have to respect that and reflect on it."

To boil this all down, a simple phrase sums up the Prime Minister's words and deeds: Do as I say and not as I do. That catchphrase seems to describe a lot of what we see from the Liberal government. I am afraid it is playing itself out yet again in the area of sexual misconduct.

The Prime Minister, when he took the stage in Davos, said that having an established policy was crucial. His own government's legislation, which we are debating today, will entrench this expectation in federal labour law. However, we do not know what policies apply to the Prime Minister himself.

Earlier this autumn, I put some written questions on the Order Paper to get answers. Here is what I asked:

(a) what is the procedure when there is an accusation against the Prime Minister, including, (i) who decides if a complaint has merit and warrants an investigation; (ii) who conducts the investigation; (iii) does the individual conducting the investigation have the ability to recommend sanctions; (iv) are the recommended sanctions binding; (v) what is the policy regarding whether or not the reports and findings are released to the public; (vi) what mechanism, if any, exists for the temporary suspension of certain duties of the Prime Minister pending the outcome of an investigation; and (b) does the procedure...apply to incidents which occurred prior to the individual becoming Prime Minister?

Those are valid questions. Canadians deserve to know, this Parliament deserves to know, how the Prime Minister will be held accountable if there are past allegations of sexual misconduct. I have not had an answer back yet.

I would have thought that for something so near and dear to the Prime Minister's heart, the government would actually have had this already prepared and would have given me an answer immediately. Again, that was wishful thinking.

However, there is a deadline for a response to my question, so we should know, come mid-November, just what procedures are in place for Canada's Prime Minister. Maybe the government will even comply with what it expects of other Canadians in Bill C-65. This assumes, naturally, that the government actually answers the question, assuming that there is actually a policy, and assuming, of course, that Bill C-65 is not simply another case of Liberal's saying "do as I say and not as I do."

Government Orders

In closing, Canada's Conservatives support this legislation, as combatting harassment is a pressing need in all sectors of society, including in the Parliament of Canada. We believe that all forms of harassment, sexual violence and discrimination are unacceptable. That is why at committee, among other things, we, as Conservatives, successfully introduced an amendment to prevent political interference in political offices during harassment investigations.

We also successfully introduced amendments to ensure strict timelines for investigations into incidents of harassment to ensure that investigations are carried out in a timely manner.

I think we can all agree in this place that government policy needs to focus on supporting victims of harassment. This legislation is a positive step in that direction. We look forward to answers from the Prime Minister's Office in regard to the policies that are in place should there be allegations against the Prime Minister himself.

We support Bill C-65. We do want more answers. We expect more answers.

• (1530)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am glad that the Conservative Party supports the bill. That does not surprise me, because we heard that at both second reading and third reading.

Members on all sides recognize that this is a historic type of legislation that would ensure that we have more harmony in the workforce going forward. It demonstrates strong national leadership.

My colleagues across the way seem to want to make personal attacks, whatever type of legislation comes before us. When we look at the legislation we have today, I would encourage them to recognize that the many different stakeholders, not only elected or in the Senate chamber but all Canadians, recognize this legislation for what it is, which is a solid piece of legislation that would advance our society in a positive way.

Would my colleague across the way not agree that not only should the national government continue to demonstrate leadership on this file but that it is also important that our provincial entities have labour laws that reflect this type of legislation and that they look at ways they could provide a better and more harmonized workforce?

• (1535)

Hon. Candice Bergen: Madam Speaker, I think we need to get our own house in order here before we start telling other jurisdictions how to handle issues that they may or may not be facing, which leads me to the point I was making in my speech. I would like to present this to my hon. colleague in the position he is in. Will we be able to get answers regarding how allegations of sexual misconduct are handled when they are against the Prime Minister?

We saw these allegations happen over the summer. The Prime Minister did not address them directly. In fact, he said that men and women experience things differently. This goes to the very heart of what we are saying. That is actually an excuse. I cannot be abusive or hurt people then say that they might have experienced it differently, and that lets me off the hook. That is why we have this legislation in place. That is why we all support it.

What we do not know, and what we have not seen, is what the process is for the Prime Minister himself. We know it happens when there are accusations levied against ministers. They have been removed from cabinet. They have indeed been removed from the Liberal caucus. We did not know what that investigation looked like.

Canadians deserve to know how investigations will be handled if there is an allegation against the Prime Minister.

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am glad that all of us here seem to support the bill. It is a step forward in the right direction in how we work and what the culture or environment is like both here in this place and across the country.

The member talked a lot about incidents in the past. I wonder if she might have further comments about how things will change in the future for people who work in government here. I also have specific concerns about things like privacy. We live and work in a small bubble here. How might the privacy of complainants be protected in the future?

Hon. Candice Bergen: Madam Speaker, the member is correct. On technology, on behaviour, we are learning more and growing as a society. This is an issue that will be changing. We support that this will be looked at every five years and that there will be a review so that we can ensure that we are using best practices to ensure that we have a harassment-free workplace and that our employees, the people we interact with day to day, are supported and are able to reach their fullest potential. Therefore, we support seeing this reviewed every five years and being able to change and evolve as the situation changes.

Mr. Bryan May (Cambridge, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time this afternoon with the hon. member for Alfred-Pellan.

I am honoured to stand and speak to Bill C-65. Our government ran on a commitment to take action on workplace harassment and violence, and I am very proud of where we are here today.

Members of the House, from all parties, have worked together to create a strong piece of legislation, one that will address harassment and violence for the hundreds of thousands of employees who work in the federally regulated industries, and closer to home, one that will provide political staff here in the chamber, in the other chamber and in our constituency offices with the same health and safety protections under the Canadian Labour Code as all other workers in this country.

All of us here in the House, no matter our political allegiance, have a unique opportunity. Today we can join forces and take a stand together. We can send a strong message to all Canadians that workplace harassment and violence is unacceptable and will not be tolerated any longer. Together we can support Bill C-65 so that it can become law and we can effect real change. Together we can help make a real difference in the lives of Canadian workers in federally regulated workplaces, including all of our staff right here on Parliament Hill.

Government Orders

It is true that this piece of legislation would apply only to federally regulated and parliamentary workplaces. However, we believe that through it, we will be leading by example. We believe that the bill will inspire other governments, businesses, employers and organizations across the country to follow in our footsteps. Indeed, with this new legislation, Canada is being seen as an international leader in addressing workplace harassment and violence.

We believe that we are not the only ones who strongly refuse to tolerate these toxic, destructive behaviours any longer. Harassment and violence, including sexual harassment and sexual violence, in the workplace and in our society at large is nothing new. However, over the past few years, it has been top of mind. In fact, over the past few years, social media lit up with campaigns such as #MeToo, #AfterMeToo, and Time's Up. These hashtags became movements and these movements showed just how pervasive and extensive this problem is.

These movements are the result of people. They are the result of brave women and men who thought it was important to show the world how common harassment and sexual violence are in our lives. They found the courage and strength to speak up, and now it is our turn to take action.

Our government ran on a commitment to take action on workplace harassment and violence, and I am sure my colleagues agree that action in this area is long overdue. I am sure they also agree that it affects us all. That is what we are doing here today: taking action.

The new approach we are proposing aims to drive a culture change in federal workplaces. This new approach aims to prevent incidents of harassment and violence from occurring, to have an effective response when they do occur, and to have support for those affected.

I want to acknowledge the work accomplished by the members in the House and the other place in their careful study of the bill. I also want to acknowledge the generosity of the many witnesses who informed that study, which resulted in important amendments. Amendments were made as the bill passed through this chamber, and several more were proposed by the other chamber. As a result, Bill C-65 is now stronger than ever.

Today I will give an example of how this tremendous work made our proposed legislation so strong.

As we know, members of the other chamber studied the bill carefully, and they proposed a number of amendments. One of the amendments our government is in support of concerns the terminology used in the bill. The members proposed a revision of certain terminology, terminology that they felt could have an adverse effect on the very people we are trying to protect if left unchanged.

● (1540)

Currently, the words “trivial”, “frivolous” and “vexatious” are used to describe the basis upon which a complaint to the labour program could be dismissed. While these terms are generally understood in law and appear throughout the Canada Labour Code, they are, as a member of the other place so rightly pointed out, rooted in prejudice. Our government understands the power of language and we fully support the replacement of these terms with the more neutral term, “abuse of process”.

This is just an example. Our government agrees with a number of other amendments proposed by the other chamber. For example, we agree with explicitly stating that nothing in Bill C-65 takes away from an individual's rights under the Canadian Human Rights Act. We agree with the proposal that anyone designated by the employer to receive complaints related to occurrences of harassment and violence has the appropriate knowledge, training and experience. We agree to the amendment to require data in the annual report on incidents of violence and harassment to be categorized according to prohibited grounds of discrimination under the Canadian Human Rights Act. Such amendments would strengthen Bill C-65.

At this point, I would be remiss if I did not mention the work also accomplished by the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disability, also known as HUMA. It is a privilege of mine to chair that committee. The HUMA committee also proposed some significant amendments, which were made to Bill C-65. These amendments include adding a clear definition of harassment and violence in the Canada Labour Code, including a specific reference to preventing occurrences of harassment and violence in the purpose clause of part II of the code; allowing former employees to come forward with complaints related to occurrences of harassment and violence; a provision allowing employees to complain to someone other than the supervisor if they prefer; an annual report on harassment and violence in all federally regulated workplaces; as well as giving the deputy minister powers normally given to the minister to avoid the possibility of any perceived conflict of interest when political actors are involved.

The work accomplished by members in this House, and in the other, will help us send a strong message to all Canadians that workplace harassment and violence is unacceptable and it will not be tolerated any longer. Each and every one of us here in this House can help us send a strong message. I urge everyone here today to help move this bill forward by casting a vote that will help end workplace violence and harassment in Canada.

● (1545)

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Madam Speaker, this a very serious topic that should grip all of us in this House and indeed impacts all of us in this House and impacts all Canadians.

My colleague referred, in his comments, to a new approach and a culture change. We on this side definitely agree that is needed, and that is why we are supportive of this legislation. However, we need more than just words, we need more than just a bill; we need action and follow-through on these commitments to a culture change.

With the alleged incident of a number of years ago by our Prime Minister and an apparent denial, and also the recent comments of the finance minister in committee, referring to my colleagues and other colleagues as neanderthals, these certainly are not the kind of language that we would like to hear in terms of creating a culture of respect. I wonder if my colleague would comment on whether he feels that the Prime Minister and the finance minister at the very least owe an acknowledgement of wrongdoing and preferably should offer an apology.

Government Orders

Mr. Bryan May (Cambridge, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I agree with the member opposite that actions speak louder than words. That is why I was very pleased at how the committee came together and worked. We basically eliminated political allegiances on this study. We had a number of people sit in on the committee on all sides who wanted to speak to this issue and really wanted to deal with this professionally and not to politicize this issue.

It is important to recognize the work that was done by the staff and the clerks to make the accommodations that were necessary to accomplish what we did. There were a number of firsts that were involved in this study, and I personally want to extend my thanks to my clerk and all of her team for making this happen, because it was critically important that we respect the privacy of those witnesses who appeared before us. That was done with an incredible amount of logistics and incredibly professionally.

Ms. Sheri Benson (Saskatoon West, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to be in the House with my hon. colleague today.

I do want to acknowledge that the committee worked hard and the amendments that came forward from my colleague, the hon. member for Jonquière. Of course, not all of the amendments that were proposed were accepted, but I do want to acknowledge that there was an openness and willingness on the committee to make this bill better than what it was when it started at committee. Thus, I also want to congratulate the committee members.

I have one comment, in particular, about the fact that I have a connection with a local teamster union in my riding that has done a lot of work around mental health and had hoped to have mental health included in this document around psychological harassment and whatnot. I just wanted to make a point that when we do the five-year review, which I think is an excellent way to look at legislation, that we could once more entertain that addition as we know more once the bill is out and people are using it, and we know what works and what does not.

• (1550)

Mr. Bryan May: Madam Speaker, I agree with the member. I am not sure there was a question there, but I will take this opportunity to agree that this was a team effort.

I think that on the issue around what comes next, a lot of that is going to be dealt with, of course, in regulations. This is not something that is going to go away. I do not believe that we are done by simply passing Bill C-65. I think this is going to be a continuous project or issue that we are going to be dealing with well into the future.

We will have to evolve. We will have to make changes and we will have to develop the legislation over the years to deal with the times that we are faced with and the challenges that we are faced with.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Angelo Iacono (Alfred-Pellan, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from Cambridge for sharing his time with me so I could speak on this important subject.

I am pleased to be speaking on the Senate's proposed amendments to Bill C-65, an act to amend the Canada Labour Code regarding

harassment and violence, the Parliamentary Employment and Staff Relations Act and the Budget Implementation Act, 2017, No. 1.

I want to start by thanking the members of the Senate for the effort they put into their study of Bill C-65. I especially want to thank them for the amendments they proposed, which we are debating today in the House. The government appreciates the work they did to strengthen this bill.

Getting back to the amendments to Bill C-65 proposed by the other place, one of them is intended to guarantee that the person designated by the employer to receive complaints regarding harassment and violence has the necessary knowledge, training and experience to deal with such situations. The amendment in question also highlights the need for the designated person to know the legislation applicable to each case. Our government recognizes the importance of ensuring that everyone in a workplace receives sufficient training. The bill enhances that aspect because it requires employers to ensure that all of their employees receive and undergo training in the prevention of harassment and violence.

Training for everyone is absolutely fundamental, not just to provide the necessary tools to respond effectively to a situation of harassment or violence, but also to bring about the cultural change needed to eliminate and eradicate this kind of behaviour. For these reasons, we support the proposed amendment, which explicitly requires the designated person to be qualified to receive complaints.

[*English*]

There are, however, other amendments that our government does not support. For example, the proposed amendment to clause 3 of Bill C-65 specifies that employers must ensure that the workplace is free from harassment and violence. While this is certainly in line with the intent of Bill C-65, it would, in practice, undermine the process at the heart of the code: the internal resolution system that gives those in the workplace the opportunity to quickly resolve the issue before escalating it to outside parties.

Workplace parties, including the employer, the employee or employees, must try to resolve the situation internally first, including undertaking an investigation if unable to resolve it to everyone's satisfaction. It is only in instances where the process has not been followed that a complaint would be made to the labour program, which would then trigger an investigation. This process recognizes that the workplace parties are the ones best positioned to identify, address, mitigate and prevent occupational health and safety hazards in their own workplace.

However, with this proposed amendment, the labour program could be required to investigate every incident relating to harassment and violence, regardless of the outcomes of internal workplace resolution processes. This would not only undermine the objective of the provisions, it would significantly increase costs for everyone involved. Furthermore, requiring the labour program to investigate every incident of workplace harassment and violence would divert resources from other health and safety investigations, ultimately delaying the resolution of all incidents. Resolving these incidents in a timely manner is paramount.

Government Orders

During our consultations prior to tabling Bill C-65 and in previous debates and committee meetings in the chamber, we heard time and time again that a lengthy resolution process is a major deterrent to those who might otherwise come forward. Individuals who experience workplace harassment or violence need effective and timely resolution. The last thing we want to do is deter individuals from coming forward when they experience an incident of harassment or violence in the workplace.

It takes an enormous amount of courage to do so and those individuals need to feel confident that their complaints will be dealt with as efficiently as possible. Members of the other chamber also proposed the addition of a line to specify that a copy of the investigation report must be provided to the employee and the employer. Let me assure everyone that this would be the case. It would be abundantly clear through the regulations that all parties involved would be informed of the status of the investigation. Unfortunately, where this was inserted in the bill as per the proposed amendment, it would not apply to complaints of harassment and violence. It would apply to all investigations undertaken by workplace committees of occupational health and safety violations except harassment and violence.

● (1555)

The line directly preceding the line that would be inserted states, “The employee or the supervisor may refer an unresolved complaint, other than a complaint relating to an occurrence of harassment and violence, to a chairperson of the work place committee or to the health and safety representative to be investigated jointly.” Complaints related to an occurrence of harassment and violence are specifically excluded here because if unresolved, they would be referred to a competent person. However, let me reiterate that this is a valid concern and it would be fully addressed in the regulations associated with Bill C-65. It would clearly stipulate that all reports from investigations would be shared with both the employee and the employer.

[Translation]

There is no doubt that this bill deals with some sensitive issues. Victims of harassment and violence deserve justice, they deserve a timely resolution, and they deserve to know that a good system is in place if needed. All of this is the basis for Bill C-65.

I assure the House that our government has carefully studied this legislative framework to ensure that the provisions are reasonably clear and effective. All Canadians deserve a workplace free from harassment and violence and in which inappropriate and unacceptable behaviour is not tolerated. Employees who have been victims of harassment and violence have suffered for too long and have had to deal with a limited system that did not work.

We listened to what Canadians had to say, and our action will bring about a change in culture that will have a positive effect on all workplaces and also on our society. We are keeping the promise we made to always stand with those who have been affected by these life-changing experiences.

I urge the House to support Bill C-65 so that we can set the standard and create a model of which we can all be proud.

● (1600)

[English]

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for tagging onto the comments made by his colleague, the member for Cambridge. I asked the question of his colleague, and it certainly applies to the recent comments by my colleague across the way.

We agree that we need to take action on this. All of us are impacted by this and we need to provide safeguards. However, it goes beyond words and beyond simply passing a bill and filing it on a shelf. It comes to action. Many times with this kind of inappropriate behaviour, the tone is set at the top. In recent months, we have seen from the front benches of the government, including the Prime Minister, inappropriate behaviour that has not been acknowledged and not been apologized for.

Therefore, does my colleague not feel that if we are to actually have the bill implemented and acted upon so Canadians can have confidence in it, we need the Prime Minister, the finance minister and other members of the front bench who have shown inappropriate behaviour to acknowledge that behaviour, apologize for it and set a new tone for all Canadians, including those in the House?

[Translation]

Mr. Angelo Iacono: Madam Speaker, I appreciate my opposition colleague's support for Bill C-65.

Harassment and violence are too often part of workplace culture in Canada. The scary part is that too few of these incidents are reported, and measures taken to put a stop to these behaviours in the workplace are often ineffective.

Our government is taking the necessary steps to address the problem of harassment and violence, to intervene quickly and effectively when incidents occur, and to support victims, survivors and employees. Bill C-65 is a progressive and revolutionary bill that Canadians can be proud of.

[English]

Ms. Sheri Benson (Saskatoon West, NDP): Madam Speaker, I have raised this issue before in the House. We will be supporting the bill, and I do want to acknowledge the committee's work and acceptance of some excellent amendments from my colleague, the member of Parliament for Jonquière, around a number of areas. The bill is much better than it was before it came to committee.

The Teamsters Canada Youth Committee has been working on an issue called “Make It Mandatory”, which speaks to mental health support and awareness in the workplace. Its representatives made a presentation to the committee and had hoped it would be their opportunity to open up the Labour Code and include mental health as one of the grounds protected under the act. I know it did not happen this time, but I would ask my hon. colleague this. Under the mandatory review of the act, would he support mandatory mental awareness and support for people in the workplace in Canada?

Government Orders

[Translation]

Mr. Angelo Iacono: Madam Speaker, violence is unacceptable. According to Abacus Data, one in ten Canadians says that sexual harassment is common in their workplace.

That is not okay. It is not okay for employees to go to work with a sick feeling in the pit of their stomach. It is not okay for employees to be afraid to go to work.

This situation has gone on for far too long. That is why Bill C-65 is a major step forward toward ensuring safe, healthy workplaces for all. With this bill, we will ensure that victims get justice and swift resolution and that they can count on a system that works.

• (1605)

[English]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Vancouver Centre.

I am pleased to rise today to participate in the debate on Bill C-65. The main goal of the legislation is to ensure that all employees of federal jurisdiction, including those in federal workplaces and in federally regulated industries, are treated fairly and protected from harmful behaviours such as harassment and sexual violence.

On this side of the House, we are fully supportive of the changes that have been made in the bill.

The past year has been defined by many powerful stories, spearheaded by survivors and their families. Movements such as #MeToo, Time's Up, as well as the global women's marches have shone a light on the ongoing challenges faced by victims and survivors, as well as the harsh realities that continue to hold us back.

Bill C-65, introduced last November by the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour, represents the historic step this government is taking to prevent and address the issues of gender-based violence, particularly in federal workplaces.

Bill C-65 is built on the pillars of prevention, response and support. It will ensure that employers take steps to protect employees from these unacceptable behaviours, to respond to them when they occur and to offer support to those affected.

Sexual harassment and violence in the workplace is sadly nothing new. We know that legislation alone will not solve this problem. No one action will bring an end to gender-based violence. We must continue to do what we can. It will take a collective whole-of-government approach, alongside employers, employees, colleagues, family members and friends to move the needle forward.

To support our approach, in budget 2018, our government announced it would be providing \$34.9 million over five years to support training and education, provide resources, such as an outreach hub accessible through an 800 number, and to support enforcement. Addressing gender inequality and gender-based violence has been a central theme to this government since day one.

Bill C-65 is historic and supports the first-ever gender-based violence strategy, which was launched by the Minister of Status of Women in 2017. Since the launch of "It's Time: Canada's Strategy to Prevent and Address Gender-Based Violence", Status of Women

Canada and federal partners have been working to find ways to take action on prevention, provide support for those affected and make changes to the justice system so it is responsive to the needs of women who experience harassment and violence.

In budget 2018, we expanded the gender-based violence program, with \$29 million over five years, so more organizations, such as rape crisis centres, could help more high-risk women facing violence. This program supports the testing and implementation of practices that will help the gender-based violence sector do more for indigenous women and their communities and underserved populations, such as women living with a disability, non-status, refugee or immigrant women, LGBTQ2, gender non-conforming people and ethnocultural women.

It includes preventing dating violence and equipping health professionals to provide appropriate care to victims with an additional \$31 million over five years; \$5 million to enhance the development of preventative bullying and cyberbullying initiatives; enhancing support by \$19.3 million over five years for the National Child Exploitation Coordination Centre to increase the investigative capacity of the RCMP; providing \$2 million over five years to support sexual assault centres in close proximity to Canadian bases so members of the Canadian Armed Forces have access to a full spectrum of supports to address gender-based violence; an additional \$14.5 million over five years to address human trafficking by establishing a national human trafficking hotline, including an online portal and a referral mechanism to social services and law enforcement; and up to \$5.5 million over five years, starting in 2018-19, to work with stakeholders, including the provinces and territories, toward developing a harmonized national framework to ensure consistent, comprehensive and sustainable approaches in addressing gender-based violence at post-secondary institutions across the country.

• (1610)

In June 2018, the Minister of Status of Women marked the first anniversary of the strategy. Concrete steps forward this past year included: 7,000 new or repaired shelter beds for survivors of family violence; 2,225 sexual assault case files classified as unfounded were reviewed by the RCMP; over \$4 million in funding to the Canadian Centre for Child Protection to protect children from sexual exploitation on the Internet and additional funding to establish a survivors' network; \$20 million to support projects to address gaps in supports for gender-based violence survivors and their families; and the launch of the first ongoing national survey on gender-based violence in Canada.

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In conclusion, the actions speak clearly and loudly. Our government is committed to preventing and addressing violence against women and girls. We are doing just that. I would like to encourage everyone in the House to continue the work that we have started. By working together, we can eradicate violence in all its forms and achieve peaceful, safe lives for everyone in Canada and around the world. In that worthwhile struggle, I wish members courage, wisdom and perseverance.

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Madam Speaker, this is three in a row now where we have had commitments to the words of the bill, which we all agree with. We want this serious matter to be addressed clearly. My colleague said different times that actions speak clearly and loudly and that regulations alone will not solve the problem. My previous two questions related to the leadership from the top of the government on the front benches, including the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance, in terms of some of their inappropriate behaviour, which has not been acknowledged or apologized for.

Again, does my colleague not feel that if we are actually put action to the bill and have it implemented and that Canadians see leadership from this chamber, it is incumbent upon the leaders of the government to take the first action, apologize for their actions and to set the record straight going forward?

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, leadership is about identifying problems, creating and identifying solutions for those, putting the processes and policies in place to ensure that people have access to the resources that they need in order to overcome the violence we are talking about in the bill. That is exactly what we are seeing in the bill. We are seeing the leadership that is required from a whole-of-government approach to addressing gender-based violence in particular, a matter I know everyone in the House takes seriously and will strive toward creating a serious, meaningful impact and difference in the future.

[Translation]

Ms. Karine Trudel (Jonquière, NDP): Madam Speaker, we have talked a lot about Bill C-65 in the House over the past two days. This bill amends the Canada Labour Code in order to reduce violence, intimidation and sexual harassment.

We have talked a lot about this, but I would like to hear what my colleague thinks. What does he think about the fact that, despite the many amendments I proposed, the government did not want to keep the joint health and safety committees? The government did not want to give those who file a complaint the option of submitting it to a joint workplace health and safety committee. We heard the argument that it would undermine the confidentiality of the person filing the complaint, but actually the opposite is true. The members of these committees have a certain expertise in the organization and they know how to work with people.

I would like to know why the government rejected the amendments and why it took away the right of joint workplace health and safety committees to receive and investigate complaints.

• (1615)

[English]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I admit that there is a vast array of subjects that we get to be part of and contribute to in the

House. This is one of those ones that I do not have the level of detail that the member is referring to when she talks about the various different components. What I can say is that I have a great degree of faith in the legislative process, the committee process we have, where the bill has come from and where it has gone through the process in order to determine the best safeguards to be put in place for victims. I have faith in the work that our committees do. What they recommend back to Parliament through that deliberative process is something that I am extremely willing to accept and I am willing to move forward with.

Mr. Alupa Clarke (Beauport—Limoulu, CPC): Madam Speaker, this is a very important debate today, as we are speaking about increasing safeguards at the workplace for males and females, concerning discrimination, harassment, be it sexual or other types of harassment.

It struck me today that, on an ongoing basis, my colleagues have been asking members on the other side of this House about the actions that were alleged this summer, through the media, that the Prime Minister inappropriately touched a journalist 20 years ago. The PM has not addressed this situation in an appropriate way.

What does the member have to say about this?

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I have already answered this question. I could be brief and just say that.

Again, it comes back to the leadership that is displayed on this side of the House. It is about identifying the problems, creating the policies and processes to put them in place, to make sure that all victims are protected through the process they will have to go through, should they have complaints to bring forward.

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to stand and speak to this particular bill because I think it has been a long time coming in this House.

We know that staff on the Hill have had no recourse and we know also that parliamentarians have no protocols, recourse or processes with which to address sexual harassment, physical violence, intimidation of any kind and/or just basic workplace safety in the sense of fair play and justice in the workplace.

Why is that so? Mainly because most employees were afraid to speak up as they were afraid that they would lose their jobs and afraid of further intimidation. We know that these are the real reasons to deal with these issues.

We also know that there had been nothing in place for parliamentarians to discuss any sexual harassment, physical violence, intimidation or inappropriate behaviour from other parliamentarians.

Therefore, this is something that this government is trying to set right. We are trying to do this to address the problem not only in the federal public service and in the federal workplace but for parliamentarians, their staff, ministerial exempt staff and the Prime Minister's exempt staff. We will have the whole group covered then, who have never been covered before.

Government Orders

I guess most Canadians would find this extraordinary that this was not in existence before. However, we know that the reality is that where there is power there is also an abuse of power. That is what we see happening here, whether the power is based on gender, i.e., men in positions of power who tend to intimidate women who are under their jurisdiction or who work for them.

We must also address that while we have talked a lot about women and girls and gender in this particular bill, we need to recognize that this does not only apply to women and girls. We do know that young women, however, are about three times as likely to have these issues of sexual harassment and violence, etc. addressed to them.

We also know that systemic racism has really been a problem here within this House, within most institutions, and within most places that are federally legislated with people in positions of power.

We know that disabled persons also face this kind of intimidation, harassment and bullying, to use the appropriate term.

We know that people of different sexual orientations, the LGBTQ, have often been afraid to come out or to let people know of their sexual orientation because they fear bullying and harassment.

This is an issue that is becoming more and more complex as we look at the problems of the workplace with issues such as the use of social media. Especially as parliamentarians, we know that the use of social media can be very damning to parliamentarians. One can be found guilty even before one has been shown any due process.

This bill will take aspects of two separate bills and the labour code to have a comprehensive way to address this particular problem in its entirety so that we are not looking at sexual harassment only. We would be looking at violence. We would be looking at bullying and we would be looking at intimidation. Under that there are three specific things we are hoping to address. One of them in the labour code is that employers will now be bound to protect their employees from harassment and bullying and from the kind of intimidation and fear of reprisal that we know that employees now feel.

That is an important part of it that there can be no reprisals, rather that people can come out and speak freely. At the same time, this must be balanced to show that there is a fair and objective way of dealing with complaints when they come through. Of course, I think we have all found in this House that complaints against parliamentarians need to be very careful. When results of investigations occur and we find out that people are not guilty, we are going to be able to say so.

Having the ability to sully a name, especially a parliamentarian, is really important when we look at how we balance the objectivity of any kind of legislation.

• (1620)

Although parliamentarians are not necessarily employees, per se, they are part of this institution and this institution needs to look at how we deal with parliamentarians as well.

When we look at preventing this, which is what we are looking at as part of the bill, we are looking at things like how we prevent it, how we make the workplace a safe place and how we make it a place for people to feel free to speak out without fear of retaliation and

reprisals. Making it easy for people speak out is one element. The second is to prevent it, which means the creation of a safe workplace and letting everyone know very clearly there are processes in place in which they can feel safe in coming forward.

However, the idea is to also have an objective way to look at it. I know people have been concerned that existing tribunals, etc. may be replaced. I do not think the bill says that. It does not say that they will be replaced. If they exist and are able to do the work and get the full amount of that work done, it would be fine. However, if there was none in existence, they may need to be replaced by one which would be able to deal with the whole issue. This is what we are trying to talk about here. There is no point in having people doing the same thing, as we now see, because the whole issue has been dealt with in two separate regiments. We would then need to bring them together, which may mean rejigging how we do this and who the people are who will look at this.

We need to ensure that at the end of the day there is a clear process, everyone knows what the process is, the process is objective and is carried out by people who have expertise and understanding of some of these issues. As I said before, a lot of people who have different sexual orientations are very afraid of social media outing them or of being moved from their place. Even though the Prime Minister stood in the House and apologized for all the damage done to people in the LGBTQ community who had worked in the armed forces and other areas of government, we still need to guard against it. Everyone in the House knows that it is not just legislation that makes a difference. Legislation has to be backed up by policies and by clear, fair, open and transparent programs.

The bill also talks about that openness and transparency. It is very important that there is annual reporting on how the bill is going through, how it is being implemented and what the outcomes are. However, it is also important to do this five-year review. At the end of five years, we will have to do exactly what is done in medicine. We need to look back to see if it has worked, if it has achieved its results, if the objectives have been met, or if there are problems, glitches or areas we can tighten or have things fell between the cracks.

As any legislation, it is also very important to have a look back and see if it worked and if it was effective and transparent.

I have been in the House now for 25 years, which is been a long time. I have seen so many people who have fallen by the wayside because they were afraid and did not want to come out. For me, it is why the issue of LGBTQ was really important. I knew many people who worked in the public service who were very afraid to come out and say what their sexual orientation was because they feared reprisals. Reprisals do not have to be in the form of firing, but can include shunning, how one treats someone, perhaps with a certain amount of psychological manipulation, disdain, making them feel lesser or making them feel they do not belong. We know about that with people with mental disabilities and physical abilities. It could also be that the workplace is not ready, or making room for them or not showing them they are welcome to be part of that workplace. There is a sense that one does not belong and is really out of place. These are some of the most important things.

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It is important that we will look at policies and programs, which will make it effective, that we will report on it every year and that in five years we would go back and look at if we achieved the results we said we would. That is a simple way of dealing with a long-standing problem.

• (1625)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Karine Trudel (Jonquière, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to ask my colleague what she thinks about something.

The committee heard from Teamsters Canada, who made the important and vital suggestion to add just two words, “mental health”; that is one of my amendments.

We talked about this here in the House of Commons on several occasions as it pertains to various subjects, so it might have been a good idea to include those words, at the very least to raise awareness.

I would like my colleague to tell me why the government and Liberal members rejected the amendment to include the words “mental health” in the Canada Labour Code.

[*English*]

Hon. Hedy Fry: Madam Speaker, I think all amendments have been considered and will be considered. Again, with yearly reporting and with a five-year look-back to see how things have worked, there will be the ability to see if the amendment was necessary or if the existing legislation addressed the issue that my hon. colleague discussed. We think it will with all of its pieces. We will be able to look back and see.

Nobody ever writes legislation or moves it forward and has 100% of it work. This is why we have structures in place to look back to address and report on an annual basis on how things have gone.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alupa Clarke (Beauport—Limoilou, CPC): Madam Speaker, my colleague who just spoke has been here for a long time, so she has really seen first-hand how things have changed in the House of Commons.

I would like to know if she thinks this bill is part of a long-term evolution that might lead to other legislation that would continue to strengthen the workplace and make it safe.

Does she think this bill will, as we hope, eliminate the slightest possibility of harassment on Parliament Hill? Is she convinced that this bill contains all the necessary measures and provisions to finally keep everyone safe from harassment and discrimination in our workplace here on Parliament Hill?

[*English*]

Hon. Hedy Fry: Madam Speaker, because I have been here for this length of time, I can tell the member that there is no perfect legislation, no perfect policy and no perfect program. We need to look at the issue as broadly as we can, try to address every one of those pieces, go to committee and discuss what we hear, discuss what we think is missing and then eventually do something about it. This bill would do something to address these problems.

The bottom line is that with an annual reporting mechanism, we will be able to see if indeed we have achieved what we set out to

achieve or if there are things we need to tweak. This is important. It is why legislation is not a stagnant thing. It is always evolving as we move forward. We will see whether it works or not.

Therefore, no, I cannot tell my colleague that this is 100% certain, but I think the intent and the will of everyone in the House is to ensure that this is as good a bill as it can be at this time and follow through to see if it does in fact achieve its goals.

• (1630)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alupa Clarke: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her reasoned and reasonable answer, because constantly reviewing legislation describes our constitutional and political role in the House of Commons to a tee.

That is why it is important for Canadians to understand that nothing is ever perfect and that they must not get too cynical and disillusioned about politics. The fact is that everyone here is always working to improve Canadian society.

[*English*]

Hon. Hedy Fry: Madam Speaker, the ways of harassing or intimidating people evolve. Who would have known 10 years ago that social media would play such a huge role in harassment and intimidation, but it does. Who knows what new tools next year or two years from now people will use to undermine, harass and intimidate each other.

Therefore, this annual report is key. I hope all members of the House will ensure they look at that report and decide whether they think we are where we need to be.

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): It is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, Government Spending; the hon. member for Vancouver East, Natural Resources; and the hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, Foreign Affairs.

Mr. Alupa Clarke (Beauport—Limoilou, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with my very hon. colleague from Cariboo—Prince George, in northern B.C.

As usual, I want to say hello to the people of Beauport—Limoilou who are watching us live on CPAC. I know that many of them do watch us, because they tell me so when I go door to door. They tell me that they watched me the week before. I want to say hello to all of them.

Today's debate is a very important one, since we are talking about harassment and discrimination in the workplace. Some may be surprised to hear me say this, and I am no expert, but it seems to me that the Canada Labour Code does not apply to employees who work in MPs' offices on Parliament Hill. This means that the code would not apply to me or my employees. This is rather surprising, in 2018.

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I want to quickly touch on last week, which I spent in my riding. You will see why. I hosted two economic round tables. The first round table was for the Beauport business network, which I created a year and a half ago. There are some 50 business owners in this network, who get together once a month to talk about business-related issues and priorities in the riding. On Friday morning, I also held a round table called “Conservatives are listening to Quebecers”. This round table was attended by social, community and business stakeholders, among others.

Yesterday I asked the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour a question. After all, we are talking about workplaces here, with Bill C-65. I asked her if she was aware that we are in a crisis at the moment, especially in Quebec City, but all over Canada, because of the labour shortage. She made a mockery of it, saying that it was proof that the government has created so many jobs in Canada that businesses can no longer find workers. While that may be true from an objective, Socratic and rational standpoint, she is ignoring a real crisis situation that we are in.

I want to say one last thing before I get to the bill. At the two round tables I hosted, every time I visit businesses in my riding, in all my discussions with constituents and in all the correspondence I receive every day, to which I reply in writing every time, people mention the labour shortage. Some businesses have had to shut down in Beauport—Limoulu and others are scaling back operations, so I think it is very sad and upsetting that the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour would make a mockery of my question. The people of Quebec City were not happy to see that on Twitter and Facebook.

Today we are talking about an important bill, the act to amend the Canada Labour Code regarding harassment and violence, the Parliamentary Employment and Staff Relations Act and the Budget Implementation Act, 2017, No. 1. It is clear that Conservatives, New Democrats, Liberals and all Canadians in general support the Liberal government's recently introduced bill. That is certainly not something I say every day, but when it is true, it must be acknowledged. With this important bill, even employees on Parliament Hill will benefit from guidelines and protection to keep them safe from sexual harassment, psychological harassment and every kind of discriminatory behaviour in the workplace.

I can say that this affects us all. It could also affect our family, a cousin, a brother or sister and, in my case, it affects my children. My daughter Victoria is four years old and my son Winston is a year and a half. My daughter started kindergarten a few months ago. It is the first time she has attended school. We definitely do not want her to experience discrimination or harassment. It will inevitably happen because good and evil are part of life, and harassment and discrimination will always exist. That is why it is important to have laws that govern, try to control, eliminate or at least reduce this as much as possible in our society.

I would like to tell you that I have directly experienced discrimination and psychological harassment, but not sexual harassment, thank God. When I was in grade six, I moved from New Brunswick to Quebec. I can see my colleague laughing because he knows that I grew up in New Brunswick. I am from Quebec, but I grew up in New Brunswick. I moved to Quebec when I was in grade

six. Children can be very brutal because they lack empathy and an understanding of the context in which they find themselves.

• (1635)

Kids are often oblivious to the harm they inflict on others. I got beaten up at recess every day for a year, so this is a subject I am not unfamiliar with. In my case, the situation made me stronger. Unfortunately, in other cases, it has ruined lives. What we want to avoid is situations where harassment and discrimination destroy lives. It is terrible to see a life completely destroyed after such an incident.

I want to reiterate that, setting politics aside and speaking from a human perspective, all members and all Canadians should support this bill. However, that does not mean there is no need to propose certain amendments, which I will discuss shortly.

The bill is meant to strengthen the workplace safety framework on Parliament Hill. When I think of all the young Canadians who work on the Hill, it makes me even more motivated to support this bill. The people working on the Hill are often young Canadians in their twenties who are full of hope, ambition and energy. They love politics, and they love Canada. They are proud to work for a minister, the Prime Minister, a shadow cabinet member or an MP. These young people arrive in Parliament full of energy and enthusiasm.

There is no denying that, throughout our country's history, members and ministers have behaved inappropriately or committed inappropriate acts, including sexual harassment, psychological harassment and discrimination.

Many of the young victims were surely brilliant, highly motivated and ambitious individuals. Perhaps they were even future Liberal, Conservative or NDP prime ministers, although unfortunately for them, that will never happen now. These were young people who were here for the right reasons, who were not cynical. A lot of young people in Canada are saying they have no use for politics, and that is unfortunate. Those young people should read books on Canadian history to understand what we are doing here today. Some young people have had the courage to get over their cynicism and come to this place, only to become victims of sexual or psychological harassment or discrimination. Careers have been destroyed in some cases, along with their hope and love for Canada. I find that appalling and very upsetting.

This bill sets out to fill a legal void. I would like to remind everyone that Parliament Hill was the only place where Canada Labour Code provisions on harassment and discrimination did not apply. There was a legal void, and it is important to acknowledge that that void played a part in destroying young Canadians who came here full of energy to help build a strong and thriving country on both national and international stages. Everyone wants a workplace that contributes to their quality of life, one where safety is important. Employees perform better in such workplaces.

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Most of the Conservatives' amendments were accepted. We successfully introduced an amendment to prevent political interference during harassment investigations. The Conservatives played an active role in bringing the bill to this stage. We successfully introduced an amendment to ensure strict timelines for investigations into incidents of harassment. We proposed mandatory sexual harassment training, training that all MPs received. We proposed a mandatory review of the bill after five years because it needs to be reviewed at regular intervals, as my colleague said.

In closing, since this is Small Business Week, I want to say three cheers for business people. I thank the people of Beauport—Limoilou for the work they do every day. I think they are wonderful, and I look forward to seeing them when I go door to door.

• (1640)

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to take what could be the last opportunity to address the importance and significance of the legislation we have been debating for the last couple of days. I believe it is historic legislation that will provide more harmony in our workforce. We are thinking of victims and the ways in which we can prevent having more victims in the future by passing legislation of this nature. I believe it sends a strong message, and it is so encouraging to see the support of all sides of the House, the Senate and the Canadian population as a whole.

I wanted to leave that as a comment. The member can add whatever else he might have to say about the legislation.

Mr. Alupa Clarke: Madam Speaker, I agree with the member that this is an important piece of legislation. It is the reason that we as a caucus made sure that we could adjust or increase the benefits of the bill by working thoughtfully throughout the process during committee hearings. I believe there will be other committee hearings also, and maybe other witnesses who will continue to adjust the bill to make sure that it corresponds with the needs of the Canadian people and our employees in our Hill offices. It is an important piece of legislation that we should all be proud to support.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Karine Trudel (Jonquière, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to know what my colleague thinks about the amendments that were proposed concerning the definition of harassment and violence in Bill C-65, whether in committee or by the Senate. I myself presented amendments in that regard before the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities, but they were rejected.

I would like to know what my colleague thinks about the Liberals' definition and about the fact that they rejected all the Conservative and NDP amendments. Does he think that the definition presented in Bill C-65 is ambiguous or restrictive?

• (1645)

Mr. Alupa Clarke: Madam Speaker, the member for Jonquière has raised a key issue that I should have raised myself since definitions are very important in legislation, particularly in this case.

We agree that the goal is to enhance the security of employees on Parliament Hill, but we also do not want to create an environment where any employee can destroy the life of a parliamentarian because some things, such as sexual harassment, were poorly defined.

I hope that what my colleague from Jonquière said will be examined in committee. We need to seriously consider properly defining the problem that we want to address.

Ms. Karine Trudel: Madam Speaker, in committee, a representative from Teamsters told us that we needed to take mental health into account in Bill C-65 and in the Canada Labour Code. The amendment that I proposed related to that request, but it was rejected.

I already asked a question about this in the House, but I would like to know whether my colleague thinks it is important to talk about mental health and to take it into consideration in the Canada Labour Code.

Mr. Alupa Clarke: Madam Speaker, I have no opinion on that right now, but I invite my colleague to continue her work and express her concerns. Perhaps she could have a meeting with our critic on the matter.

[*English*]

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to stand in the House any time I get a chance. I have listened to this debate for the full amount of time. The amazing thing about the House is that we can, at times, make jabs at those across the way. We are all here to support and represent those who elected us, but at times there are divides on certain issues. I think we all can agree that the time is up, that things need to change, that we need to be united as we move forward and that there is no place for harassment or violence in the workplace.

There is spirited debate all the time. We are not always going to agree on everything, but in listening to debates, we learn valuable things from other colleagues across political lines. I have to say that this debate has been interesting and illuminating at times. I am not a lawyer and have not had a chance to sit in the committee while this work was being done. I am a father of three amazing girls aged 30, 30 and 28, and my son is 24.

We should be doing everything in our power for victims of violence and harassment. I am going to repeat what the parliamentary secretary mentioned at one point yesterday during the debate, that we should always be looking through the lens of the victim, and that is really important. In how we comport ourselves in our everyday service to Canadians, we should be looking through the lens of the grassroots, those who elected us.

I am going to focus my time on where I see some failures. The Conservative Party and caucus are supporting this bill as it stands. In reading the notes, there was some great work done at committee. At committee is probably where we do some of our best work. It is an opportunity for us to work with our colleagues across the way out of the limelight, out of the glare of question period. We do great work in committee at times, and by all appearances, it looks like Bill C-65 is the culmination of some great work.

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My hon. colleague from Jonquière mentioned mental health being left out. She put an amendment forward about it, for whatever reason. I do not know the reason. Again, I cannot talk about the background to that, because I was not part of the committee. However, every member of the House and the people watching know that I am a tireless champion of mental health. Whether it is first responders, veterans, military, victims of violence or first nation communities, we must do everything as Canadians and as leaders within this beautiful country of ours to make sure that those who come forward are believed so they have the confidence that when they do come forward with an allegation of sexual harassment, sexual assault or violence in the workplace, they will to be believed. We have to build an environment where it is conducive for them to come forward, to be believed, and therefore not to be revictimized time and time again throughout the process. Today that is what I want to talk about.

I am a new member of Parliament and I want to bring the House back to the early days of this session of Parliament when something called “elbowgate”. occurred. I was way down on the far end of the House as a new member of Parliament. It was an interesting situation. I saw the Prime Minister walk across the aisle, angrily shouting swear words, barking orders and then physically grabbing someone, the Conservative whip at the time, who has since, unfortunately, passed away.

● (1650)

A melee took place after that. I was shocked. Days after that, parliamentarians were asked what we thought his intent was. I started to talk about *mens rea* yesterday, which in a court of law is translated as a guilty mind. Can it be proven beyond a doubt that the perpetrator of that crime had a guilty mind, that he intended to commit that crime?

In my speech the next day following that event, I offered up how that incident impacted me. I said that it was like asking the guy who got caught shoplifting whether he intended to do it. Everybody is sorry when he or she gets caught. I used an example about my brother who was killed in a drinking and driving accident. I said that the person who would get behind the wheel after having a few drinks probably did not intend to hurt, maim or kill somebody when he or she did that, but how would we know?

As a new member of Parliament, I received some interesting comments, such as I was comparing “elbowgate” to drinking and driving, which was not what I was suggesting. I was merely asking how I would know what the Prime Minister intended when he walked across the way. How was I to know what was in his mind. How was I to know if he truly intended to elbow a colleague. We received an apology that day. I do not know whether it was sincere or not, but I took him at his word.

I also brought up yesterday what happened in the previous Parliament, when the prime minister at the time called another member of Parliament a derogatory term. He stood and offered an apology.

Through the summer, we heard allegations of groping. Whether it was eight months, eight days, 18 days or 18 years ago, we can all agree it happened. The Prime Minister had a bunch of different stories along the way. Unbelievably, he offered this, that everyone

knew that during certain circumstances men and women would experience such circumstances differently. That was not an admission of guilt. If anything, it was a denial. That is what I am talking about today, that was another re-victimization of the victim.

It is no different than the #MeToo movement. When those who have been brought forth, the ones who perpetrated the incidents against the women who bravely came forward, they stand before the courts, before the public and say that they thought it was consensual. I have a problem with that.

As leaders, we must always comport ourselves to a higher standard. Law does not apply willy-nilly to others and those who are in cabinet or those with the highest power can say that it does apply to them.

This is not an attack. Our hon. colleagues are going to say whatever they want to say, but I offer this. Our Prime Minister, who says he is a feminist, missed an incredible opportunity to stand and apologize, and it would have been done.

Bill C-65 is good legislation. We support the bill. However, we have seen it before, where the Liberals put legislation forward to cover up other transgressions within their cabinet. They tell us this that is what they will do now, but they never apologize for what they did before. Somebody else is always to blame.

This has been a great debate. I have learned many new things from all my colleagues, and I say that with true respect. We can be held to a higher account and I trust that through Bill C-65 all of us will be held to a higher account, regardless of the position.

● (1655)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Karine Trudel (Jonquière, NDP): Madam Speaker, as I have said many times, every recognized party in the House has stated their willingness to study Bill C-65 in a non-partisan way. In committee, our three parties worked very hard and very seriously for many hours and we heard from witnesses.

We spent a lot of time talking about training in the workplace, in businesses. Even here in the House of Commons, every member was required to undergo training on harassment, sexual harassment, and bullying.

How does my colleague see Bill C-65 and what could we have done to require businesses to provide training? How could we have helped them have a structure that allows them to have the information they need, but also requires them to provide this training?

● (1700)

[*English*]

Mr. Todd Doherty: Madam Speaker, my hon. colleague has come to this debate in a very respectful way, asking all parties great questions. Whether in the private sector or when I was a coach for a long period of time, we go through harassment training. I believe it should be mandatory. I believe that Bill C-65 has it in there.

Government Orders

I want to touch on one thing. If people are in the private sector, Bill C-65 does nothing for them. It is for government and only 8% of Canadians are employed by the federal sector. If this were truly going to be a historic piece of legislation, it could have been expanded. The government was hoping that the private sector was going to adopt this. If we truly want to be leaders within our country on this subject, we could have put a little more meat to the bill. However, I applaud those who sat around the table, the committee that worked tirelessly and all parties that came up with this piece of legislation. I look forward to seeing what the Senate comes back with.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I know that the Conservatives have spent as much time as possible on this issue trying to attack the Prime Minister specifically rather than address the importance of this piece of legislation. I would like to correct the record of the member in his speech when he questioned the Prime Minister's ability to apologize. In fact, the Prime Minister said, "If I apologized later, then it would be because I sensed that she was not entirely comfortable with the interaction we had." He did do exactly that, but let us not dwell on that issue. Let us focus on the monumental achievement in Canadian history we are seeing here today with the passage of this legislation in order to properly protect victims.

I know that the Conservatives believe in this because they have been talking about it. We know they are going to vote for it. Would the member at least not agree that this is a monumental achievement for Canada in terms of moving forward the issue of gender-based violence?

Mr. Todd Doherty: Madam Speaker, I asked my hon. colleagues across the way, not once but about 12 times, whether they agreed with the Prime Minister in that he felt that with males and females, victims of violence depending on the situation, might experience that situation differently. Similarly, the Prime Minister said, "I'll be blunt," that males and females may experience the very same experience differently.

I asked every one of the members when I was in the House, if, in his or her opinion, victims of harassment and violence could experience such violations differently from their perpetrators. Not one member answered that question truthfully. With that, I will cede the floor.

Mrs. Kelly Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, CPC): Madam Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to rise today to speak to the motion by the government in response to the Senate's amendments to Bill C-65.

I am pleased to see that the government took a judicious view of the amendments, accepting those that strengthened the bill in combatting harassment and violence in federally regulated workplaces, while respectfully declining those that would have caused the bill to be imbalanced or that could be better dealt with through regulations. The government's thoughtful review of the amendments proposed by the other place have ensured that I will be supporting its response.

Recently, I spoke out here in the chamber against violence in our political discourse, stating that it had no place in Canadian society. I feel just as strongly about violence and harassment in our workplaces. They have no place in Canadian society or within

Parliament. We have been working in recent years to move toward addressing these issues with the gravity they deserve.

The Conservative Party has a long and proud tradition of standing up for the rights of victims of crime. Our previous Conservative government passed the Canadian Victims Bill of Rights, ensuring that the most vulnerable Canadians could still receive justice. I am happy to see that Bill C-65 follows along that same path set by the previous government, proposing legislation that seeks to prevent incidents of harassment and violence and ensure additional protections for parliamentary staff.

In some ways, this proposed act would continue the work that I and other members of Parliament undertook in the previous parliament through the all-party subcommittee on a code of conduct for members. In that subcommittee, we struggled with the balance between parliamentary privilege and responsibility, between holding to account and respecting privacy, and between the rights of the accuser and the rights of the accused. Due to my time on that subcommittee, I understand the complexity of these questions.

For most workplaces, these issues are difficult enough. Clearly, Parliament is far from a typical workplace. Our workplace is unique. As such, it can be ripe for abuse, and for far too long, victims of harassment and violence have felt that they had no recourse. The bill before us seeks to rectify this problem and would provide legal recourse and protection to MPs' staff as well as to other victims.

Recent events have made it clear that a rigorous process needs to be in place to ensure that all are treated equally. Our democratic system of laws demands that justice be blindly executed and that all face consequences for their actions, whether that person be the pauper or the prince. Is this currently the case? If I may make an observation about the party across the floor, it does not appear to be.

I fear that the Liberal Party has become the party of virtue signalling. The Liberals will readily say the right words, or more often, the words that sound nice in theory but fail in reality. Their actions do not match their platitudes. They are willing to create a rule and to then apply it unequally, as the need may be. At times, they have gone so far as to ignore their own rules, as was a recent case with the Prime Minister. In that case, there was one set of rules for the members of his caucus when it came to accusations of harassment and another for him. That is far from fair, far from feminist and far from just.

I know that I am not alone in wanting better from those in power. It is for this reason that I welcome the clarity Bill C-65 would bring to this process. No one, no matter who they are, should ever escape the consequences of their actions because of the title they bear.

Bill C-65 would ensure that every victim would be given due process and that the rights of the accused would be protected. Canadians want a fair process free from interference, free of innuendo and blind to power. I am happy to see that all parties worked together to ensure that this would be the case by amending the bill in committee.

Government Orders

●(1705)

Prior to the amendments, as my colleague, the member for Lethbridge, pointed out in her remarks at second reading, the bill granted a great deal of power to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour. Those powers included the ability to choose when and if to begin an investigation.

We could see that this was an issue. Not only must investigations be free from political interference, they must be free from the appearance of political interference. Canadians must be completely confident that justice is served to all, or our justice system, as a whole, loses legitimacy.

Other powers originally granted to the minister included the power to subpoena personal and professional material in the offices of any member of Parliament under investigation. This could have included confidential political documents regarding internal party policy discussions. It is not hard to see how these powers could be misused.

We can all agree that allegations of harassment are sensitive and require the confidence of all participants in the process. Both accuser and accused must believe that the highest priority of the investigation is to find the truth.

The placement of so much power over an investigation in the hands of a political operative weakened the bill greatly. The victim's voice would be drowned out in political debates. I am pleased to see that the committee worked together to address this very serious concern. The power would no longer be in the hands of the minister but would be in the hands of the deputy minister, a non-partisan civil servant. I believe that this change would ensure the integrity of not only the investigation process but of our political process as well.

The bill would apply not only to Parliament Hill but to all federally regulated workplaces. I am pleased to see that the government accepted an amendment from the other place that would ensure that the person to whom complaints would be made would be required to have proper training, knowledge and experience in dealing with harassment. The amendment would give additional strength to the enforcement of the bill, as every federal employee would have an expert to turn to when faced with violence or harassment.

Much of the conversation around this act has focused on the after-effects of harassment and violence, or the allegations thereof. However, I am also pleased to see that an amendment was accepted during the committee stage to add mandatory sexual harassment training. The enactment of this training moves beyond reactive responses to harassment and instead seeks to prevent harassment from taking place in the first place.

I would once again like to congratulate my colleagues in this place and the other place for all the work they have done to ensure that Bill C-65 would be able to combat workplace violence and harassment effectively. I will be supporting the government's response to the amendments, and I look forward to seeing this bill become law.

●(1710)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am delighted to hear the comments from the other side about their support of the bill.

Back in the 80s, my mother worked at Kingston Interval House, in the Kingston area. It is a place where women who are abused can go and seek the assistance and resources they require. I know that this legislation is going to improve upon and strengthen organizations like that. I wonder if the member opposite has similar stories of places she knows that will be given the resources they need to fulfill what we are all trying to accomplish here.

Mrs. Kelly Block: Madam Speaker, we too have organizations within our province, within my riding, that seek to address issues of the violence women experience.

Both this place and the other place have worked together to create a bill that would address this issue with the degree of seriousness it deserves. I believe it will provide confidence to Canadians at large.

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Madam Speaker, I think it is clear that all parties are going to support Bill C-65. It is an important step forward. However, the communication that goes around Bill C-65 is also important when we are sending a message to Canadians that we are taking a leadership role. When it comes to addressing harassment and sexual harassment in the workplace, it is also important that we tell Canadians that there is a level playing field, that every single Canadian, no matter who they are, whether a cabinet minister, a prime minister, or a supervisor in a workplace, will be treated the same as everyone else.

However, what we have right now appears to be "Do as I say, not as I do". The Liberals are not practising what they preach. I would like my colleague to talk about how important it is that we tell Canadians that no matter who they are, they will be treated equally when it comes to sexual harassment in the workplace.

Mrs. Kelly Block: Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for the question as well as for the very good work he has done in his role as our shadow minister and on the committee that was reviewing this bill.

I think it behooves the Parliament of Canada, and us as elected representatives, to ensure that we are setting the bar high, that we are actually reaching that bar, and that we are providing a good example for others when they look to deal with these sorts of issues in their own workplaces. I believe this bill addresses the issue with the degree of seriousness it deserves. I hope we follow through and that our actions will follow our words.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Questions and comments?

Resuming debate?

Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Private Members' Business

(Motion agreed to)

• (1715)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I suspect if you were to canvass the House, you would find unanimous consent to see the clock at 5:30 p.m. so that we can begin private members' hour.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Accordingly, the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business, as listed on today's Order Paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

PENSION BENEFITS STANDARDS ACT

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC) moved that Bill C-405, An Act to amend the Pension Benefits Standards Act, 1985 and the Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act (pension plans), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleagues on the government side. The fact that we can see the clock as 5:30, when it is 5:15, shows we can work together on policy and items from time to time.

Perhaps securing the retirement and pension security of Canadians is another time that we should work together on all sides of this House to bring certainty to hundreds of thousands of Canadians in their retirement. I am proposing, with Bill C-405, a modest proposal, harkening back to Mr. Swift, where we can actually make progress while also respecting other initiatives. Some of my friends in the NDP and other parties have ideas with respect to securing and safeguarding the pensions of Canadians' defined benefit pension plans in circumstances of insolvency. However, we should not just wait for a magic bullet; let us make progress today on an important public policy issue, and that brings us to this bill.

All politicians, whether we have been here generations, like it seems the deputy House leader of the Liberal Party has been, or are new to this Parliament, know the headlines: Nortel Networks, insolvency and liquidations, the leading stock-market company for a time is no longer with us. People are still annuitizing that pension plan and the stranded pensioners. There are Collins & Aikman and Livent. Sears has been in the headlines, where pensioners across the country are going to be facing less in retirement. They thought they had worked hard for that secured defined benefit pension, and they are finding that, in the circumstances of insolvency, they are not.

We have also seen some circumstances where there has been success in the restructuring of companies in bankruptcy or in insolvency proceedings, and they restructure outside the other end with a variety of degrees of success. We have seen it in multiple instances in Ontario with many companies. They include Stelco, of course; and Algoma, which is emerging from CCAA protection in the coming weeks. That has appeared to preserve 2,700 jobs. We saw

that with Abitibi, which is now Resolute Forest Products and doing very well.

I worked on that first-hand, as a brand new articling student and lawyer in the CCAA restructuring of Air Canada. Thousands of jobs and an important service for our country were preserved because the insolvency procedure worked and the pension plan that was at risk is healthy now. People retained their jobs.

Therefore, the goal for anyone, in politics and in advocacy outside of here, should always be to maintain these businesses as a going concern. That helps the employees now; that helps the retirees now and in the future; and it is by working together to make sure it is restructured. We do not see thousands of people laid off and pensioners left stranded.

This is an area where one of the elements of Bill C-405 will make us work more collaboratively with the provinces and territories, and highlight this issue with Canadians and regulators like security commissions because there is a lot they can do. We have seen that in the Sears case, where special dividends squandered goodwill and capital that could have been used to make up shortfalls in the pension. This should be an all-hands-on-deck approach, not an approach where I am not going to support any bill unless it is my bill. Bill C-405 would make progress for Canadian pensioners, and that is why we should support it.

Many Canadians may not be familiar with many of the cases I cited. I worked on some insolvencies, as a lawyer. This is also a good time to publicly educate on what restructuring is meant to do. Large companies, greater than \$5 million in revenues, will generally proceed with the Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act, CCAA, where they will have a plan of arrangement and all creditors will have to have a court-monitored plan to restructure the company. Sometimes there is debtor-in-possession financing, meaning that a new company coming in to try to help the restructuring will take precedence on receiving some of the capital back if the restructuring is not successful.

However, as I said, the goal should always be restructuring. We should have a goal of the Air Canada scenario that I saw as a young lawyer: a successful restructuring, a strong company now, no massive layoffs of employees, secured benefits and a pension that is healthy now. The going concern of the company should be our goal, because then we still have an employer contributing to a pension, and any shortfalls can be made up.

• (1720)

With the Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act, that is for smaller companies not eligible for CCAA, where they will make a proposal in bankruptcy.

Private Members' Business

The issue that brought me to bring my first private member's bill, Bill C-405 relates to one of the earliest concerns I had as a brand new member of Parliament in Durham. General Motors salaried employees in a group called GENMO, Mike Powell and Brian Rutherford, came in to see me, and I saw the distress caused. The near insolvency of General Motors led many pensioners to see that their pension was only funded to an amount in the 70% range, due to changes made in the Ontario government years before. They were facing many decades, potentially, in retirement, likely receiving 20% to 30% less.

Right now, pension administrators, when there is an insolvency that is not successful, have to annuitize the pension. What they do is they take what is left, and they have to then use a large amount of those resources to buy an annuity to provide a steady stream of payments to those stranded pensioners. If they already have 75% of their value, in an underfunded pension, and they have to annuitize and lose another 10% or 15%, they are then going to be in a circumstance where they could be receiving 60% of what they thought they would have from their defined benefit pension in retirement. That should not be acceptable.

I am happy to say the key thrust of Bill C-405 is we should modernize legislation to make sure that pensions, as much as possible, can be kept as a going concern, so that they can still be growing, so that they can have the benefit of the pooling of resources and large numbers of people within the plan. That is the aggregating benefit. That is the first principle of this bill that would be changed, the ability for pension administrators to preserve and enhance that fund.

There are other successful pensions that would perhaps like to have assets transferred over, so that they would have a fund within a successful, well-managed fund, and they would have the benefit of pooling of resources, pooling of numbers and a potential upside.

Rather than, right away, knowing, in an insolvency situation, they are going to annuitize and everyone is going to get less than what they are already going to get under an underfunded plan, this would allow for a potential upside. If the pension plan it transfers into has success, these pensioners would have success. It will secure and enhance.

The second thing it will do is it will bring more fairness to this. We have seen the headlines that drive pensioners crazy, where they see massive executive contracts to retain executives in the restructuring. We just have to look at the headlines to see this. We have seen it with Sears, Target and others. These contracts for executives are often massively larger than all the employees. It is squandering the funds in what are called key employee retention plans.

This bill will provide much more ability for pensioners and the court to restrict those excessive key executive retention plan payments, bringing more fairness to the process for the average worker, to try to bring back some confidence in the process for these Canadians.

The third thing it will establish is a national reporting mechanism, working with the chief actuary of Canada, the provinces, the territories and security regulators, making sure that more Canadians

know how many pension plans are in an underfunded situation and what risks there are to thousands of Canadians in their retirement.

This is a particularly acute issue in southern Ontario where there is a number of older defined benefit plans of companies reaching financial distress. It is not just losing the jobs of the employees, it is often much larger numbers of retirees within the greater Toronto and Hamilton area in particular. This will educate and get collaboration. This will preserve their funds. This will bring fairness to executive retention programs.

As I said, we want some of the key people to restructure that company, because the goal should be to maintain that company as a going concern, where the employees are safeguarded, creditors will agree to working with them to get more in the long run and pensions will be secured because the pension plan will continue to be paid into. There can even be a plan to put it back into a balanced state.

● (1725)

Therefore, there is nothing in Bill C-405 that would conflict with the super-priority demands of unions and other groups. There is nothing in Bill C-405 that would be a step back. It is steady progress down the field. Let us make progress for tens of thousands of Canadians while advancing other bills that some people might want, but that might require a Hail Mary pass that I do not think will come.

Why is it important to educate Canadians? Only 40% of Canadians have a pension. The good thing is that despite the real risks to a lot of the old traditionally defined benefit pension plans after the global recession in 2008-09, things are getting better. According to last year's report from the Financial Services Commission of Ontario, there has been a decrease in the number of underfunded defined benefit plans, mainly in Ontario. In one year alone, from 2016 to 2017, the percentage of underfunded plans went from 30% to just 22%. Even better, the projected mean solvency of the average plan in Ontario went up from 91% to 96%.

I remind people that the time and strategy of these plans and making sure that employees are more a part of it are all critical. As one expert reminded me, the year before Nortel's insolvency, their pension plan was almost fully funded, in the high nineties in percentage wise. However, market conditions and the plan's inability to change quickly, as well as the lack of the success of the restructuring, left pensioners holding the bag. That is why we are here with Bill C-405. As one expert told me repeatedly, "You don't wind up a plan at the worst possible time". In fact, many families in the Ottawa region where we sit would know that they are still providing an annuity for the Nortel pension plan. They are still annuitizing that plan. They are now locking in a lower rate for those people for good. Bill C-405 would allow the administrators more options for preserving the resources and for upside growth.

Thus, if there is the potential for people to have better retirement outcomes and they are facing these risks from a defined benefit plan, why would we not all agree on it? We can all agree that we 15 minutes ahead of time in the House here now. We are just coming up to 5:30. Why can we not agree to make steady progress on an issue that we are all receiving emails about now?

Private Members' Business

When the former Conservative government enhanced the wage earner protection plan, protecting more of the earnings of current employees in the context of an insolvency, the Senate committee that was used largely to consult on insolvency and bankruptcy stated directly that the better approach was not to go to super priority. That is why the former Conservative government did not succeed. That is why the Liberal government is not going to do it. People are going to wait for a magic bullet that is never coming, so Bill C-405 will make progress.

Here is what the Senate committee report said about super priority in the case of an insolvent defined benefit plan. It stated:

The Committee believes that granting the pension protection sought by some of the witnesses would be sufficiently unfair to other stakeholders that we cannot recommend the changes suggested. For example, we feel that super priority status could unnecessarily reduce the moneys available for distribution to creditors. In turn, credit availability and the cost of credit could be negatively affected, and all those seeking credit in Canada would be disadvantaged.

We are in Small Business Week. Higher credit costs impact every business, whether or not they have a pension for their employees or are the small or medium-sized businesses we are celebrating today. With higher costs of credit and fewer companies able to restructure, that is not sound public policy.

As I said, Bill C-405 does not preclude our having a debate on super priority. When it was looked at carefully 10 years ago, it was clear that if it were kept as a benchmark and a person wanted to keep that company as a going concern for the employees for its economic activity and for the safety and security of the pension, restructuring then has to be the option. Allowing companies to get debtor and possession financing and allowing them to restructure under CCAA is good for job protection.

• (1730)

I want to thank the many people I consulted in respect of Bill C-405, because I learned, as a parliamentarian, a lot about this issue. I am very proud to have worked with my friend Andrea Boctor, at Stikeman Elliott. I met her when we were working on the insolvency of Air Canada. She is one of the leaders in the field. I already mentioned Mike Powell and Brian Rutherford—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The member will have an opportunity to maybe add some more to his speech through the questions and comments.

Questions and comments, the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development.

Mr. David Lametti (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I certainly understand the need for flexibility in the CCAA restructuring process, so I commend the member for that. My concern is that perhaps he would be giving too much power to the administrator, under the circumstances, to perhaps do things to the detriment of workers and people who are beneficiaries of the plan. It seems to me that the standard in his particular case, the benchmark of one-third, may be too low. Maybe the member could comment on that.

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate my friend's comments. Certainly, doing nothing is failing Canadians. That is part of the reason for this debate.

Having more consultations on the potential for some super-priority solution in the future sounds good, but when we see the negative impact it has on the economy, there are actually more negatives. Sometimes the cure could be worse than the ailment, in terms of the inability of small companies to access credit.

However, he raised a good point. We could have an object standard of no more than one-third, which perhaps might be a good way to use it. I remember that even Jacob Ziegel, the famous insolvency professor, commented in the Senate round that everyone agrees that the priority needs to be restructuring and keeping the company and the pension plan a going concern. That should be the priority. That is why CCAA should be the preference.

In terms of the pension administration, we need to modernize that. Right now, the only option these administrators have is to annuitize the remaining funds. That will take a fund that could be worth 75% of what the people get, and the inefficiency of restructuring that at the worst time could guarantee them even less. Why we would not give them more options, provided the employees have a direct say? We might quibble over how many employees are required to reach a threshold for making a change or transferring assets, but the status quo is clearly not working.

Mr. Scott Duvall (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my colleague mentioned fairness, and that is what he is trying to bring here. Can you explain to me where the fairness is after a person works for 35 years, defers wages into a pension plan, and then all of a sudden, when the company is in financial distress, it goes under CCAA, and the first thing they do is look for concessions and give themselves bonuses? At the same time, if it liquidates, the employees are at the bottom of the list. This is money that was actually given to the company to make sure that their investment was there. The company guaranteed it. That was the agreement, and all of a sudden, this inadequate law we have allows them to go onto the bottom of the list.

• (1735)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): I want to remind the honourable members to place questions and answers through the Speaker, not directly to the other honourable members.

The hon. member for Durham.

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Mr. Speaker, this is why I am saying that Bill C-405 should not preclude that member or other members he has spoken to from advancing super-priority.

This would make steady progress. Let us move the ball down the field 12 yards. We could still throw for even more. However, when we know that there would be a benefit from these changes, we should all get behind it and educate people.

Private Members' Business

I would remind the member that the Indalex decision showed, with respect to the way he is describing pensions, that they are viewed more as a benefit than as deferred wages. This is still being debated and litigated, but the Senate committee I cited earlier, and the member knows this, also said the following: “As we noted earlier, insolvency—at its essence—is characterized by insufficient assets to satisfy everyone, and choices must be made.”

The key choice is to keep the company a going concern for the well-being of workers and pensioners. We are only talking about situations where that cannot be done. Most experts have agreed that super-priority will actually lead more companies to liquidate and not restructure. We could debate that, and that is what today is for, but if that was going to happen with super-priority, with less access to credit for distressed companies, there would be no Algoma. There would be no Stelco.

As I said in my remarks, Algoma is on the precipice now of emerging from CCAA. There are 2,100 jobs in Sault Ste. Marie. Even Sault Ste. Marie itself is a creditor. Let us work together to preserve those jobs. Bill C-405 is a way all parties could come together to make progress.

[Translation]

Mr. David Lametti (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, thank you for allowing me to join my colleagues in discussing private member's Bill C-405.

[English]

My hon. colleague mentioned Professor Jacob Ziegel at the University of Toronto. I would like to mention another one of his colleagues, having attended a number of his consumer and corporate law workshops over the years. My first law job was working on a pension task force in the Province of Ontario for Professor Martin Friedland, a colleague of Jake Ziegel. In that context, I got to know a lot about pensions and to know Cliff Pilkey very well. Here I would note that in addition to his prowess on pensions, he could also play a pretty mean game of pool.

We recognize as a government that there are difficulties with insolvencies and we are committed to getting feedback from pensioners, workers, companies, and lenders in order to move forward with a whole-of-government evidence-based approach to enhancing retirement security for all Canadians.

To put it briefly, the problem with a number of these ideas is that they attack one little point in a complex equilibrium, when in a defined pension plan a benefit is being promised in the future based on actuarial assumptions now. Therefore, there are a number of different challenges there, and merely focusing on one little part of the picture will not necessarily lead to a just or equitable result.

[Translation]

Bill C-405 would amend federal legislation dealing with pensions and insolvency. Other members will be addressing pension matters, and therefore I will instead focus on issues regarding insolvency and corporate restructuring.

Bill C-405 amends the Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act, the CCAA, in order to prohibit approval by the courts of key

employee retention plans, known as KERPs, which give incentives to some employees and directors so they will continue to work for an insolvent company, unless certain conditions are met, including: the employee retained must be vital to the company and the employee must have received an offer from a competitor. There will be a ceiling on any incentive offered.

Additionally, for companies with underfunded pensions, in order for a KERP to be approved by the courts, the bill would require that an agreement be reached by the company and the plan administrator to pay the unpaid pension contributions, which correspond to the normal payments that the company must regularly make to the pension fund.

● (1740)

[English]

The CCAA is an important marketplace law that supports the Canadian economy in a number of ways. The CCAA promotes the restructuring of financially distressed businesses over their liquidation where possible. This is a preferable outcome. While insolvency is an unfortunate fact in modern economies, a successful company restructuring can help minimize the negative impacts on the many affected parties, preserve company value, maintain jobs and supplier relationships, and allow companies to continue funding pensions and benefits. Therefore, in most cases, keeping the company viable over the long term is the best result for everyone, including pensioners.

Indeed, the CCAA has worked well, helping to prevent the failure of important companies, such as Air Canada, AbitibiBowater, and Stelco, which continue to operate and provide good jobs.

Where a viable restructuring plan is not possible, the CCAA provides a framework to maximize the value of company assets for equitable distribution to creditors and the preservation of jobs and business value in a timely, efficient and impartial manner, using a process that is transparent and predictable.

[Translation]

To address the issue of KERPs, it is useful to outline exactly how the CCAA works. This legislation allows companies in financial difficulty with debt of more than \$5 million to negotiate a restructuring agreement with creditors by means of a process that has been tested, is well thought out, is set out in legislation and is part of established practices.

Private Members' Business

Procedurally, the courts oversee any restructuring carried out in accordance with the CCAA. This gives the courts considerable flexibility in dealing with particular cases and in taking action to facilitate negotiations and preserve the value of a company. All of this is vital to ensuring that the process is fair and is in the best interests of the public.

The CCAA provides for a stay of proceedings to prevent creditors from taking legal action and to allow the company to continue operating, paying its employees and providing services. In many cases, the company covers the legal fees for pensioners and other vulnerable groups to ensure that they are able to participate meaningfully in the negotiations.

Under the CCAA, creditors and the company may agree on a restructuring plan, but this plan must be voted on by creditors and then approved by the courts. As a result, we must look at the possibility of changing how KERPs are handled in the event of insolvency. We must remember that the CCAA does not expressly authorize the approval of KERPs.

The courts have inherent jurisdiction over case management and therefore have authority over the creation of KERPs. The courts have developed tests to determine whether a KERP would help make a restructuring successful.

The bill would reduce judicial discretion over the approval of key employee retention plans, which raises a number of problems.

First, given their precarious financial position, some companies might have a hard time retaining the necessary key employees to guide them in the process. A KERP could prevent a company from losing its employees and increase the chances of achieving a successful restructuring.

Second, when approving offers to employees, the courts look at whether the knowledge and skills of the retained employees are easily replaceable, whether the KERP has been approved by the court-appointed comptroller and whether key employees consider other options in the absence of a KERP.

When weighing these factors, the court will seek to strike a fair balance between competing interests and the creation of conditions conducive to a successful restructuring. It is preferable that this flexibility remain in the hands of the courts to ensure that it is used judiciously.

• (1745)

[*English*]

Third, we must also keep in mind the complexity of corporate restructuring. Indeed, no two cases are exactly alike. A great strength of the CCAA is its flexibility to allow parties to make a deal that suits their circumstances and interests. This flexibility is properly circumscribed by court supervision and the exercise of judicial discretion to balance competing interests in the proceeding. We must therefore consider whether restricting the flexibility of courts to act would support the important goal of promoting restructuring where possible.

Fourth, as described, the CCAA already provides a court-supervised process through which creditors may protect their interests during the proceedings. Creditors and other stakeholders,

including employees and pensioners, may make representations to the court as to whether a KERP is appropriate in the circumstances.

Finally, while the bill links KERP approval to the payment of unremitted pension contributions, I note that the CCAA already provides an effective super-priority for these payments before a restructuring plan can be approved, which means they would be paid ahead of payments to key employees.

In sum, these proposed changes reduce the flexibility of courts based on particular situations and facts. These current flexibilities help to achieve the best outcome for the company and pensioners and they might conflict with important policy objectives.

Mr. Scott Duvall (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to the private member's bill, Bill C-405, an act to amend the Pension Benefits Standards Act, 1985 and the Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act, pension plans, sponsored by the member for Oshawa. I want to thank the hon. member for acknowledging the bankruptcy and pension benefits act needs to be changed. However, this is the only thanks I will be giving him on this issue.

Over the last 10 years, we have seen an increased focus in the province with Canada's inadequate bankruptcy and insolvency laws. The cases of Nortel, Wabush Mines, Stelco and, most recently, Sears have brought into national focus the fact that workers at large companies that go bankrupt are offered very little protection from investors and banks. Sometimes international hedge fund operators make out like bandits.

As a solution to this problem to fix Canada's inadequate bankruptcy and insolvency laws, the measures outlined in the bill are in complete opposition to NDP proposals, policies, initiatives and values. The bill helps to make clear that the approach favoured by the Conservatives and ironically by the Liberal government is to protect the interests of large business and their investors, while throwing Canadian workers under the bus.

There are presently four private members' bills in Parliament that address the legislative crisis and present solutions for fixing those problems. Three are in favour of increasing protection for workers and retirees in the Canadian public. The bill stands alone as it focuses on protecting and increasing the advantages enjoyed by big business, the financial sector and well-off company executives.

Chris Roberts, policy director for the Canadian Labour Congress, sums it up neatly when he says, "Right now a number of private member bills in the House and Senate are trying to honour the pension promises made to workers and retirees. Bill C-405 is not one of these. This bill would make it easier for employers to walk away from their obligation, with the consent of only a minority of beneficiaries. This legislation goes in precisely the wrong direction."

Private Members' Business

Many Canadian companies use our inadequate bankruptcy laws to effectively gain concessions from their employees and escape responsibility for often huge pension deficits they themselves have created. Workers are then left with the threat of reduced pension and health care benefits.

The bill would make it easier for employers to manipulate laws by allowing those with existing defined benefit pension plans to convert those plans to target benefit or defined contribution plans, which would transfer all the risk onto the employees. Employers would let off the hook and allowed to walk away from their responsibility to provide secure retirement benefits to their employees.

Workplace pensions are deferred wages that employees agree to put aside until their retirement. This is critical to understand. Allowing companies to walk away with these funds is theft, pure and simple. The measures in the bill are in stark opposition to the approach proposed by the NDP to fix Canada's flawed bankruptcy and insolvency laws that would actually protect the pensions and benefits of Canadian workers and retirees.

My bill, Bill C-384, Liberal Senator Art Eggleton's bill, Bill S-253, and the Bloc's bill, Bill C-372 present solutions that would actually protect the pension funds of Canadian workers and retirees when a large Canadian company goes bankrupt. Chief among the proposals presented in the two bills are measures to heighten the priority of paying back deficits to workers' pension funds to the same level as secured creditors. Currently those payments are only considered at the same level as unsecured creditors who often only receive pennies on the dollar for any monies they are owed.

One of the most offensive things that happens during the bankruptcy proceedings is that executives give themselves huge bonuses. The very people who ran the company into the ground get big rewards and it is done because the law allows it to happen.

Nortel executives got over \$200 million in bonuses. Sears executives got \$9.2 million. Stelco executives got \$1.25 million. When I tell that to people at the town halls I have been doing when I go across the country, people ask me if I am kidding them. I have to tell them that I am not, that this really happens because the law allows it to happen.

• (1750)

Canadians know this is not right and they are demanding that the laws be changed. Remember that this all happens while workers and retirees get their benefits cut off, employees lose vacation, severance and termination pay, and small suppliers get stiffed on money they are owed.

The proposals in this bill dealing with executive compensation would do nothing to prevent the excessive rewards handed out during bankruptcy proceedings. The many executives who are paid largely through stock options and bonuses would not be affected by the new rules laid out in this bill. Executive bonuses during bankruptcy proceedings should be outlawed, pure and simple. Why should executives get bonuses to begin with when workers are, at the same time, being asked to make concessions? This is so obvious to the majority of working Canadians and it is time that we change the laws to make this happen.

It is also time for the government to get serious about changing the laws it knows are hurting workers and retirees and are threatening the retirement security of Canadian seniors. This is not a new issue. The problem has been happening for decades. The Liberal Party even went so far as to pass a resolution at its last policy convention calling on its own government to provide pension security.

In 2009, at the height of the Nortel mess, the leader of the Liberal Party stood outside this building and told workers that he would do everything he could to make sure this kind of problem did not happen again, and during the 2015 election campaign, the current Prime Minister came to my city of Hamilton and told workers that he would use every tool in the tool box to change the laws and fix the problem. The Liberals did not tell the truth. They did not live up to their promises.

The disconnect between the government and the needs of Canadian workers is hard to understand. The innovation minister tells workers that he cares, but does nothing; the seniors minister tells Canadians she wants to come up with the right solution, but then refuses to consult anyone; and the Prime Minister has a "let them eat cake" moment and tells the Sears pensioners, who are losing 30% of their pensions, that they can rely on the CPP and EI. They should be ashamed of themselves and the Conservatives should be embarrassed and ashamed to offer legislation that would further threaten the well-being of Canadian workers and retirees.

We were elected to the House to protect Canadians, not to allow their pensions to be stolen because of inadequate legislation. It is in our interest to prioritize the interests of Canadians when it comes to these bankruptcy proceedings to ensure that the company pays, not the pensioner and not the Canadian taxpayer. This bill would not do that, which is why the NDP cannot support Bill C-405.

• (1755)

Mr. Blake Richards (Banff—Airdrie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, imagine someone who has worked for 30 some years and has contributed to their workplace pension from every paycheque during that time. Obviously, that plan would be their plan for their golden years. It is a pension that would help pay for some of their expenses and perhaps even give them a chance to enjoy a vacation or a few luxuries they perhaps did not have when they were a little younger. What happens if a year or two before retirement their company goes bankrupt? What happens when their company can no longer pay out the pension the person has been counting on for decades? Well, pensioners in Canada have seen this happen before. We saw it with Nortel, and recently with Sears. Those are two examples that come to mind.

Private Members' Business

The issue of pension shortfalls has certainly shaken Canadians' confidence in the sustainability of defined benefit pension plans. We cannot blame them. This is a nightmare that is facing many of these workers, and it is a long one. They probably have a lot of sleepless nights and spend a lot of time worrying how it will all work out in the end. They are not sure. They are wondering if it will force them to look at shelving their retirement plans and maybe returning to work for a long period of time, well past what they had anticipated. They may be thinking they should have perhaps saved a little more money for their retirement, but they thought they had this pension plan to rely upon. They wonder what they are going to do now. They wonder what happened to all the money they had invested into the pension plan. Those are the kinds of questions going through their heads.

That is why I am pleased to stand here today in support of my colleague, the member for Durham and his bill, Bill C-405. It addresses these concerns in a balanced sort of way.

I want to clear up some of the misconceptions we just heard regarding the legislation, because the bill would really aim to create peace of mind through flexibility, by making underfunded pension plans more nimble so that more benefits for pensioners could be recovered in these kinds of situations, in a balanced way.

The bill would also improve accountability and transparency by creating a more robust requirement for government agencies to report to Parliament and Canadians. Companies facing bankruptcy would also be prevented from exploiting loopholes or abusing certain rules that would allow for payouts to executives while the pensions are underfunded. Therefore, there is a delicate balance that needs to be achieved between addressing the concerns of sustainability of defined benefit pensions and not adversely affecting other creditors, the bottom lines of companies, etc. Both of those are important, and I believe that Bill C-405 seeks to address those issues in a balanced way.

It goes without saying that the best way to ensure the health of pensions and ensure retirement security for Canadian workers would be to keep companies in business. That is the ideal. It means we have to make sure we create a competitive field for companies to succeed. It means always looking at ways to lower taxes, which is obviously the opposite of what we have seen from the Liberal government, whether payroll taxes, carbon taxes, removal of tax credits, or going after small business owners by branding them as tax cheats and trying to gain more revenue out of them that way.

All of these things are the opposite of what we should be seeking to do as a government. It should be trying to make the opportunities easier for our job creators by lowering taxes and ensuring we are not putting up unnecessary roadblocks and barriers to their success. It certainly means not bringing in a job-killing carbon tax that would hurt Canadians' chances of getting a job, or the ability of businesses to compete and grow and therefore create more jobs.

However, I do not want to get too far down the line of the failures of the Liberal government, because we could talk for hours about that, so I will just move back a little more toward this unfortunate reality.

● (1800)

Despite the efforts made to ensure that we are creating a level playing field and giving opportunities to businesses to be competitive and to be able to succeed and to create opportunities and jobs, sometimes companies will fail. Hard-working, loyal employees can be left in the dark in those situations. They can be unsure about the future of their pensions.

This bill would amend the Pension Benefits Standards Act of 1985 to authorize the administrator of a pension plan to amend an underfunded pension plan in certain situations, and to provide for the tabling of an annual report on the solvency of pension plans. Again, that is the transparency we are talking about.

The bill would also amend the Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act to add limitations on orders made to cover certain costs. Now, members might be asking how the bill would do that. Let me try to provide some answers.

The bill would add flexibility to the refinancing, replacement or amendment of terminated pension plans with unfunded liabilities, so that administrators can obtain the highest payments possible. That flexibility obviously would give them the ability to try to make sure that the best possible arrangement can be worked out.

It would also limit the degree to which large bonuses and pensions could be given to executives while pensions for regular workers go underfunded. We have all seen the headlines, like the Global News story from July 2017 that "Sears managers, executives get \$9.2M in bonuses while thousands laid off".

Obviously we have seen headlines like that, and it frustrates and angers anyone who sees them, other than maybe those people who were getting the bonuses, but that is a pretty small number of Canadians. We need to be focused on the workers, the people who are hearing about being laid off. It certainly is not fair to them. It is something that needs to be addressed; there is no doubt about that.

Previous arrangements with super priority, I do not think are an option. These arrangements create issues in the credit and bond markets that can lead to more insolvency, which obviously does not help anyone.

This week is Small Business Week when we think about small businesses. Many times, some of those other creditors can be small businesses. Because they are small, sometimes when they are dealing with a large company, it can be their only, or one of their only, customers. When small business owners are not able to get paid for the services or goods they are providing those businesses, it could drive some of those small businesses out of work. That means their families and employees would lose out. We have to be conscious of that as well. We need a plan that creates security and transparency for Canadians.

Private Members' Business

Another example in this area was Wabush Mines, which shut down in 2014. Their workers saw their pensions slashed by 21% to 25%, because their plan was not fully funded. Then the health benefits for 2,400 retirees were cut as well. Some of those workers saw cuts of more than \$1,000 a month to their pensions. They worked hard for their benefits, and they were left with a lot less than they had planned for. In this case, there was no priority for pensions during the restructuring proceeding, and the pensions were underfunded. Proceedings took place and the pensions ended up being wound up after liquidation. That process meant that the fixed rate annuity then only paid the pensioners a small fraction of the total amount they had originally agreed to. Obviously, that is something we want to try to address.

That is what this bill does. It would provide greater flexibility for the administrator in situations like that to manage the funds of an underfunded pension at its windup. That would really help. It is something that could have been done already if this bill had been in place. They could have purchased a variable annuity or could have created a group plan that would utilize economies of scale and help pool the risk. Both of those options would have produced higher returns for those pensioners over time. That is what they would have ended up with under this bill.

We can look at other cases, such as Nortel, Sears, Target and others. People were caught by surprise that the pensions were underfunded. The transparency and accountability that Bill C-405 would help in that regard. At the very least, there would obviously be greater transparency and accountability, but there would also be the flexibility and nimbleness needed to address these issues.

• (1805)

I certainly hope all members of the House will choose to support a bill that would be able to address those issues for workers in a balanced kind of way so we can give the nimbleness and flexibility needed.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is always a pleasure to rise and share some thoughts and opinions on what is before the House.

This afternoon, we are debating Bill C-405. It is somewhat interesting to note that the legislation is coming from an individual who I would classify as a fairly influential member of the official opposition. For a number of years, I sat on the opposition benches and the member sat on the government benches both as a backbencher and in cabinet.

Back then I did get the chance to talk about pensions on a number of occasions. I would have thought the member, who has proposed this legislation, would have had a bit more clout back then to have brought forward some of the changes he has proposed today. This issue is not new. It has been around for many years.

I sympathize with workers who find themselves in the difficult position of possibly facing bankruptcy, or a realignment of companies, or trying to manage their financial affairs. This will have a profound impact on them and their pensions.

I listened to my NDP friend who I thought was a little unfair in his criticism toward the government. He tried to give a false impression

to Canadians. Our government has been very progressive with respect to dealing with pension-related issues and maybe that is a good way for me to start off tonight.

The Prime Minister went to Hamilton and to many different locations to talk about pension issues. I have also talked about this. We realize just how important pensions are to Canadians.

A number of years ago, when I was a MLA, I was walking along a picket line with some of my brothers within the union movement in Manitoba. I want to refer to the private sector in particular. I was shocked that people would work for decades and receive very little pension. What came to mind was the need for a national government to take the issues of pension and pension security seriously.

Canadians are dependent on the private sector to continue to cultivate and grow the economy with incentives at times from government, and it has seen relative success over the last couple of years.

When I came to Ottawa in 2010, this was an important issue for me. In my years in opposition I would try to hold the government of the day accountable for some of its decisions and lack of action on this important file. The Harper government did not step up at all. Let me give a few examples.

Many of us who were around at the time will recall when former prime minister Stephen Harper was somewhere in Europe and announced that his government would increase the age of retirement to 67 from 65. He was not even in the country. I suspect I might have been the first member in the House of Commons to talk about that, even though it was not substantiated.

• (1810)

We have a Prime Minister who made a commitment when he was the leader of the third party inside the chamber that the Liberals would fix that issue, because the Conservatives, in making that decision, were putting the livelihoods of many thousands of seniors at great risk as they started to edge toward retirement. Therefore, one of the first actions we took as a government was to reduce the age from 67 to 65 for OAS recipients, and that applied to everyone.

However, not wanting to settle for just that, there were a number of other initiatives that were taken. How many times have I had the good fortune to be able to stand inside this House in the last couple of years and talk about this government, led by our Prime Minister, and our approach to the guaranteed income supplement? Imagine the poorest of our seniors in every region of the country getting a substantial increase because of that policy change.

Then we talked about Sears and the many other employees, the hardships and anxiety that had been caused, and those who are in the workforce today who want to ensure they have pensionable monies going forward. Our government will do what it can with respect to companies like Sears. We are very sympathetic to that.

I truly believe that where there is progress to be made we will make that progress. A good demonstration of that is the CPP. For years we had a federal government that closed its eyes to it, and when we—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The hon. member for Hamilton Mountain is rising on a point of order.

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Mr. Scott Duvall: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. We are here to talk about Bill C-405 with respect to pension theft. What the hon. member is doing over there is talking about anything except that. I am wondering if he could get back on track, never mind about all the stuff the Liberals had done before, and talk about what they are going to do today.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): I will remind hon. members that I have listened to a number of speeches in the House and members often bring in stories or take a roundabout way of getting to a point. Therefore, I will leave it with the hon. parliamentary secretary. I am sure he will bring it back to where it belongs. He has about a minute and a half left, so I will let him wrap things up.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, it is unfortunate the member did not stand up when we were talking about a price on pollution.

This is absolutely relevant. The workers from Sears, and others, are going to have protection going forward with respect to the CPP and what the government is doing on that particular file. We have negotiated an agreement with the different provinces and stakeholders so that workers in every region of our country will have more when it comes time for retirement.

With respect to the issue relating specifically to the legislation, we have had a parliamentary secretary address the specifics of it. We have indicated we have a government that is very sensitive to it and is following the file. It is not one department but a number of departments that are engaged with it.

We recognize that the legislation was brought forward in a private member's piece and it will ultimately come to a vote. I understand the New Democrats are going to be voting against the legislation because they have some preferred legislation that they would like to see.

At the end of the day we need to look at the bigger picture. I believe that we have a government that has demonstrated very clearly that it is concerned about pensions. I gave several examples of that. That caring attitude will continue even when it comes to the issues that have been raised today with respect to businesses restructuring and bankruptcy.

• (1815)

[*Translation*]

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

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

[*Translation*]

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Côte-de-Beauport—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as always, I am honoured to participate in the adjournment debate. I know that close to 2.2 million people are tuning in tonight.

Before the G7 summit began, I asked questions about what was going to happen, because the people of Beauport—Côte-de-Beauport—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix were calling me for information. The G7 summit took place, and we could say that Charlevoix will go down in history for two reasons: the security and the photos.

First, security was so tight that some of our businesses are still having trouble staying afloat. Second, the summit resulted in some great photos. Obviously, we all know that the Prime Minister loves posing for photos. Honestly, it put Charlevoix on the map.

Some businesses in my riding did manage to benefit from the G7 summit. In particular, I am thinking of Manoir Charlevoix and Bistro Chez Truchon, which hosted the Prime Minister's family and his royal guests.

Baie-Saint-Paul is located about 30 minutes from La Malbaie. Security was so tight that tourists could not visit Charlevoix.

Restaurant owners were upset because their revenue was way down. The acts of vandalism everyone expected never happened, but even so, a number of Quebec City businesses experienced major financial losses during the G7 summit. The authorities expected demonstrations, so streets downtown and in Baie-Saint-Paul were deserted.

Business owners in Baie-Saint-Paul are now looking for compensation, and they are threatening to sue Ottawa. I told them they could not do it alone and should get together to tally their losses. I will always stand by the people of Charlevoix. I congratulate those who struck gold at the G7 summit, but I also speak on behalf of those who got nothing, so I will fight for them.

What is the status of compensation for the G7 summit?

Mr. Matt DeCoursey (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to remind the House what a tremendous success the G7 summit in Charlevoix was. During the summit, we were able to see just how proud the people of Charlevoix were to welcome representatives from around the world and show them how beautiful their region is and how it is a source of Canadian pride.

Our government actively communicated with local representatives before this global event. In May, the Prime Minister went to Charlevoix to meet with the community and local leaders.

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I would also like to add that this summit generated economic spinoffs for the region that will continue to be felt long after this world event. For example, the investments we made in local infrastructure will directly benefit the community. We invested \$15 million in modernizing the cellular network. That was a very important legacy of the G7 summit. In that regard, I would like to quote the reeve of the Charlevoix-Est RCM and mayor of Saint-Siméon, Sylvain Tremblay, who said, and I quote:

We would likely not have seen investments like that for decades, and that is no exaggeration. This is a very important legacy. We expected investments to be made, but this means that we have entered the 21st century with the same tools as everyone else.

My colleague expressed her concerns about compensation for local businesses. I would like to immediately reassure her: the compensation policies for local businesses affected are the same ones that were in effect under the Harper Conservatives in 2010. We have a program to compensate commercial businesses, non-profits and individuals affected by extraordinary security measures, which was the case during this summit. We received the applications and we are currently evaluating them.

With regard to compensation, my colleague seems to have a short memory. In 2012, two years after the 2010 G8 summit, the Harper government was still processing \$11 million in claims for compensation. It was even said at the time that big companies were paid before small ones.

• (1820)

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague opposite.

The G7 obviously generated significant economic spinoffs. There were legacy projects, but they do not work. They spent \$18 million on towers, but Saint-Urbain still has no cellular network. It does not work. The mayor and reeve, Ms. Claudette Simard, expressed her disappointment concerning the solution provided by the G7.

The member spoke about 2012, but with all due respect, I was not here. However, the G7 was held in my riding, and I was there even though I was not invited. I went to see it with my own eyes. There were some success stories, but there are still—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Order. The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Matt DeCoursey: Mr. Speaker, perhaps it bears repeating that the compensation policies for affected local businesses are the same as the ones in place under Mr. Harper's Conservative government when it hosted the G8 in 2010. When they organized the G8 summit in 2010, the Conservatives were still analyzing more than \$11 million worth of compensation claims. Thus, we do not need to take any lessons from them.

The G7 summit was a major event that greatly benefited the region and Canada as a whole. The residents of Charlevoix and all Canadians should be proud.

[*English*]

NATURAL RESOURCES

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is becoming increasingly clear that the Liberal government talks a big game on combatting climate change, but is incapable of following

through with the actions required to achieve results. Canada pretended to be a world leader during the Paris Agreement negotiations by pushing to limit global temperature increases to 1.5° instead of 2°. Instead of living up to our end of the deal, we then just adopted Harper's emissions targets and, even then, we are not on track to achieve that.

Just two days ago, the House of Commons had an emergency debate on climate change, because we are heading toward catastrophic irreversible environmental damage. Look at all the signs: unprecedented forest fires, record flooding, increases in radical weather patterns, acidification of oceans and melting ice caps. Whether it is the Auditor General of Canada or the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, when the so-called Liberal plan is measured up, it comes up short again and again. When pressed on it, the Liberals just blame the Conservatives. Surely, the government knows that blaming the Conservatives for its lack of leadership just does not cut it anymore. The time to take real and significant action is now.

The IPCC report was clear. To meet our goals under the Paris Agreement, we need to lower our emissions to 325 million tonnes by 2030. According to the government's own performance report, we will only get down to 500 million tonnes. We are not even close. We are not close because, despite all the lofty rhetoric and the overused talking points about the economy and the environment going hand in hand, the government is still operating on Harper's goalposts. The Liberals approved the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion under Harper's process, and we are told by the Federal Court of Appeal that the National Energy Board's review failed to include the increase in tanker traffic and its negative impact for endangered killer whales.

The Auditor General also confirmed in May that the current Liberal government, despite its campaign promise to do so, has no intention of abolishing fossil fuel subsidies. In fact, not only will the subsidies continue, but the Liberal government has taken things even further, purchasing a 65-year-old leaky pipeline for \$4.5 billion. Just weeks after I asked in question period about finally following through on its promise to end these subsidies, the government agreed to pay Kinder Morgan's two senior executives an additional \$1.5 million just to stay in their jobs, as part of the deal. According to the company's documents, one of the executives, Ian Anderson, was paid nearly \$2.9 million last year in salary, stock awards and other compensation, and that was only from June through to December 2017.

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I can safely say, on behalf of taxpayers from coast to coast, that governments should not be using public funds to pad the bank accounts of ultra-wealthy executives, especially not fossil fuel industry executives, when we are facing the stark realities outlined in the IPCC report. When will the government end the corporate payouts and subsidies to big polluters? When will the government follow through on its promise to end subsidies to the fossil fuel industry?

• (1825)

Mr. Paul Lefebvre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I know the hon. member for Vancouver East feels very passionate about this topic and she has tried to articulate her concerns very well.

However, our government is equally passionate about our vision for Canada, a vision that includes our commitment with our G20 partners to phase out inefficient fossil fuel subsidies by 2025. It is also a vision that includes investing in economic prosperity, enhancing environmental performance and advancing indigenous partnerships.

The Trans Mountain expansion project has the potential to create thousands of good, middle-class jobs, including many jobs for indigenous peoples; open new markets for Canada's resources; and ensure a fair global price for our Canadian oil. Right now, Canadian oil is being sold at a \$50 per barrel discount on the market, which is something the NDP appears to be satisfied to see continue.

The TMX investment will strengthen our economy and generate billions of dollars in new revenues for all government levels. This is why our government approved the project, and that is why we ultimately chose to purchase Trans Mountain's existing assets.

The member opposite forgets that millions of hard-working Canadians invest in the country's stock market every day, either directly or through their mutual funds and RRSPs. Canadians are shareholders in Canadian assets also.

The member also forgets that the Trans Mountain pipeline is an asset, and a sound investment generating hundreds of millions of dollars in annual revenues. However, as the Prime Minister, the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Natural Resources have said, our goal is not to be the long-term owner of a pipeline. We expect to sell our stake at the appropriate time.

In the meantime, we remain committed to doing the hard work necessary to move forward the right way, by following the guidance provided in the Federal Court of Appeal's decision. That is why the Minister of Natural Resources has instructed the National Energy Board to reconsider its recommendation and to take into account the environmental impacts of marine shipping related to this project. That is why we have relaunched our government's phase III consultations with indigenous groups affected by the project, and doing so with the help of former Supreme Court Justice, the Hon. Frank Iacobucci, who will provide the best possible external advice and perspective in support of a meaningful consultation process. All of this is in accordance with the direction provided by the Federal Court of Appeal.

As the Prime Minister said in his original response to the member opposite, "We are committed to growing the economy and protecting the environment at the same time."

• (1830)

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Mr. Speaker, the government cannot understand that we cannot suck and blow at the same time. We cannot spend billions of dollars propping up the fossil fuel industry while claiming to be a leader in combatting climate change.

We at the NDP understand that the environment and the economy can work together. However, that means investing in just transitions for energy workers toward a future in sustainable energy. It is not continuing to subsidize fossil fuel industries. It is not buying leaky pipelines so that fat-cat shareholders keep getting their dividend cheques. It is investing in Canadian workers and Canadian entrepreneurs to develop, implement and obtain careers in green energy initiatives that will allow us to meet and exceed our emission reduction targets. Why is this so difficult for the Liberal government to understand?

By the way, the Liberals cannot say they have meaningful consultation with the indigenous community when they have already made the decision.

Mr. Paul Lefebvre: Mr. Speaker, I would encourage the member opposite to read the whole decision on TMX and not just the parts that she agrees with.

The member's comments remind me of something the Prime Minister said the last time she raised this issue. It is worth repeating here, because I think it illustrates how wide the gulf is in this House. The Prime Minister said that "The NDP and Conservatives still think there is a choice to be made", between the economy and the environment.

They are wrong. They are making a false choice. Economic growth and environmental protection are not competing interests. They are equal components of a single engine that will drive Canada's innovation and prosperity for generations to come.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a year and a half ago, Saudi Arabia was elected to the UN women's rights commission. We thought that was inappropriate.

On this side of the House, we have been clear in speaking about Canadian and universal values on the world stage. It was part of an engaged and principled Conservative foreign policy, yet the government has in so many ways backed away from that, admiring China's basic dictatorship, being slow to respond to crises around the world, failing to recognize genocide of Yazidis and Christians at the hands of Daesh, being slow to respond to the Rohingya genocide. In so many different areas we have seen a lack of willingness of the government to confront issues of fundamental human rights around the world.

Adjournment Proceedings

At that time, I had challenged the Minister of Foreign Affairs to acknowledge the absurdity of Saudi Arabia being on the UN women's rights commission. I posed this question to the minister multiple times. She pointed out that Canada was not involved in the selection process, but she would not acknowledge that the problem associated with that likely was the need for some institutional reform at the United Nations that recognized there were certain actors that were just not appropriate for being in the leadership role on certain kinds of issues. The minister refused to recognize that reality for reasons that are hard to understand.

Fast forward to where we find ourselves today. There are many issues around the human rights record of Saudi Arabia that raise grave concerns. We have raised in question period issues about what appears very likely the killing of a journalist in a Saudi consulate in Turkey. Also the nature of the prosecution of the war in Yemen. We have raised and spoken about the terrible humanitarian crisis in Yemen. We should not forget the role that Iran is playing fomenting problems, but also absolutely the terrible impact on civilians as a result of the way in which that war is being prosecuted.

On this side of the House, we have been always willing to raise and confront issues of fundamental human rights, whether that involves Iran, Saudi Arabia, China or the government of Burma. However, the Liberal government has been very slow and often unresponsive.

I will ask again the question that I asked a year and a half ago and again earlier this week. The minister in response to a serious question from my colleague about the current crisis with respect to Saudi Arabia, thought it was a good moment to be partisan and accused us of being slow to the party. We asked this question a year and a half ago about Saudi human rights record and the minister repeatedly refused to answer.

Again, will the government acknowledge that it does not make sense for the government of Saudi Arabia to be in a leadership role at the UN with respect to the issue of women's rights? It would be great to hear from the Liberals a recognition that it does not make sense or if they think it does make sense, it would be worthwhile knowing that as well.

I look forward, hopefully this time, to the parliamentary secretary actually answering the question, recognizing that reality with respect to the human rights situation in Saudi Arabia.

• (1835)

Mr. Matt DeCoursey (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let us be clear that under our government, the promotion and protection of human rights, which certainly include women's rights, is a fundamental and foundational part of our foreign policy. We advocate for the rights of women across all conversations around the world, and that includes in our conversations with Saudi Arabia.

I am glad to hear the member opposite, his party's junior critic, on this file agreeing with us in principle that human rights and women's rights are important to advocate for. It was not too long ago that his party was opposing that principle and, quite frankly, we are still unclear about his party's position as it relates to support for the human rights of women around the world.

His party's senior critic, the member for Durham, said that my party has advocated too much for women's rights in Saudi Arabia, saying that we have caused a "disconnect" by doing so. I can talk about another senior voice within the Conservative Party and his views on our advocacy of women's rights in Saudi Arabia. Maybe the member opposite can clarify whether John Baird's words to the effect that our advocacy and defence of women's rights is "giving Canada a bad reputation" is still the policy of the Conservative Party of Canada.

On this side of the House, we do not just believe in defending human rights but in defending the human rights of any and all individuals, especially when it is difficult to do so, and we do not believe that gives Canada a bad reputation. Quite frankly, we believe doing so shines a light on Canada as a beacon in the world, and the world knows that Canada will be there to defend the human rights of all vulnerable people and women.

There is a certain irony in the position taken by the member today. On one hand, he wants a public condemnation of the past membership of a UN body; on the other hand, it is his party that argues that we should not use public comments as "a substitute for proper diplomacy". Again, that is a direct quote from his party's senior critic for foreign affairs.

Our government will continue to call on the Government of Saudi Arabia to ensure the full protection of human rights, including women's rights, as well as respect for peaceful expressions of dissent and to ensure fairness in judicial proceedings. We will never hesitate to promote these values and we believe that dialogue is critical when we engage in international diplomacy. While Canada was not a member of the UN Economic and Social Council until recently and therefore had no influence over who was elected to its membership in 2017, we will use this forum to spur action by other countries on women's rights.

Of course, the Commission on the Status of Women's diverse membership sometimes presents challenges. Not all governments are willing to move as quickly and progressively on the protection and promotion of women's rights as Canada is, but if its membership were composed solely of countries already taking a strong view on the protection of human rights, its ability to make change would be much less significant.

Let me reiterate that we are committed to the full protection of all human rights, including vulnerable populations around the world, and in Saudi Arabia we are committed to the protection of the human rights of women.

• (1840)

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, that was quite a striking display from the member across the way. Let us be very clear that Conservatives believe in standing up for human rights. I do not think that needs to be said. I think that is quite obvious. The problem that the member seems to have is that he does not like it when we criticize the Liberals' horrendously ineffective way of advancing these principles when they talk about it.

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What my colleague from Durham said, and was quite right to say, is that tweeting about an issue is not a replacement for actually doing the hard, sustained work of advancing human rights and raising it in bilateral conversations with other governments, instead of talking and tweeting about it without having done that work first. It is not a question of whether one should make public statements, but a question of whether that is the only thing one should do.

The problem with the government on human rights is that it continually wants to look like it is doing things, but when it comes to actually doing the hard work and the heavy lifting, it has cancelled programs to deal with the advancement of human rights. We see it again from the member and his—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Matt DeCoursey: Mr. Speaker, we will continue the hard diplomatic work of standing up for human rights around the world in each and every forum we have the opportunity to do so. It is far too

easy for the Conservatives to stand up and grandstand on issues, to cherry-pick issues and have their critics, their leading voices within the party, outside the chamber saying that when we stand up and defend human rights and women's rights, we are giving Canada “a bad reputation”.

On this side of the floor, Canadians can expect a principled and firm stand in defence of human rights, the rights of LGBTQ2 communities around the world, the rights of vulnerable refugees when they find hardship and, certainly and strikingly, the rights of women and girls in Saudi Arabia and everywhere around the world.

[*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 tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6:42 p.m.)

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