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Friday, October 26, 2018

—

Speaker: The Honourable Geoff Regan

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Friday, October 26, 2018

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

●(1000)

[English]

ELECTIONS MODERNIZATION ACT

The House resumed from October 24 consideration of Bill C-76, An Act to amend the Canada Elections Act and other Acts and to make certain consequential amendments, as reported (with amendments) from the committee, and of the motions in Group No. 1.

Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will pick up where I left off before the Liberals imposed a legislative guillotine to cut off debate.

My greatest concern about Bill C-76 is the Liberal claim that it would combat and control third party spending. It would not properly address a problem that could have been easily solved if, and this is a big if, the current Liberal government had actually wanted to solve it.

At first glance, it appears that the legislation might contain foreign financial interference by setting some spending limits and requiring third parties to have a dedicated Canadian bank account. However, Bill C-76 would double the total maximum third party spending amount allowed during the writ period, and it would still allow unlimited contributions from individual donors and others, unlimited spending by third parties and unlimited foreign donations outside the pre-writ and writ periods.

Some of our Liberal colleagues claim that foreign financial interference has been adequately blocked, but the reality is that a huge loophole, exploited in recent elections with increasingly larger amounts of foreign funding of third parties, still exists. Foreign charities, such as the Rockefeller Brothers Fund in New York or the American Tides Foundation in San Francisco, can give millions of foreign dollars to Canadian charities such as the Tides Canada organization, Leadnow, the Dogwood Initiative or the Sisu Institute, and those millions can be disbursed as Canadian dollars to third-party groups to support parties and candidates of their choice and to oppose parties and candidates of their choice. Elections Canada can do nothing without new legislation.

Bill C-76 would do nothing to stop these, effectively laundered, American dollars from being used, as they were in 2015, to work to defeat a Conservative government, or next year, to attempt to re-elect the current Liberal government. In fact, the Canada Revenue Agency, before the 2015 federal election, had been working to audit 42 registered Canadian charities for political activity. There is research, accumulated by the skilled investigative journalist and researcher Vivian Krause, that indicates that 41 of the 42 audited charities were not fully compliant with the law and that the CRA would have recommended that at least five of these so-called charities be disqualified and shut down completely. However, in 2016, the CRA shut down those audits without reporting, coincidentally after the revenue minister was issued a mandate letter that directed her to “Allow charities to do their work...free from political harassment”.

Ms. Krause testified last week, before the ethics committee, that she spent six months in 2016 writing a report, which she submitted to Elections Canada. Elections Canada sent investigators to Vancouver to meet with Ms. Krause, and she testified that after extensive discussion, it became clear to her that Elections Canada cannot do anything if the Canada Revenue Agency allows charities to Canadianize foreign funds.

The Income Tax Act is very clear that charities are to operate for purposes that are charitable as defined by law. While charities have been able to get away with it by pointing to language that permits a limited amount of political activity, the original intent was that the political activity was intended to further a charitable purpose. If that political activity does not support a charitable purpose, the allowable political activity should be, as Ms. Krause pointed out very clearly before committee, absolutely zero.

In wrapping up, while there are, admittedly, some modest improvements made to Bill C-76, it remains a deeply deficient attempt to restore fairness to the Canadian election process. It is a testament to the current Liberal government's deliberate decision, as with Bill C-50 before it, to leave loopholes the Liberals believe will enhance their efforts to save their political skin in 2019.

●(1005)

Mrs. Bernadette Jordan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his comments today on Bill C-76, a bill we think will strengthen the ability of Canadians to vote that was taken away by the party opposite.

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One of the amendments that was accepted at committee was to add additional punishments for third parties that are found guilty of offences related to the use of foreign funds. It is interesting that the Conservatives are saying that we are not doing enough, but they voted against that in committee. This was an amendment put forward by the hon. member for Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame. It is also one supported by Senator Frum in her legislation. However, the Conservatives felt that they had to vote against it.

Did Conservatives vote against it because it was put forward by a Liberal, or did they vote against it because it strengthened the legislation?

Hon. Peter Kent: Madam Speaker, that was a deflecting question.

I believe the larger question comes back to the fact that the government, in its mandate letter to the Minister of National Revenue, gave her pretty clear direction on the CRA audit of questionable Canadian charities that were Canadianizing American charitable dollars to be used by third parties. The donors of these original American dollars basically bragged that they were sending them to Canada to be used to defeat the sitting Conservative government.

That is the larger issue we are addressing here today. The fact is that Elections Canada should have been enabled by this deficient legislation, Bill C-76, to allow, and to ask, the Canada Revenue Agency to make clear exactly where the money trail leads, from American dollars through American charitable agencies to Canadian charitable agencies, and then disbursed to third parties. Third parties, as Ms. Krause reminded us, can throw mud in an election campaign while the party, the Liberal Party in this case, can claim to take the high road.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Madam Speaker, I have been sitting with my hon. colleague at the ethics committee, where we have been studying the ability of third party operators to monkeywrench the electoral process.

We see that Europe is warning of a digital electoral arms race. We have seen the effects of Brexit and the Cambridge Analytica scandal, yet the government has refused to take the all-party consensus regarding the necessity of putting political parties under a credible privacy regime to limit the potential of political parties to use the new dark arts of the digital manipulation of voters.

What does my hon. colleague think about the credibility of the Liberal government's supposed electoral reform if it is ignoring all-party consensus on the need to have political parties accountable, as well, in protecting data and making sure that we are not manipulating voters through the kind of monkeywrenching that went on in the Cambridge Analytica scandal?

• (1010)

Hon. Peter Kent: Madam Speaker, it has indeed been a pleasure to work with my hon. colleague in these recent months on the ethics committee on the study of Cambridge Analytica and AggregateIQ here in Canada, which revealed the huge vulnerability of the Canadian democratic electoral process through new media.

The member is quite correct that the interim report of our committee in June, before the House rose, recommended to the government, among a number of recommendations, probably a

dozen, that electoral activity in Canada, particularly activity by third parties in elections, be brought under the purview of the Privacy Commissioner, not for the Privacy Commissioner to regulate or interfere with political activity by political parties but to protect the privacy of Canadians from third-party interference and attempts to manipulate and contort the election results.

[Translation]

Mr. Randy Boissonnault (Edmonton Centre, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the Government of Canada has heard what Canadians have to say.

We are very proud that the majority of the all-party amendments to the bill are among the amendments the committee adopted.

[English]

When the bill was introduced, the Government of Canada introduced it as an initiative to modernize our electoral process and make it more transparent, accessible and secure for all Canadians. One of the proposed amendments was to require all electors to be Canadian citizens when exercising their right to vote.

[Translation]

Even though that has always been a requirement for eligibility to vote, Bill C-76 revealed an error in the wording of the new Canada Elections Act, which came into force in 2000.

It was possible to interpret the French version of the act as stating that a person who expected to obtain Canadian citizenship prior to voting day could vote in an advance poll before being granted citizenship. Of course, there is no way to know for sure that a person will become a Canadian citizen until that person has taken the oath of citizenship.

[English]

The amendments made by the committee to Bill C-76 correct this error and clarify that only Canadians can cast a ballot in a ballot box. This would help ensure the integrity of the entire electoral process.

Former chief electoral officer Marc Mayrand has applauded the Government of Canada's efforts to modernize our electoral system and make it more accessible. However, he also mentioned that additional amendments should be made to facilitate the identification of electors who live in seniors residences or in long-term care centres, because it could be difficult for seniors to prove where they live with an ID. I think this is a great amendment, a great suggestion, because in a riding like Edmonton Centre, with so many towers and so many seniors residences, I have seen that this particular voter ID difficulty for seniors is prevalent.

The committee also adopted amendments to Bill C-76 that would make the electoral system more accessible for our seniors. From now on, seniors centre employees would be allowed to cast ballots for senior citizens living in their place of work, provided they themselves can vote and live close to the seniors centre. I know that the seniors at St. Andrew's will be happy to hear this. They live about a block away from my house, and when it comes time to vote, they will be able to make sure that their voice is counted.

[Translation]

Bill C-76, the elections modernization act, includes measures to ensure that political parties and third parties play by the same rules in exercising their right to participate in political electoral activities.

[English]

From now on, third parties that intervene in the electoral process in any way would have to clearly explain their advertising messages. Also, third parties that spend more than \$10,000 or that receive more than \$10,000 in contributions would be required to submit financial reports to Elections Canada every two weeks, starting on September 15 in a fixed-election year. Elections Canada would publish these financial reports on its website. These transparency measures would help Canadians better understand who is trying to influence their vote and why.

[Translation]

This bill will also protect our democratic institutions from foreign attempts to influence outcomes. Elections Canada representatives and the commissioner of Canada elections appeared before the committee and recommended further enhancing a number of protective measures. The government agreed to several of those recommendations.

•(1015)

[English]

Bill C-76 also contains additional tools that would make it easier for Elections Canada and the Canada elections commissioner to prevent or limit the effects of third party influence on Canadian voters. For example, the new third-party funding section of the act would prohibit the use of foreign funds at any time to obtain or broadcast partisan advertising, to fund partisan activities or to conduct polls. New anti-avoidance provisions would also forbid all attempts to sidestep these rules.

[Translation]

Bill C-76 created a new offence to prohibit the fraudulent use of a computer to influence election results. A new offence added during the committee's study will henceforth prohibit all attempts to influence an election and strengthen that prohibition.

[English]

We would also make it a criminal offence to publish material made by anyone attempting to impersonate the Chief Electoral Officer or a returning officer.

Finally, on the recommendation of the commissioner of Canada elections, our government would reinforce the ban that applies to all persons and entities that sell advertising space. It would now be

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forbidden to sell advertising space to foreigners that would allow them to broadcast election advertising.

The results of Canadian elections should only ever be determined by electoral votes made by Canadians. Bill C-76 already contained numerous amendments to the act to amend the Canada Elections Act that were important to Elections Canada's recommendations.

[Translation]

During the committee's study, the Government of Canada listened to independent experts whose only job is to protect our democratic institutions. I am proud of the comments we heard from those experts because they helped strengthen the bill.

[English]

Therefore, I invite all colleagues in the House today to voice their support of the third reading of the act to amend the Canada Elections Act and modernize our electoral process and make it more transparent, accessible and secure for all Canadians from coast to coast.

When we take a look at the facts, 56 witnesses were heard in committee on Bill C-76, there were 24 hours of committee time and there were 36 and a half hours of study time of CEO recommendations by committee. For bill C-23, the hours of study for the Fair Elections Act was 49.5.

Bill C-76 would encourage Canadians to participate fully in the electoral process, and that is exactly what we intended.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have only one concern from all the debate and information I have received about Bill C-76. We saw multiple examples where asylum seekers coming in received letters saying that they should register to vote. I am concerned to understand what mechanisms would be in place with Elections Canada to verify people's information. My understanding is they are not Canadian citizens and should not be able to vote. If we go with a voter ID card only, then how would we make sure we do not have illegal voting?

Mr. Randy Boissonnault: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for her concern about the safety and security of the Canadian electoral system. It is quite clear that permanent residents and landed immigrants do not get to vote. Canadian citizens get to vote. Voter ID cards are exactly that: demonstrating a person is a Canadian citizen. That is what we want to make sure takes place in this country, and that is what Bill C-76 would ensure.

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Madam Speaker, one of things that really concerns me in this House is the reality that we have time allocation again put on this. It is the second time this has happened, and we are actually talking about our elections and how they work. It is really important we have that meaningful debate. I appreciate the work that has been done in committee, but to put time allocation on this particular bill is absolutely shameful. I would just like to hear the member's response to that comment.

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• (1020)

Mr. Randy Boissonnault: Madam Speaker, the amount of work the committee has done on this particular bill is exemplary. We have had great debate here in this House. If we take a look at the amount of time that was spent on Bill C-23, it is a fraction of what we have been able to spend on Bill C-76. It is important to let members of this House know that a voter identification card is information, and that information is important. Only Canadian citizens can vote in a Canadian election and that is the way it should be.

Mrs. Celina Caesar-Chavannes (Whitby, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the amendments made by committee and throughout this process would allow for persons with disabilities to have better access to be able to vote. We know our democracy is only improved when we allow access, as my colleague just mentioned, to Canadian citizens who are allowed to vote, who have the proper voter information and who could subsequently provide either their own identification cards or have someone with the proper documents vouch for them. The number of amendments made that would ensure persons with disabilities are able to vote is really impressive, because it would allow for more inclusivity. Could he speak to other measures within this piece of legislation that would allow for a more inclusive part for Canadians to play in our democracy?

Mr. Randy Boissonnault: Madam Speaker, I would like to spend a moment reinforcing what my colleague is talking about, the great work of the committee and of the government on Bill C-76 as it pertains to making sure Canadian elections are inclusive and barrier-free. If we take a look at our government approach as a whole when it pertains to persons with disabilities, we are trying to make the federal workplace barrier-free through Bill C-81 and are trying to make sure our elections process is inclusive and fair. This is a process that should be inclusive to all Canadians and should prevent foreign interference in our Canadian elections system, and that is exactly what Bill C-76 would do.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Madam Speaker, I still do not understand why, when it comes to making sure that people who should not be allowed to vote are voting, Elections Canada is sending notices to asylum seekers who do not have Canadian citizenship and telling them to register to vote. Who is doing the verification that they are Canadian citizens?

Mr. Randy Boissonnault: Madam Speaker, I would say this to my hon. colleague across the way. Let us be really clear. The voter information card shows proof of address, not proof of identity. Voters have to show proof of identity. They need to show that they are Canadian citizens. That is what it takes to vote in the Canadian election. Everything else is a frivolous and vexatious attack on the Canadian electoral system from the other side.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Madam Speaker, it was interesting to listen to my colleague across. I was going to start my speech off by talking about foreign financing, but when we are talking about voter identification we recognize there are 39 pieces of identification that were approved under the Fair Elections Act. We have to talk about that, because we just got through a municipal election in Ontario a few days ago where we heard about voter cards being left in the lobbies of apartment buildings rather than being secured in people's mailboxes. Of course, that was a bit of a threat as well, because there were issues with the fact they had a PIN that could be used online. We recognize that

most Canadians are not going to do things that are fraudulent. However, there are those who, at times when they are so passionate, may choose to do something that sometimes is illegal to basically better their cause or do something they think is really important.

It was great to hear my colleague from Sarnia—Lambton question what we are going to do about voter identification cards. Can voters could go in with voter ID cards they received in the mail and show their Costco card to prove they are Canadian? For many years I worked as a campaign manager and worked in an office talking to different people about what they needed. Also, I worked in a constituency office where I was working with Canadians who were applying for the Canada child benefit, Canadian citizenship and all these things. It is peculiar how our departments need some sort of identification to prove who people are and where they live to receive a variety of different benefits through the Ontario disability support program or Ontario Works. However, the biggest thing a Canadian citizen can do is vote, yet somehow we do not say that they need those documents. Therefore, after listening to my friend from Edmonton, I am really concerned that the Liberals think that proving Canadian citizenship is going to be that easy by saying people can come in with their driver's licence and voter card. This is a reminder. Permanent residents can drive too. I see them drive all the time. I think that is one thing we have to really look at.

However, I want to focus more on foreign financing. That is where I want to go with this, because we saw a number of third party campaigns in the 2015 election. I saw that not only with respect to the provincial election and the federal election, but also with the recent municipal election as well. On TV I cannot see that the campaign was authorized by the campaign manager for *x*, as a lot of the time it is authorized by a third party campaign.

For many people like myself, contributions to run a personal campaign come from individuals. There were I believe approximately 241 individuals who donated to the EDA during the window of the 2015 election. Those were all individuals. We did not have any third parties working around us. We were on the ground working. However, some of my colleagues who were in ridings such as London North Centre know that there were huge campaigns going on that were really focusing on anything but Harper. That is the concern I have, because this was not money going to the Liberal Party, the NDP or the Green Party, it was money that was being used for people to go out and campaign on. Therefore, I started looking at my returns for the 2015 election to see how much money I had fundraised compared to my colleagues. I am talking about a \$40,000 to \$50,000 difference in fundraising, yet they ran very strong campaigns as well. Where did they get their money from? Where did they get their advertising from? They did not necessarily have to go out there and do that. They did not actually have to pay for it from their campaigns, because we know how many third parties were out there doing that.

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This is where it goes into the next step. Where is that money coming from, that is going to these campaigns, these third parties? I would like to continue that conversation by the member for Thornhill. We talk about things like the Tides Foundation, located in San Francisco and New York. The Tides Foundation funnelled money through Canadian groups and charitable organizations, which then put that money into Canadian elections. It is really that simple. It is so easy to look at the fact that money from the United States was filtered into Canadian campaigns through a third party. We have to recognize what some of those restrictions and regulations are.

What is great is that, within the Senate, Senator Frum was talking about some of these contributions. There was a lot of discussion about contributions coming from third parties and how people can donate to a party. We have to look at this hypothetically, because this entire conversation is really hypothetical: what if, what if? That is what we really need to do here. When we are talking about the Government of Canada, it should be black and white when it comes to the rights of people to vote and give to a party.

• (1025)

What happens if somebody donates \$10,000 to a foundation, a not-for-profit, six months prior, and then that money goes into a campaign? It does not matter. Bill C-76 would increase the amount they can spend.

It is not as if I am saying that Conservatives are the only group beaten up on. I recognize that all of us have third parties that support us, and that is fine. However, “101 reasons to vote against Harper” and “Voters Against Harper” are two organizations and I can tell members the money that was funnelled through those parties was not supporting Conservative candidates but instead there was now a new war chest for the NDP, Green, Liberal or Bloc candidate. We have to recognize that we are now, and not just as individuals, fighting another source. We are not fighting among political parties. We have activists out there doing this. Therefore, foreign funding is a critical piece.

The organization that TIDES is involved with, the Dogwood Initiative, is an interesting case. The Dogwood Initiative is a Canadian not-for-profit public interest group based in Victoria, B.C., and I will read a little about it.

The organization works to increase the power of British Columbians over government decision-making. They were instrumental in the fight against Enbridge's Northern Gateway pipeline, introducing a tanker moratorium on B.C.'s north coast and the province's campaign finance reform. The organization currently works to stop Kinder Morgan's Trans Mountain tanker and pipeline expansion in B.C., ban U.S. thermal coal exports through B.C. ports^[5] and restore accountability and transparency to the province's democracy by calling for a Corruption Inquiry.

Researchers and pundits have come back and criticized it, because Dogwood has been funded from outside Canada, and so there is foreign investment coming in. The U.S.-based funders provided money through the TIDES Foundation to Dogwood.

Now, we have these groups working as a third party. Therefore, if I am allowed to spend \$78,000 on my campaign, and my colleagues are allowed to spend \$78,000 on their campaigns but they actually have a third party, we are now talking about spending \$156,000 on their campaign if they invest properly in some of these things. It is not just about one group. We have to recognize that in the last federal election there were 115 organizations that were third party.

This is all hypothetical, but that is why we need to have this debate. If we get one group or one person who decides that they do not like what a party is doing, they could set up 100 different organizations and put \$10,000 into each of them, and then that money could be filtered. Yes, there is a cap on how much money can be spent within a certain constituency, but at the same time, if that is done 100 times over, it is unfair, and this is where, when I look at this, that it is absolutely not the right thing to do. We have to be very cautious on foreign investment coming into Canada that is focused on the policies of Canadian politicians.

We hear about fake news all the time, and I do not want to talk about what is happening in the United States, but I do not think we should kid ourselves. There are people here in Canada who also have an agenda and are speaking to our government officials. This week, we have talked a lot about Vice-Admiral Norman and the lobbyists that were working for Irving and how the Davie shipyard lost something. There are all of these things, and so please, let us not kid ourselves, lobbyists and third party groups are very important in Canadian government. Now, when they are part of our elections as well, we have to have caution on that. Therefore, it is a really big concern.

I will go back to an editorial written by our former colleague, the Hon. Joe Oliver, who was a fantastic minister of finance and continued the great job that Jim Flaherty did. This is something I think most Canadians need to understand, and we have to bring this back to the dining table so that everybody can understand it.

Canadians can only donate \$1,550 to political parties and candidates. Union and corporate donations have been banned completely, and yet in the Senate hearing, Commissioner Côté said that as long as foreign money is donated to a third party six months prior to the election writ being dropped, the amount that can be donated is endless.

These are things that we have to be aware of. I thank everybody for listening. Let us have this conversation and really talk about what is happening in Canadian elections.

• (1030)

Mrs. Celina Caesar-Chavannes (Whitby, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to go back to the beginning of the member's speech and make some very clear distinctions around the voter information card.

To be clear to anybody who is listening or who inadvertently received a card from Elections Canada, the voter information card is not a piece of ID and it is an offence under the Canada Elections Act for a non-citizen to vote or for a non-citizen to register to vote when they know they are not able to do so.

I know that we are talking about this in the context of the cards being sent out, but we should be telling individuals that it is an offence and something that cannot be done under Canadian law. I would hope that in this conversation it becomes clear to all permanent residents and non-Canadian citizens that it is not something they can do.

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Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Madam Speaker, as I was doing my research for this speech, I was looking at information regarding the election going on in Surrey, B.C. There was concern with voter fraud, people who were non-Canadians voting in the municipal elections.

We recognize as Canadians that it is our right to vote. However, we also have to recognize that everybody in Canada is not always honourable. It may be 1%, or 0.5%, but it does matter. Canadians have the privilege to vote because we are Canadians.

Just on that list, what the member has said is incorrect. The voter card can be used as one piece of ID. It indicates the address of a person. Now a Canadian health card or an Ontario health card can be used as identification. That does not prove a person is a Canadian citizen. Another example would be a social insurance number. Only a few of us know that the number “9” means a person is not a citizen of Canada.

There is a lot of information. Therefore, unfortunately, I cannot agree with that.

• (1035)

Ms. Georgina Jolibois (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to voice some of my comments and concerns regarding this very important discussion this morning.

There is a level hypocrisy from members of both the Liberal government as well as the Conservative Party when they say that all Canadians are equal. Where I come from within the Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River riding, even obtaining a photo ID is a challenge.

Both parties are making it difficult for indigenous voters and people who are struggling. They are making it difficult to go out and vote. How can they improve that for all Canadians?

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Madam Speaker, we recognize that there are challenges when we talk about poverty reduction strategy, when we talk about all of those things.

One of the greatest challenges for a person is actually getting identification, whether it is a health card or things like that. The Canadian government needs to work on that. Provincial and territorial governments need to ensure that people have those. All people should be able to have a health card. If they have the right to health in Canada, they should have that health card.

We do need to work with our first nations. I totally appreciate that comment. Let us work harder to do more.

Mrs. Bernadette Jordan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.): Madam Speaker, every entity, every individual who is not a candidate, or an EDA, or a political party is a third party.

I would like the member opposite to tell me this. Is it her position that any individual who wants to engage in topics that matter to them should have to register and report to the government?

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Madam Speaker, that is a really unique question. At the end of the day, the government can give to a not-for-profit organization or things like that.

We have to be very cautious when we talk about interest groups outside of the country funnelling their money into Canada so they can do things, like stopping our pipelines so they can build pipelines and extract oil in their own countries. We have to be aware of this.

If people are not giving to a political campaign or to an EDA, they are more than likely giving to a church or a not-for-profit organization. However, a lot of times we have to be cautious on what these organizations are doing when it comes to political duties.

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Multiculturalism (Multiculturalism), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am glad to speak this morning in support of Bill C-76.

The goal of Bill C-76, the elections modernization act, is to modernize Canada's electoral system and to strengthen its integrity by making it more transparent, accessible and secure. It would do so, among other things, by establishing spending limits for third parties and political parties during a pre-writ period by increasing transparency regarding the participation of third parties in the electoral process and by expanding the powers of the commissioner of Canada elections.

The commissioner's new powers would include the imposition of administrative monetary penalties for contraventions to key parts of the act, including those governing political financing and third party activities.

In recent months, we have heard a great deal of news about the influence of foreigners, fake news and the impact of emerging technologies on elections around the world. The Government of Canada has already included in Bill C-76, right upon its introduction in the spring, a number of measures aimed at preventing foreign influence or the malicious use of technology. However, new details about undue influence attempts in the electoral systems in western democracies are brought to the public's attention almost weekly.

Amendments to the Canada Elections Act only represent one tool at our country's disposal in its fight to protect our democracy. Members of Parliament, political actors, academics and Canada's civil society at large also have important roles to play, for example, in the area of civic literacy.

I would like to focus my remarks today on the improvements brought to the elections modernization act during its study in committee, which the Government of Canada sees as a great tool aimed at increasing the transparency of political advertising practices.

In 2017, Statistics Canada estimated that almost every Canadian under the age of 45 was using the Internet every day, while approximately 80% of Canadians aged 45 to 65 were using the Internet every day.

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As of April 1, Statistics Canada estimated Canada's population at just above 37 million. This means that roughly between 22 to 23 million Canadians between the ages of 18 to 65 access the Internet and online platforms virtually daily.

Given the impact of new technologies on the lives of Canadians, the time has come to require more transparency from online platforms during election periods.

Online platforms, whether they are smart phones, applications or websites, which sell advertising space on a commercial basis during the pre-writ and election periods, will now be legally compelled to maintain an online registry of all partisan and election advertising messages that they publish.

This new requirement will apply to those online platforms having a medium to high reach to persons present in Canada, no matter where the platform is actually located. Each online platform will be required to maintain this registry on the platform itself and to make it fully accessible to the public. The registry will include at least a copy of each partisan and election advertising message that has been published during the pre-writ and the election period respectively, as well as information about the person or entity that authorized the publication of the message.

Traditional media, such as radio, television and newspapers, offer political ads to Canadians in plain view. They allow all political actors to be held accountable for the information they share and for the promises they make. In comparison, online platforms allow advertisers to target a very precise segment of the population. Without a registry of political ads, it is impossible for Canadians to know how their neighbours, their families and their co-workers might be targeted.

The new online platform registry of political ads in Bill C-76 will help Canadians better understand who is trying to influence them and how. For example, even if an election advertising message was targeted to only 50 Canadian electors, a copy of the published advertisement would need to be published in that registry. Along with that copy would be found the name of the financial agent who authorized its publication, whether it was the official agent of a candidate, the chief agent of a registered party or one of his or her delegates, or the financial agent of a third party.

The Canada Elections Act will require online platforms to maintain public access to the new registry for a minimum period of two years after the polling day. This will ensure more transparency on political advertising targeting techniques, as Canadians, including academic researchers and journalists, will be able to take a close look at all messages conveyed by political entities and third parties in their attempts to influence Canadians.

● (1040)

In addition, online tax forms would be required to safeguard the information found in the registry for a total of five years after the polling date. This retention requirement would ensure the commissioner of Canada elections would have sufficient time to initiate investigations and, when necessary, seek access to the contents of the registry.

Of course, political entities and third parties would be legally required to co-operate with online platforms by providing them the

information they need in order to publish them on their registry. Political entities, third parties and online platforms that fail to comply with the new Canada Elections Act requirements could potentially face criminal charges.

The Government of Canada recognizes that some online platforms have already announced voluntary transparency measures of the kind I am talking about today. This is a helpful development, but on subject matter as important as Canada's democracy, voluntary measures are not always sufficient anymore.

The new Canada Elections Act requirements would ensure that all qualifying online platforms would be subject to the same disclosure rules and the same minimum information would be made available in each online platform's registry of political ads. These new requirements, along with the bans on use of foreign funding and on selling of advertising space to foreigners, as well as new financial returns required of third parties during the election period, will go a long way toward affording Canadians a more secure and transparent electoral system.

I strongly encourage all members of the House, across party lines, to support Bill C-76.

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Madam Speaker, there is no more sacred obligation than to ensure our citizens have the opportunity to vote privately in a democratic election and to ensure their identities are who they say they are. However, the government is implying that the voter information cards mailed out to Canadians are identification cards. We know clearly they are not. In the last election, nearly a million of those cards were issued in error.

How can my colleague have confidence in this system that mails out the information cards, many of which are in error and many of which fall into the hands of unscrupulous people when they are thrown into recycle bins at apartment buildings and townhouses? It is an issue that is very important to many people in my riding. I am sure my colleague has heard from constituents in his riding about the concerns they have on using the voter information cards as a voter ID card.

● (1045)

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree: Madam Speaker, I agree with my friend opposite that Canadians' right to vote is sacrosanct. It is a right that is available to every Canadian citizen aged 18 and over. When we vote, we reiterate our citizenship commitment to our country.

I want to clarify that the voter information card is not the only form of identification. It is in fact not an ID. It needs to be coupled with proper identification that verifies who the individual is. Under the Elections Act, it is illegal for anyone to vote who is not eligible to vote. I am confident that Bill C-76 would ensure that all citizens who wanted to vote would be able to vote. While fraud may be an issue in one or two instances, we cannot make public policy based on those very minor infractions that can be enforced through our Elections Act.

Government Orders

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Madam Speaker, the U.S. Treasury Department has found evidence that Russian oligarchs have been funding Tides U.S.A. Tides U.S.A. is known to then funnel money into Canada to interrupt not only our oil business here, but also to influence elections. Bill C-76 would allow a doubling of foreign money to be used.

Why would the Liberal Party allow this when we have seen pure evidence that Russian money is being funnelled through Tides U.S. A. into Tides Canada to influence our elections?

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree: Madam Speaker, Bill C-76 essentially puts severe limitations on third-party advertising. There will be a very well-grounded regime to ensure there is transparency with regard to who those parties are.

Bill C-76 strengthens our democracy from foreign influence. While it imposes certain restrictions on third parties and the influence of foreigners, there are other important mechanisms that the government will undertake to ensure there is security in the Internet, to make sure that foreign influence is curtailed.

It is certainly a problem in parts of the world, and in Canada as well. Bill C-76 is a very important step in addressing this issue.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alupa Clarke (Beauport—Limoilou, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is always an honour to rise to speak in the House.

I would like to say hello to the people of Beauport—Limoilou who are watching us now on CPAC or watching a rebroadcast on Facebook or Twitter.

Without further delay, I would like to address the previous speaker's comments. I find it interesting that he said their objective was to prevent foreign influence from third parties.

The bill will pass, since the Liberals have a majority. However, one problem I have with the bill is that it will allow more than 1.5 million Canadians who have been living outside of Canada for more than five years to vote in general elections, even if they have been outside Canada for 10 or 15 years.

These people have a privilege that even Canadians who have never left the country do not even have. The Liberals will let them randomly choose which riding they want to vote in. This is a massive privilege.

If I were living in the United States for 10 years and saw that the vote was really close in a certain riding, thanks to the new amendments made to the bill, I could decide to vote for the Liberal Party in order to ensure that a Liberal member gets elected. That seems like a very dangerous measure to me. It will give a lot of power to people who have been living abroad for a very long time. That still does not make them foreigners, since they are Canadian citizens.

For those watching us, I want to note that we are talking about Bill C-76 to modernize the Canada Elections Act.

This is an extremely important issue because it is the Canada Elections Act that sets the guidelines for our elections in our democracy. These elections determine the party that will form the next government of Canada.

I am sure that the people of Beauport—Limoilou watching us right now can hardly believe the Liberal government when it says that it wants to improve democracy or Canada's electoral system or allow a lot of people to exercise their right to vote. The Liberals' record on different elements of democracy has been deplorable the past three years.

Two years ago when the House was debating the issue, I was a member of the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates. The Liberals introduced a parliamentary reform that included some rather surprising elements. They wanted to weaken the opposition, thereby weakening roughly 10 million Canadians who voted for the opposition parties, including the Conservative Party, the New Democratic Party, and the Green Party.

They wanted to cut speaking times in the House, which is completely ridiculous. I have said it many times before and I will say it again. An MP currently has the right to speak for 20 minutes. Most of the time, each MP speaks for 10 minutes. Through the reform, the Liberals wanted to cut speaking times from 20 minutes to 10 minutes at all times. The 20-minute speaking slot would no longer exist.

I have a book at home that I love called *The Confederation Debates*. It features speeches by Papineau, Doyon, George-Étienne Cartier, John A. MacDonald, Louis-Hippolyte La Fontaine, among many others that I could name. These great MPs would speak for four, five, six, seven or eight hours without stopping, long into the night.

With their parliamentary reforms, the Liberals wanted to reduce MPs' speaking time to 10 minutes. They wanted to take away our right to speak for 20 minutes. All this was intended to minimize the opposition's speaking time, to stifle debate on various issues.

What they did yesterday was even worse. It was a clear-cut example of their attitude towards parliamentary democracy. They imposed time allocation. In layman's terms, they placed a gag order on a debate on the modernization of the Canada Elections Act. No example could more blatantly demonstrate their ultimate intent, which is to ram the bill through as fast as possible. It is really a shame. They want to ram this down our throats.

There is also what they did in 2015 and 2016 with their practice of cash for access.

● (1050)

When big-time lobbyists want to meet with a minister or the Prime Minister to discuss an issue, they just have to register and pay \$1,500, or \$1,575 now, for the opportunity to influence them.

These are not get-togethers with ordinary constituents. These are get-togethers arranged for the express purpose of giving prominent lobbyists access to top government officials and enabling them to influence decisions.

Here is a great example. The Minister of Finance attended a get-together with Port of Halifax officials and people closely connected to the Port of Halifax. No other Liberal Party MP was there. That is a blatant conflict of interest and cash for access.

Statements by Members

If Canadians have a hard time trusting the Liberals when they say they introduced this bill because they want to enfranchise people or improve democracy and civic engagement, it is also because of all of the promises the Liberals have broken since their election in 2015.

Elections and electoral platforms form the foundations of Canadian democracy. Each party's political platform contains election promises. Personally, I prefer to call them commitments. The Liberals made some big promises. They said they would run small \$10-billion deficits for the first two years and then reduce the deficits. Year after year, however, as they are in their third year of a four-year mandate, they have been running deficits that are much worse: \$30 billion, \$20 billion and, this year, \$19 billion, although their plan projected a \$6-billion deficit.

They broke that promise, but worse still, they broke their promise to return to a balanced budget. As my colleague from Louis-Saint-Laurent has put it so well often enough, this is the first time we are seeing structural deficits outside wartime or a major recession. What is worse, this is the first time a government has had no plan to return to a balanced budget. It defies reason. The Parliamentary Budget Officer, an institution created by the Right Hon. Stephen Harper, said again recently that it is unbelievable to see a government not taking affairs of the state more seriously.

Meanwhile, with respect to infrastructure, the Liberals said they were introducing the largest infrastructure program in Canadian history—everything is always historic with them—worth \$187 billion. What is the total amount spent to date? They have spent, at most, \$7 billion on a few projects here and there, although this was supposed to be a pan-Canadian, structured and large-scale program.

The Liberals also broke their promise to reform the electoral system. They wanted a preferential balloting system because, according to analyses, surveys and their strategists, it would have benefited them. I did not support that promise, but it is probably why so many Canadians voted for the Liberals.

There is then a string of broken promises, but electoral reform was a fundamental promise and the Liberals reneged on it. It would have made changes to the Election Act and to how Canadians choose their government. That clearly shows once again that Canadians cannot trust the Liberals when they say they will reform the Election Act in order to strengthen democracy in Canada.

Let us now get back to the matter at hand, Bill C-76, which makes major fundamental changes that I find deplorable.

First, Bill C-76 would allow the Chief Electoral Officer to authorize the use of the voter information card as a piece of identification for voting. As one of my Conservative colleagues said recently, whether we like it or not, voter cards show up all over, even in recycling boxes. Sometimes voter cards are found sticking out of community mailboxes.

There are all kinds of ways that an individual can get hold of a voter card and go to the polling station with it. It is not that difficult. This Liberal bill enables that individual to vote, although there is no way of knowing if they are that person, unless they are asked to provide identification—and that is not even the biggest problem.

● (1055)

It does not happen often, thank goodness, but when I go to the CHUL in Quebec City—which is the hospital where I am registered—not only do I have to provide the doctor's requisition for blood work, but I also have to show a piece of ID and my hospital card.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member will have another five minutes for questions and comments when we resume debate after question period.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

CANADIAN HERITAGE

Mr. Marc Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Soeurs, Lib.): Madam Speaker, thousands of indigenous people fought in the War of 1812, including on this day, October 26, in 1813. Two hundred and five years ago at the Battle of the Chateauguay, Mohawk warriors from Kahnawake and Kanesatake were fighting a common foe, Ranatakarias, the destroyer of towns, who had destroyed their peoples' villages some 30 years earlier.

The Battle of the Chateauguay is remembered alongside the Battle of Crysler's Farm, which caused American forces to give up their attack on Montreal and abandon their St. Lawrence campaign. On this day, a British force of slightly over 1,500 troops, composed mostly of French Canadian fighters and commanded by Charles de Salaberry, repelled an American offensive twice its size.

Today, six regiments of the Canadian Armed Forces carry battle honours from the conflict: the Royal 22e Régiment, the Canadian Grenadier Guards—"Up the Guards"—the Black Watch; Les Voltigeurs de Québec; Les Fusiliers du St-Laurent; and Le Régiment de la Chaudière.

● (1100)

[Translation]

Canada's history is both rich and complex, but we must remember that on this day 205 years ago the founding peoples of this country joined together to fight a common foe and to lay the foundation for what—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for Calgary Rocky Ridge.

*Statements by Members**[English]***NATURAL RESOURCES**

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Madam Speaker, in the government's last budget, it was noted with some concern that the discount on Alberta crude had averaged \$20 a barrel over the previous year. The budget then went on to predict that, with new pipelines on the way, the differential this year would begin to close, allowing Canadians to get closer to world prices.

The differential has not shrunk. Last week, it hit a staggering \$50 per barrel. This means that under the current government's failed pipeline policies, Canada is subsidizing the American economy by sending discounted oil, along with jobs, investment and lost tax revenue to the United States, while supporting Saudi Arabia by importing its oil.

Therefore, on behalf of thousands of my constituents who depend directly on the energy industry, I call upon the government to stop Bill C-69, stop Bill C-48, quit dithering, table a plan to get the Trans Mountain pipeline built, scrap the carbon tax, and get serious about energy policy.

* * *

WINDSOR/ESSEX SPORTS AWARDS

Ms. Cheryl Hardcastle (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP): Madam Speaker, I congratulate the 2018 Windsor/Essex County Sports Hall of Fame inductees, including Cheryl Damphouse, for golf; Andy Delmore, hockey; Richard Shaw, basketball; and Mary Spencer, boxing.

The sports builders inductees include J. Paul Reddam, thoroughbred racing; Don Marrin, wrestling coaching; Domenic Silvaggio, basketball coaching; and Paul Carter, basketball officiating; the Tecumseh Baseball Club, for its 75 years; and the 2011 to 2015 University of Windsor Women's Basketball Team, for winning five straight championships.

Since 1981, the Windsor/Essex County Sports Hall of Fame has been showcasing and archiving our illustrious sporting achievements. I salute this year's board, headed by Dr. Scott Martyn, Chuck Smith, Charlotte Loaring, Anthony Paniccia, Craig Greenham and Cary Vigneux.

Let us now all get behind the Farrow Riverside Miracle Park and continue to remove the barriers to participation in sport.

* * *

*[Translation]***MERCADOR AWARDS**

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation, Lib.): Madam Speaker, a business in my riding took home top honours in the innovative exporter category at the 20th edition of the MercadOr awards gala, hosted by Laurentides International in Mirabel. That business is LP Aventure, a manufacturer and distributor of Subaru parts located in Brownsburg-Chatham. This company's international development project made it stand head and shoulders above the rest.

I would like to congratulate the president of LP Aventure, Julien Pilon, and all the members of his team on winning this prestigious award.

I am proud of the success of this company in Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation, whose expertise, innovative spirit and passion helped it become a true North American leader in the manufacturing of Subaru sport vehicles.

Congratulations once again to the entire LP Aventure team.

* * *

*[English]***UKRAINIAN INTERNS**

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Madam Speaker, today, I have the honour to rise and congratulate the Ukrainian interns working on the Hill as part of the Canada-Ukraine parliamentary program, whose time in Parliament is rapidly coming to an end. Established in 1991, this program over time has brought almost 1,000 young Ukrainians to Canada to learn about our system of government, our history and our people.

A number of parliamentarians from all parties had the privilege of working with these talented young men and women. We sincerely thank them and hope that in their time here on the Hill they have learned from us, just as we have learned from them.

This is the fifth time I have hosted an intern and I can attest to the fact that it is an excellent cultural and educational exchange between Canada and Ukraine, as well as an opportunity to deepen our national ties.

I would like to thank my intern, Yaroslav, and wish all of them well in the future.

* * *

● (1105)

MENTAL HEALTH

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Madam Speaker, last Friday, I participated in the Bridges of Hope project when it launched at the Hartman Bridge in New Hamburg.

Bridges of Hope is an initiative launched locally by two inspirational grade 12 students from my riding, Gretta Dotzert and Olivia Miller. Their mission is simple: to break the stigma surrounding mental illness by attaching uplifting and positive messages to three frequently travelled pedestrian bridges in the Waterloo region, such as “Your life matters”, “You are not alone”, and “Tomorrow needs you”.

I have often quoted in the House the saying that “Hope is the oxygen of the human spirit. Without it, the spirit dies.” Hope is foundational to mental health recovery and it is contagious. We each have it within us to share with our neighbour. Gretta and Olivia's compassion and desire to help others are an example for all of us. Their message of hope will impact the lives of many in our community, especially those who need encouragement the most. They are not alone. Reach out. Embrace hope.

*Statements by Members**[Translation]***COMMUNITY SOLIDARITY**

Mr. Jean Rioux (Saint-Jean, Lib.): Madam Speaker, two events demonstrating community solidarity were held recently in my riding of Saint-Jean.

I want to commend Lise Boulanger for organizing volunteers to serve meals to people in need on the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty.

I also want to shine a spotlight on the Table en itinérance de Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu. In collaboration with several local organizations, this homeless advocacy group organized our community's first Homeless Night. This awareness-raising event was a reminder of the importance of the work done by the Table en itinérance. In cooperation with Actions Dépendances, it is currently developing an inspiring project to provide services to people facing homelessness.

I would like to congratulate the volunteers and stakeholders for getting involved. Their commitment helps make our country a better place, and I have the utmost respect for them.

* * *

*[English]***DOG GUIDES**

Mr. John Oliver (Oakville, Lib.): Madam Speaker, after visiting the Lions Foundation of Canada Dog Guides in my riding of Oakville, I can truly say that dogs are people's best friend.

When people think of dog guides, they usually think of a dog providing assistance to someone with visual impairment, but these dogs are trained to do much more. Dog guides assist people with hearing impairments, provide seizure response, detect changes in the blood sugar of people with diabetes, support children on the autism spectrum, and help the physically disabled. A dog guide increases the confidence and mobility of those who are affected by impairments, and provide a strong sense of safety and companionship.

Many people in my riding foster puppies before they are ready for training and they are always looking for loving families to adopt the dog when they retire from duty. If anyone is looking for a four-legged hero, look no further than a guide dog of Oakville.

I am so proud to share the incredible work of the Lions Foundation of Canada Dog Guides. I cannot wait to visit again.

* * *

CHILDREN'S VISION MONTH

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am proud to rise in support of Children's Vision Month, which takes place annually in October. I would like to thank the Canadian Association of Optometrists, which took the time to meet me on this topic and share important information.

When children reach six months of age, vision is the most dominant of their senses and forms the basis of their cognitive and social development. Despite this fact, a majority of parents are unaware of the importance of vision for overall health. Uncorrected vision problems interfere with learning, reading and concentrating in

school, which impacts all aspects of a child's growth and development.

Since nearly a quarter of Canadian children have some form of diagnosable vision problem, it is important to recognize the significance of Children's Vision Month and act on it, for the benefit of our children and their futures.

* * *

SMALL BUSINESS

Mrs. Sherry Romanado (Longueuil—Charles-LeMoine, Lib.): Madam Speaker, during Small Business Week, I had the chance to attend a round table with entrepreneurs and winners of the 2018 WISE 50 over 50 Awards.

[Translation]

The winners are bold, innovative Canadian entrepreneurs who started a business after turning 50 and who did whatever it took to turn a long-held dream into reality.

During the lively discussion, I learned more about the particular challenges faced by these incredible men and women.

[English]

When one thinks of entrepreneurs, we often envision young people. What we fail to see is the incredible talents and expertise of our senior entrepreneurs. These entrepreneurs are forces to be reckoned with in the world of business. I salute all seniorpreneurs who are creating jobs, following their passion and proving that entrepreneurship certainly knows no age.

● (1110)

[Translation]

They are truly an inspiration for people of all generations.

* * *

*[English]***HESPELER**

Mr. Marwan Tabbara (Kitchener South—Hespeler, Lib.): Madam Speaker, one of the most historic and picturesque parts of the riding is the village of Hespeler, which was first settled in 1798. It is home to over 70 independent family operated shops, restaurants and services where our community gathers. Nestled beside the Speed River, the traditional old downtown benefits from the stewardship of the Hespeler Business Improvement Area Association, which oversees the beautification and preservation of the historic and traditional character of our village on the river.

The BIA is a non-profit organization, with a membership of over 50 businesses and property owners who fund the association and volunteer their time. This year, the BIA supported more than 20 community events. Two highlights were the lighting of the falls at Jacob's Landing and the annual spring Easter egg hunt.

I thank the members of the Hespeler BIA for the great work they do for our community.

*Statements by Members***CARBON PRICING**

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Madam Speaker, Albertans are struggling, Edmontonians are struggling, and what do we get from the Ottawa Liberals in our time of need? A carbon tax. What is their response to the concerns voiced about the impact of this carbon on everything? It is to take the kids to morning hockey on a bus, renovate our houses, or maybe buy an electric car. That is easy enough to say if someone is a trust-fund millionaire.

People in my riding are already feeling the hit from the Liberal failure on pipelines and the attack on our energy industry with Bill C-69 and the oil tanker ban. Now on top of all that, they are being forced to pay for a carbon tax on everything.

The Liberals preach about the middle-class tax cut, but that tiny amount means nothing when the cost of everything else, including interest rates and debt, is skyrocketing thanks to the government. It is time for the government to start thinking about the individual impacts its policies are having on everyday Canadians rather than pandering to special interest groups.

It is time for the government listen to Albertans and axe this carbon tax.

* * *

VIOLENCE AGAINST GIRLS

Ms. Pam Goldsmith-Jones (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, Lib.): Madam Speaker, Giselle Portenier is an award-winning filmmaker. Her documentary, *In The Name Of Your Daughter*, was chosen to be shown at the international parliamentarians' conference in Ottawa last week.

In The Name Of Your Daughter is about the most courageous girls in the world, the children in Tanzania who risk their lives to defy their parents and the thousands of years old custom of female genital mutilation. Although female genital mutilation is illegal in Tanzania, old customs die hard. Fathers and families believe that this form of torture reduces promiscuity, and they know that mutilated girls command twice the bride price in cows.

This documentary introduces us to the chillingly named “cutting season”, when young African girls know that they are about to be cut, and to Rhobi Samwelly, who protects these girls at her safe house. In Maria's case, her grandmother ordered her to pack a bag and go to her father's village for a mutilation ceremony. Instead, Maria ran away from home and straight to the safe house. “I wish I could save other girls from FGM”, the young girl says, tears streaming down her face. Maria is eight.

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B.C. MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Madam Speaker, last Saturday, British Columbians voted in municipal elections. Hundreds of citizens in South Okanagan—West Kootenay were candidates for mayors, councillors, school board trustees, and regional district directors. Some succeeded and some did not, but I want to congratulate all of them for offering to serve.

Municipal politics is one of the most important and most thankless tasks in the country. I would like to highlight the careers of two

citizens who chose to retire this year and let others carry the torch. One is Tom Siddon, who started in civic politics in Richmond, B.C., then served many years here in this place as a cabinet minister, then retired to Kaleden, in my riding, where he was elected to the school board and served two terms as a regional district director.

The second is Karen Hamling, who was first elected to Nakusp town council in 1987 then served as mayor from 2005 to 2018.

To Karen and Tom, and all those who have served or simply had the courage to run, I say thanks.

* * *

CARBON PRICING

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Niagara Falls, CPC): Madam Speaker, this week the Prime Minister and his government announced that they will force provinces that are not onside with their carbon tax to pay for it anyway. This will affect families from across the nation. The Prime Minister expects Canadians to believe that sunny ways will prevail. In reality, this tax-and-grab scheme will make everyday living more expensive for Canadians commuting to work, feeding their families, or filling their gas tanks.

How in the world can the government expect Canadians to get excited about a \$12.50 per month return, when in reality, they know they will be paying much more. Sunny ways, hardly; it is more like gloomy days.

When will the government start working for Canadians rather than expecting Canadians to work for it?

* * *

● (1115)

INTERNATIONAL ARTIST DAY

Mr. Randy Boissonnault (Edmonton Centre, Lib.): Madam Speaker, yesterday was International Artist Day.

[*Translation*]

Canada has some of the most talented artists and creators in the world. They share our experiences with the world and promote innovation through their creativity.

[*English*]

Edmonton has produced some remarkable talent, enjoyed worldwide. This includes musicians like the late maestros Tommy Banks and Brian Kipping; playwright and actor Darrin Hagen; and recent inductees into Edmonton's Arts and Cultural Hall of Fame, such as saxophone player Raymond Baril, choreographer Shelley Switzer and choirmaster Laurier Fagnan.

Oral Questions

We would not be able to support and celebrate so many artists without all of those who support the arts, from patrons who buy tickets to a Winspear show, the Edmonton Opera or the Art Gallery of Alberta to philanthropists such as Dianne and Irv Kipnes, who have a long legacy of supporting Edmonton and Canadian artists.

We thank and congratulate all artists from coast to coast to coast.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[*Translation*]

FINANCE

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Madam Speaker, the Prime Minister promised Canadians that the budget would return to balance next year. However, this year's deficit is three times higher than what was promised.

The Bank of Canada raised interest rates this week, forcing taxpayers to pay more taxes to cover the interest on our national debt. That money will go to bankers rather than highways and hospitals.

Will the economic statement confirm when the budget will return to balance, yes or no?

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Speaker, in 2015, Canadians had a choice between Conservative cuts and austerity and our plan, which is about investing in infrastructure, reducing inequality and giving more to the middle class.

Clearly, we are achieving results. Canada has had the strongest growth in the G7 in the past year. This summer the OECD confirmed that, by the same time next year, Canadian families will be \$2,000 richer than they were under the previous government, because we are focusing on what matters, which is the well-being of Canadians.

* * *

[*English*]

CARBON PRICING

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Madam Speaker, the question was when the budget will be balanced. We still do not have an answer from the government.

On another subject, the Prime Minister is a high-tax hypocrite. He raised taxes on families by taking away the children's fitness tax credit and by taking away their tuition tax credit and their education tax credit while protecting his tax-funded nannies for himself.

Now he has extended a sweetheart deal to large corporate industrial emitters while forcing others to pay the carbon tax. Will small businesses get the same exemption?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I just want to remind the member that it is not parliamentary language to call other members names, so I would hope he would excuse his language after the fact.

The hon. Minister of Environment and Climate Change.

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am happy to stand up and talk about our climate plan, because I am always hopeful that the other side will learn to understand that, one, climate change is real; two, we need to take action; and three, there is an economic opportunity.

Let me talk about what folks are saying about our plan. The CEO of the Toronto Region Board of Trade said:

...a successful price on carbon should be transparent, revenue neutral and provide support for trade-exposed industries.

The Board is encouraged with today's announcement...largely satisfies these objectives. We look forward to working with the federal government to ensure the support provided to small-and medium-sized businesses helps them remain competitive.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is no surprise that CEOs are happy with the Liberal carbon tax. That is part of the high-tax hypocrisy. They get exempted if they run large industrial corporations. They get a 90% exemption on their emissions, while small businesses like plumbers, carpenters and pizza shop owners will pay the tax on 100% of the energy they use to run their businesses.

I have a simple yes or no question. Will small businesses get the same exemption from the Liberal carbon tax as the large industrial emitters? Yes or no.

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Madam Speaker, Canadians want to know, yes or no, do the Conservatives have a climate plan that is going to meet their target. Canadians would love to see this climate plan.

Let us be clear. We have put a price on pollution for everyone, whether a small business or a big business or all Canadians, because we know that polluting is not free. We have done this in a way that makes sense, that ensures that companies are competitive and that will also put more money in the pockets of Canadians.

We know everyone wants to be part of the solution, because everyone is feeling the impacts of climate change, and they also understand the huge economic opportunity of clean growth.

● (1120)

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member still does not answer the question. She is giving an exemption to the large corporate industrial emitters. They get a 90% writeoff on the carbon tax, whereas small businesses, which are the engine of job creation and growth in the country, will have to pay the tax on 100% of the energy they consume. It is just like when the Prime Minister protects his personal trust fund.

Will the government end the high-tax hypocrisy and extend the same exemption to our small businesses, yes or no?

Oral Questions

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am always pleased to stand up and, once again, explain how our climate plan works in the hope that the Conservatives will finally have a climate plan that meets the target.

We have a plan that ensures that everyone pays a price on pollution, but the approach we have taken for large emitters should be an approach the Conservatives would support, because presumably, they want good jobs to stay in Canada, they want big businesses to reduce their emissions, and they also want us to grow the economy. That is the approach we have taken. It is the approach followed in Europe. It is the approach followed in Alberta. It is the approach followed in Quebec, in California and in China.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): There is the admission, Madam Speaker, that we were looking for. The minister said that we should support her exemption on the carbon tax for large industrial emitters, because that will keep jobs here in Canada, which means that applying that same tax to small businesses, which are the largest creators of jobs, will actually send jobs out of Canada. That is her admission. She admits the carbon tax will drive jobs out of this country.

If that is the case for large industrial corporations, and that is why they are getting an exemption, will the minister extend that exemption to small businesses, yes or no?

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Madam Speaker, once again, do not take it from me that our climate plan works. Take it from Mark Carney, the Governor of the Bank of England, who said:

You need a price on carbon, a price on pollution..... Canada, as of today, we have both... [It] unlock[s]...investment decisions which will make for a more...low carbon economy.

The executive director of the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment said:

We strongly support this legislation. As health professionals, we are deeply concerned about the impacts that climate change is having, and will have, on the health of Canadians and people around the world.

Why do the Conservatives insist on making pollution free?

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INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Madam Speaker, indigenous leaders have been calling on the Liberal government to fix its broken NEB process that approved the Trans Mountain pipeline.

This week, Grand Chief Stewart Phillip said, it is “absolutely amazing that the prime minister is without conscience, without any sense of responsibility to the citizens of this country and future generations”.

The Liberals claim that their most important relationship is with indigenous peoples, but that means nothing if they will not do the right thing.

Will the Liberals start listening and cancel the pipeline expansion once and for all?

Mr. Paul Lefebvre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we understand that protecting the environment, growing the economy and respecting indigenous peoples can be done at the same time. The NDP does not.

The Federal Court of Appeal has provided us with a very clear path to move this project forward in the right way, and that is what we are doing. I encourage members of the NDP to read the whole TMX decision, not just the parts they agree with.

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NATURAL RESOURCES

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Clearly, Madam Speaker, the government just does not get it when it comes to the environment and the broken NEB process.

The definition of insanity is doing the same thing again and again and expecting a different result. Let us look at the facts. Indigenous leaders are saying it is broken. Environmental groups are saying it is broken. Residents of B.C. and Canadians from coast to coast are saying it is broken. What do the Liberals do? They try this failed approach one more time.

What will it take for the government to acknowledge that the process is broken and drop the expansion?

Mr. Paul Lefebvre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Madam Speaker, obviously we are following the Federal Court of Appeal's decision and the direction it has provided us with. It has told us that we need to consult more with indigenous communities affected by the TMX pipeline, and that is exactly what we are doing right now. We respect the court's decision, and we are moving forward in the right way with meaningful dialogue.

That is exactly what Canadians expect of us, and that is what we are delivering.

● (1125)

[Translation]

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Madam Speaker, the Liberals fancy themselves champions of the environment, but everyone knows that is just a facade.

Behind the smiles and lofty rhetoric, behind closed doors, the Liberals are busy giving a free pass to their friends in the oil industry and using our money to buy pipelines like Trans Mountain.

When the Conservatives promise to bring back energy east, a pipeline that Quebeckers soundly rejected, the so-called champions of the environment leave the door wide open.

Are the 40 Liberal MPs from Quebec prepared to promise to never resurrect energy east?

Mr. Paul Lefebvre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise to answer that question.

Oral Questions

The energy east project was a business decision by TransCanada. Oddly enough, some NDP MPs support the LNG Canada project, which will create roughly 10,000 jobs in the riding represented by the hon. member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley. That will be one of the safest projects in the world when it comes to the environment.

They pick and choose which pipelines to approve, while our goal is to ensure that Canadians are happy with the system that we are putting in place.

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Madam Speaker, we do not pick and choose; we listen to what people tell us. We have been asking this question for weeks, and the government has been giving us non-answers on energy east the whole time.

There is massive opposition to energy east. People in Trois-Rivières, Montreal, Quebec City and in the regions all know that this pipeline puts the St. Lawrence River and many of its waterways at risk. Ottawa is not listening. The official opposition is promising to resurrect the pipeline, and the government refuses to shut the door on it for good.

When will the Liberals listen to Quebeckers and say no to energy east, once and for all?

Mr. Paul Lefebvre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the NDP obviously does not understand how countries approve or reject major projects.

In the TMX project case, the Court of Appeal told us that protecting the environment and consulting indigenous peoples must go hand in hand. Canadians expect us to respect the environment, indigenous peoples and, at the same time, Canadian jurisprudence.

The Conservatives do not yet understand all this, and the NDP clearly knows nothing about such things.

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CARBON PRICING

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Madam Speaker, this question period is very informative.

Earlier, when asked a question by the member for Carleton, the Minister of Environment and Climate Change finally acknowledged that large emitters will not pay 100% of the tax because that could result in job losses. The Liberal carbon tax could affect jobs.

The question for the minister is very simple. Why is there a double standard?

Why will small businesses pay 100%, while large emitters get a 90% writeoff?

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Madam speaker, I am really surprised by this Quebec member. Every political party in Quebec, both federal and provincial, supports carbon pricing.

Why does the federal Conservative Party and the member from Quebec not support a price on pollution? We know that we must tackle climate change and that there is a cost to pollution. I hope that the member will listen to Quebeckers, who want us to address climate change, want a price on pollution and want a clean economy.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Madam Speaker, Conservatives respect the will of the provinces. Every province should be able to do what it wants, but the Liberal government is imposing its will on the provinces.

I also want to point out that Quebec's system treats everyone equally. Be they large, small or medium-sized, all emitters are treated the same.

Why does the Liberal Party have a double standard, unlike Quebec, which respects everyone?

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would suggest that the member talk to someone in Quebec who knows the system. Our approach for large emitters is the same approach based on the same principles we see in Quebec, Europe and China.

We want to make sure that Canadian companies doing business abroad are more competitive, reduce their emissions and create good jobs here in Canada.

[English]

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Madam Speaker, Canadians know there is no way the Liberal carbon tax will save money. Ferguson Fancy Beans in my riding says that the Liberal Wynne carbon tax alone cost them over \$50,000 last year.

On an admission of her own policy, the environment minister admitted that 90% of the exemption for big emitters focused on keeping jobs in Canada. Will the government extend this to Ferguson Fancy Beans as well?

● (1130)

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will once again turn to experts. Stephen Harper's former director of policy stated:

We think the federal government is doing the right thing in putting a price on carbon in those provinces that have not done so, and in returning the money directly to households. This will...will encourage lower emissions, while also ensuring that Canadian families will not be negatively affected.

Dale Beugin, the executive director of Ecofiscal Commission, stated, "Bigger households get bigger cheques" and "more most households, rebates will larger than their carbon pricing costs. Households will see net gains."

Mr. Robert Kitchen (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC): Madam Speaker, Bert Baxter Transport, a family owned and operated company in my riding, will deeply feel the consequences of the Prime Minister's failure to support small businesses in Canada. The forced Liberal carbon tax will increase the annual cost of diesel fuel for its trucks by over \$400,000 dollars by 2022. It will have to choose between charging its customers more or laying off many of its employees. Where is its discount?

Oral Questions

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Madam Speaker, whether one is a trucker, a farmer, a small business owner, an environmentalist or a child, we are all paying the cost of climate change right now. We are paying the cost through extreme weather events like floods, droughts, forest fires. Ninety people died in Quebec this summer because of extreme heat. The cost to Canadians have gone from \$400 million to over a billion dollars. The UN climate report projects that the cost to the world will be in the trillions of dollars if we do not take action now.

It is not free to pollute, it should not be free to pollute and our government will not allow it to be free to pollute.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Madam Speaker, Boombata Homes is an innovative company that will be hit hard by the Liberal carbon tax imposed on Saskatchewan businesses. It means that families working hard to afford a home will now face even higher prices. It also means that the Liberal affordable housing program will be more expensive.

Jason and Susan know what it will mean for their business, their subcontractors and their construction workers. They know an election gimmick when they see one. Why do large corporations get exemptions from the government and they do not?

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Madam Speaker, when I talk to small businesses, and I have talked to small businesses across the country, what do they want to do? They want to do right by the environment. They want to be more energy efficient, save money and lower their emissions.

I will give the example of VariForm. It is a steel manufacturer in Cambridge. What did it do? It reduced its emissions by 80% and saved a million dollars.

We are going to support small businesses to be more energy efficient so they can save money to reinvest in their businesses and create more jobs.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Madam Speaker, we had a really deep dive into Liberal ideology earlier in question period with respect to the carbon tax. The minister admitted that large emitters would be exempt to save Canadian jobs, yet small and medium-sized enterprises, which employ 80% of Canadians, will not be exempt.

Why are these businesses and those jobs less important to the Liberals than large emitters? Is this not just another attack on small business?

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is always so surprising to hear the other side talk about how much they care about jobs. We reduced the small business tax rate to 9%. We have created more than 500,000 jobs for Canadians. We have the lowest unemployment rate in decades.

What are we also going to do? We are going to tackle climate change. We are going to save businesses money by helping them be more energy efficient.

At the end of the day, we are going to do what is critically important, which is to ensure we have a sustainable planet for our kids.

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JUSTICE

Ms. Cheryl Hardcastle (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP): Madam Speaker, a French court that was supposed to rule today on a decision that released Hassan Diab from a French prison and allowed him to come home to Canada has pushed that decision to next year. This nightmare saga has persisted for over a decade. However, the government insists on carrying out a narrow review that will not even look at reforming our deeply flawed extradition regime.

Why will the government not do the right thing and call a public inquiry?

Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Madam Speaker, our government recognizes there is a legitimate interest in better understanding the process that led to Dr. Diab's original extradition under the previous government. The Minister of Justice has asked for an external third party review of this matter so a thorough review, examining the circumstances of that extradition to France, can take place.

That independent external review is being led by Murray Segal. Mr. Segal has been given the tools, access and discretion necessary to conduct a thorough review of the case. We look forward to his report.

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•(1135)

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Madam Speaker, Germany has cut off arms sales to the Saudi regime. There is no way the current government can justify this arms deal to the house of Saud.

Here is a simple plan. One, we cancel the deal as there is not an international body anywhere that will take the side of the Saudis. Two, we impose the Magnitsky sanctions on these criminals. Three, we repurpose the plant in London to build military vehicles for our troops that need the upgrades.

As for the Saudi crown prince, will the government do the right thing and tell him that we do not apologize to tyrants and that he can go stuff his objections?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Pam Goldsmith-Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs (Consular Affairs), Lib.): Madam Speaker, we condemn the murder of Jamal Khashoggi. We demand that Canadian arms exports be used in a manner that respects human rights. That is why we are committed to a stronger and more rigorous arms export system.

As the Prime Minister said yesterday, we are actively reviewing existing export permits to Saudi Arabia.

Oral Questions

[English]

ETHICS

Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on November 20, 2015, James Cudmore, the CBC's military affairs reporter, broke a story. The first sentence read, "The new Liberal government is delaying approval of a deal to convert a civilian cargo ship into a badly needed military supply vessel."

On December 21, Mr. Cudmore wrote his last story about controversial problems in the navy's procurement program.

His last official day at the CBC was January 8. He started work for the defence minister four days later. However, on what day did the minister offer Mr. Cudmore a job?

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Madam Speaker, again, I will quote sections on the *sub judice* convention principle outlined in chapter 13 of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, third edition. The convention "recognizes the courts, as opposed to the House, as the proper forum in which to decide individual cases...as Speaker Fraser noted, "to maintain a separation and mutual respect between legislative and judicial branches of government".

Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC): Madam Speaker, the Conflict of Interest Act says, "a public office holder is in a conflict of interest when he or she exercises an official power, duty or function that provides an opportunity...to improperly further another person's private interests."

We know ministers often hire journalists for their communications skills to promote government policies. This seems to be the first time a journalist has been hired to block his communications skills to shut him up.

Therefore, the date is important. When did the minister hire Mr. Cudmore and give him a job?

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I was told that the date was provided—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I would ask members to allow the parliamentary secretary to answer the question. If they have other questions, they will be able to stand.

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: Madam Speaker, the *sub judice* rule dictates that members are expected to refrain from discussing matters that are before the courts or tribunals, which are courts of record. Therefore, we will not be making further comment on that.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Madam Speaker, that is completely untrue. Our leader's office was not told the date on which Mr. Cudmore was hired or offered a job. I cannot understand how the 40 MPs from Quebec can accept such ridiculous answers from the government on this. With respect to the Irving lobby, Mario Dumont recently said on the air, "I cannot believe that the 40 Liberal government MPs from Quebec would agree to feel less influential than a family of business people."

My question is very simple. Will one of the 40 members from Quebec finally stand up and ask the Prime Minister to defend Davie workers? Will they tell us when James Cudmore was offered a job?

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the government will not comment or speculate on any matter that is currently before the courts. On this side of the House, we believe in an independent judiciary. I would remind the member that the *sub judice* rule can be breached and violated by public statements that risk prejudicing matters or issues that are before the courts.

● (1140)

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Madam Speaker, we are asking for a date, not a comment. Just a date. That is all we are asking for at this point. What is so secret about a date, a day, month and year? Every date is public. I have a calendar here with plenty of dates on it. Plenty. It is like a multiple choice question. None of the dates are marked confidential.

What I am asking is simple and the public has a right to know. On what date did the Liberal government offer James Cudmore a job? It is simple.

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the role of the House of Commons is to help develop public policy and the laws needed to implement that policy. Police forces investigate and lay charges. The courts decide individual cases. Accordingly, it would be inappropriate to comment on this matter.

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[English]

POVERTY

Ms. Tracey Ramsey (Essex, NDP): Madam Speaker, in my riding of Essex, one in four kids lives in poverty. That is unacceptable. Our food banks are strained, there is a lack of affordable housing and hope for a minimum wage increase was just shattered by Doug Ford. The cancelled basic income pilot project in Ontario was helping us gather critical information on how to reduce poverty levels.

While Ford continues to attack the most vulnerable, the Liberals are turning a blind eye. The New Democrats join our leader Jagmeet Singh and call on the Liberals to continue this program.

Will Liberals help or are they going to turn their backs on vulnerable Ontarians too?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am so pleased to talk about the importance of reducing poverty in Canada. It has been the objective of our government since 2015.

Oral Questions

We started by introducing the most innovative social policy in a generation, the Canada child benefit, which is lifting 300,000 children out of poverty every month and 200,000 parents at the same time.

We have launched, in August, the first-ever poverty reduction strategy, which is going to reduce poverty for a further 100,000 people in Canada by March 2019. We look forward to working with other governments to ensure this is well understood.

* * *

HOUSING

Ms. Sheri Benson (Saskatoon West, NDP): Madam Speaker, the application process for the government's co-investment fund is onerous and complicated for non-profits. On the other hand, the rental construction financing initiative geared to the private sector has less stringent criteria for affordability, environmental assessment and accessibility.

Why do non-profit groups have to jump through more hoops to get similar benefits? Will the minister listen to feedback and allow flexibility so these non-profits can get down to work?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we have been so pleased and so proud to work since 2015 with a number of partners in Canada. I have been waiting for a long time for the first ever national housing strategy of this country to be launched in November 2017. We have been delighted with the level of input and the quality of the advice that they were giving to us. We look forward to working with them over the next 10 years on this \$40 billion-plus investment in the homes of all Canadians, in particular the more vulnerable ones.

* * *

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Randy Boissonnault (Edmonton Centre, Lib.): Madam Speaker, no relationship is more important to Canada than that with indigenous peoples and our government is committed to building renewed relationships based on recognition of rights and mutual respect. The Lubicon were left out when Treaty 8 was signed in 1899, and as a result, they have been negotiating with the government for almost 40 years over their rightful title to lands and treaty benefits.

Could the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations update the House on reconciliation with the Lubicon Lake Band?

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for his ongoing advocacy. This week, we took a historic step forward on the path of reconciliation with the Lubicon Lake Band. After decades of negotiations, our government, the Government of Alberta and the Lubicon Lake Band have reached agreements to finally address this historic injustice of land, compensation and community infrastructure.

As Chief Billy Joe said, this means a brighter future, a brighter economic future for their people. We acknowledge Premier Notley and her late father, the late Jim Prentice, generations of Lubicon Lake—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock.

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● (1145)

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC): Madam Speaker, Bill C-69 is putting a chill on investment in Canada's natural resources sector. The president of the Indian Resource Council said, "Bill C-69 will harm Indigenous economic development, create barriers to decision-making, and make Canada unattractive for resource investment."

This legislation must be stopped. To make matters worse, under the current Prime Minister, Canadian energy investment has seen its biggest decline in more than 70 years.

When will the natural resources minister kill this bill?

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we are very pleased with Bill C-69. Why? Because we listened to indigenous peoples. We listened to business people. We listened to people in the resource sector. We listened to environmentalists, because what did we commit to? We committed to getting our resources to market, but we also committed to rebuilding a trust in how we do environmental assessments.

We have come up with a system that engages indigenous peoples early, that has shorter and tighter timelines as businesses were requesting. It also ensures that we make decisions based on science. We know to get our resources to market in a responsible way we need a proper process. That is exactly what we—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for Calgary Midnapore.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Madam Speaker, thanks to the Liberals, energy investment in Canada has seen its biggest decline in more than 70 years. Canadian businesses are dying, people are losing their jobs and tens of billions of dollars are going to the U.S. economy instead of ours. The Prime Minister's "no more pipelines" bill will only make it worse. Will the Prime Minister—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): There seems to be a problem with translation.

Before I continue, I notice that I just missed out on one MP, so I will go back and then I will come back to the member.

The hon. member for Calgary Rocky Ridge.

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Madam Speaker, the Liberals' "no more pipelines" bill was passed by this House with the shameful support of three Alberta Liberals. However, it is not too late to stop it.

Oral Questions

Last week, the Alberta Chamber of Commerce told the finance committee that any pipeline company under Bill C-69 would be foolish to even apply for any type of pipeline, while the Alberta crude differential hit \$50 last week.

Will the minister from Alberta do the right thing and kill this bill before it becomes the “no more pipelines” law?

Mr. Paul Lefebvre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Madam Speaker, once again, I would like to tell the House about the important investment that LNG Canada is making in a pipeline that is going to new markets, that is being built in Kitimat. It is a \$40-billion investment, the largest ever private investment. It is going to create 10,000 jobs.

Obviously the Conservatives do not want to talk about that. At the end of the day, the Conservatives failed to bring any new pipelines to new markets in 10 years. We will take no lessons from them.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Madam Speaker, thanks to the Liberals, energy investment in Canada has seen its biggest decline in more than 70 years.

Canadian businesses are dying, people are losing their jobs and tens of billions of dollars are going to the U.S. economy instead of ours.

The Prime Minister's “no more pipelines” bill will only make it worse. Will the Prime Minister stand up for Canadian workers, businesses and our economy, and scrap Bill C-69?

Mr. Paul Lefebvre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Madam Speaker, let me repeat my answer, because obviously my colleague did not listen or did not hear what I had to say with respect to the \$40-billion investment. It is the largest investment in Canadian history with respect to our natural resources market.

At the end of the day, Conservatives failed to bring any new pipelines to new markets. We are making sure that we are going to do it in the right way. We are following the Court of Appeal's decision, making sure that we are respecting indigenous peoples and respecting the environment. That is exactly what we intend to do. We will make sure that we get it right.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I just want to remind members that they may not like the answers, but I would ask that they listen so that we can get to the next question in the proper fashion, and also so that I can hear the answer.

Mr. Dane Lloyd (Sturgeon River—Parkland, CPC): Madam Speaker, what the Liberals fail to mention is that the \$40-billion project is exempt from their job-killing carbon tax.

Now the Liberals' “no more pipelines” bill, Bill C-69, is a threat to the livelihood of Canadians who depend on the energy sector for employment. New carbon taxes, downstream emissions, regulations and now Bill C-69 will end energy investment in Canada as we know it.

The record is clear. The Liberals have failed to get a pipeline built, and it is time for them to scrap this legislation. Will the Minister of Natural Resources from Alberta do the right thing and kill this bill?

● (1150)

Mr. Paul Lefebvre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Madam Speaker, after 10 years of inaction under the Harper Conservatives, 99% of the oil, back in 2006, was being brought to and sold to the U.S. markets. In 2015, when they were voted out of office, it was the same thing, 99% of the oil was going to U.S. markets.

We are making sure that we are doing things in the proper way. We are following the court decision to make sure that we bring our oil to new markets.

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[Translation]

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, after a year and a half of work and several million dollars to try to fix the many problems with the Phoenix pay system, public servants are still not getting paid properly. Several unions have suggested that there are sufficient resources within the system to build an effective system without having to wait for a whole new one.

Solutions are available. Is the government exploring them?

When will the government announce the next step in finding a fair solution for our public servants?

Hon. Carla Qualtrough (Minister of Public Services and Procurement and Accessibility, Lib.): Madam Speaker, there are two ways to move forward regarding the Phoenix pay system. My way is about stabilizing the system for public service employees. Meanwhile, the President of the Treasury Board is taking a different path and working on bringing in a new system. Of course he is working with the unions. We will fix it together.

[English]

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I think people need to hear a more concrete answer in terms of how we will make progress. That is why people doubt that we will make progress in a timely way. It is why civilian members of the RCMP are upset that the government has reversed a previous commitment not to put them on the Phoenix payroll system until it is fixed and instead has created an arbitrary deadline of 2020, where come what may it will put those RCMP members on the payroll system.

Why are the Liberals risking doing material damage to the men and women of the RCMP when the payroll system is not ready to go and will they reverse the decision?

Hon. Carla Qualtrough (Minister of Public Services and Procurement and Accessibility, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I can assure everyone in the House that we are leaving no stone unturned to resolve the issues related to the Phoenix pay system. We are seeing progress. Yes, it is slow.

Oral Questions

We have reduced the backlog by 100,000 cases since January of this year. We have reduced the backlog of departments that are within the pay pod system by 21%. In the same time, we have paid out \$1.5 billion in back pay with respect to collective agreements that were not negotiated by the previous government.

We are doing everything we can. We have 1,500 people working on this in the pay centre, and we are absolutely committed to getting this done.

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HEALTH

Mr. Bob Saroya (Markham—Unionville, CPC): Madam Speaker, the opioid crisis is growing every year. The number of deaths due to overdose are increasing at an alarming rate. In 2016, there were just over 3,000 opioid related deaths in Canada. In 2017, the number jumped to almost 4,000. That is a 33% increase over just one year.

These are preventable deaths. When will we see the real plan from the government to address this very troubling issue?

Mr. John Oliver (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Speaker, our government is deeply concerned about the tragic effect of the opioid crisis across the country. To address the crisis, we have responded through significant new federal investments, enacting new legislation and fast-tracking regulatory action. Going forward, we continue to address the crisis by increasing access to treatment, supporting innovative approaches and harm reduction and addressing stigma-related opioid use.

We will continue to work with our stakeholders to bring forward solutions that save lives and turn the tide of this national public health crisis.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Madam Speaker, that answer is not good enough. Sixteen Canadians are dying every day. In fact, more people are dying in Canada each year from the opioid crisis than from homicide, suicide and traffic accidents combined.

The response of the Liberal government has been totally inadequate. It spent four times as much to legalize cannabis as it has trying to prevent and treat opioid addiction. When will the government take meaningful action to eliminate this crisis?

Mr. John Oliver (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Speaker, again, our government is incredibly concerned about the opioid crisis and the price it has for Canadians and on families. Building on our actions to date, through budget 2018, we are investing \$231 million for additional measures to help address the opioid crisis, including \$150 million for emergency treatment funding for provinces and territories. We earmarked \$100 million to support the Canadian drug and substance strategy and restored harm reduction as a core pillar. We are approving urgent funding to provinces hardest hit by the crisis.

We will continue to work with the provinces and territories to address this crisis.

• (1155)

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Madam Speaker, again, that is totally inadequate. The United States has recognized

opioid addiction as a crisis and it has spent 30 times the amount that was just announced. It has focused its efforts to prevent over-prescription and to prevent drugs from coming in its country.

Could the health minister tell the House what actions have been taken to increase treatment capacity for the thousands of Canadians who need it.

Mr. John Oliver (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Speaker, as I said, we have earmarked \$100 million to support the Canadian drug and substances strategy. Unlike the Conservative government that was hard on crime and punishment, we are treating this as a harm reduction. We are looking for health strategy and science-based interventions to help people who are suffering from dependency on opioids.

We have also addressed the manufacturing. We have required Canadian labelling for all prescription opioids to clarify their recommended dosing, limited the quantity of opioids that should be prescribed for acute pain and have strengthened the warnings to people that this drug could create dependency. Our government supported the passage of the—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for Hull—Aylmer.

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[Translation]

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Greg Fergus (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we have known for years that the Conservative Party's idea of helping Canadian families is to send cheques to millionaires.

That is what they did under Stephen Harper and the fact that they voted against the Canada child benefit and indexing that benefit shows that they have not changed one bit.

Could the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development remind the House why the Canada child benefit has been described as the most significant social policy innovation in a generation?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Madam Speaker, let me begin by commending the hon. member for Hull—Aylmer on the invaluable support he provides to families in his riding.

Since July 2016, the Canada child benefit has been putting more tax-free money in the hands of nine out of 10 families. Since July 2016, the Canada child benefit has lifted 300,000 children and their 200,000 parents out of poverty. Since July 2018, the Canada child benefit has been indexed, meaning that it has increased with the cost of living.

Our government is committed to helping middle-class families, not just millionaires. Our Canada child benefit is a shining example of that.

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Hon. Steven Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Madam Speaker, the Minister of National Defence is contradicting himself. Canada needs two supply ships. It says so in its own defence policy, which was unveiled with great fanfare in 2017.

Why is the Minister of National Defence not awarding the *Obelix* contract to the Davie shipyard? Why is it abandoning Davie's workers and Quebec's economy?

Davie had 1,500 workers under the Conservative government. Now it has just a handful, barely 100.

When are the Liberals going to take action and protect our national security?

[English]

Hon. Seamus O'Regan (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I can assure the hon. member that this government has put more money into national defence in the past three years.

We will continue to investigate that inquiry. I will be sure to take that back to the minister.

* * *

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.): Madam Speaker, with November 1 around the corner, parliamentarians and Canadians will be waiting for the immigration levels plan.

This past year, our minister announced an ambitious plan to grow our economy, to help the middle class and lead the world in welcoming those who are most vulnerable.

Will the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship please inform the House on what to expect on November 1.

Mr. Matt DeCoursey (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Madam Speaker, my hon. colleague from Nepean and all Canadians can expect good news on November 1. It is clear that the hon. member understands that a strong immigration plan is key to driving economic growth and creating good middle-class jobs for Canadians.

That is why our government will continue to recruit top global talent, why we will resettle the world's most vulnerable, and why we will reunite families again, cleaning up the backlog left to us by the Harper Conservatives. We will build upon the record \$30 billion contributed to Canada by international visitors and students last year alone.

* * *

● (1200)

[Translation]

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Mr. Alupa Clarke (Beauport—Limoulu, CPC): Madam Speaker, for the past two years, official language minority

Oral Questions

communities have been speaking out loud and clear to demand an in-depth review and modernization of the Official Languages Act.

The act was last reviewed in 1988 by us, the Conservatives.

Yesterday, the Senate tabled a report that reached the same conclusion. That conclusion was echoed by the Commissioner of Official Languages last week before the Standing Committee on Official Languages.

The Liberals announced some interesting measures yesterday, but they will not come into effect until 2023.

When will the Liberals stop taking linguistic communities hostage? When will they finally take action and start modernizing the Official Languages Act?

Mrs. Alaina Lockhart (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Tourism, Official Languages and La Francophonie, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we have heard the cries for help from our francophone communities, and we remain committed to protecting and promoting bilingualism. After conducting extensive consultations, we announced an in-depth review of the official languages regulations. The proposed changes will support and strengthen francophone communities across the country.

It was the Liberal government that created the Official Languages Act, and it is the Liberal government that is taking the necessary steps to support our minority communities and the French fact across Canada.

* * *

CANADIAN HERITAGE

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Madam Speaker, the ADISQ gala will be held on Sunday. The past 14 presidents of the organization believe that the government should take this opportunity to give creators some good news.

Streaming services such as Spotify and Apple Music must be forced to pay creators more, make a financial contribution to our culture and showcase Quebec content. Consultations and ad hoc measures are not going to make that happen.

Will the government bring in legislation on e-commerce and ensure that laws also apply online?

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Multiculturalism (Multiculturalism), Lib.): Madam Speaker, we, on this side of the House, are here for our artists, artisans and creators. We made that very clear with our cultural policy last year.

[English]

We have made historic investments of \$3.2 billion in the cultural sector, including the CBC, the Canada Council for the Arts, Telefilm and the NFB.

Due to the previous Conservative government's inaction, our laws on culture predate the Internet, which is why we are reviewing them so that we can continue to support high-quality Canadian production. The principle of this review is clear. If one is a participant in the system, one will continue to—

Routine Proceedings

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for Joliette.

* * *

[*Translation*]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Madam Speaker, they will not be announcing anything on the weekend.

The government is going to review the export permits for arms sold to Saudi Arabia to get answers to what happened to Jamal Khashoggi.

Do we really need to spell it out for them? The regime had no qualms about murdering this journalist in cold blood, sentencing Raif Badawi to lashings and incarcerating his sister, callously starving the children of Yemen, and repressing its own people with the armoured vehicles purchased from Canada. The government has all the answers it needs.

Will the government stop selling tanks to assassins?

Ms. Pam Goldsmith-Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs (Consular Affairs), Lib.): Madam Speaker, we are working with our allies to evaluate the options. We are currently reviewing export permits for Saudi Arabia.

All exports must meet the conditions set out in the permits. We have frozen permits in the past and we will not hesitate to do so again.

* * *

FINANCE

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Madam Speaker, I do need to spell it out.

Last week the government quietly wrote off a \$2.5-billion loan to Chrysler, paid for by taxpayers, without even recording in the public accounts who received the money.

The secrets do not end there. GM has had a loan of over \$1 billion for nearly 10 years, and interest keeps adding up.

All week we have been asking about what is going on with the GM debt, and the government has been telling us about Chrysler. GM and Chrysler are not the same thing.

Who is going to pay off the GM debt, GM or taxpayers?

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the debt the member is referring to was written off as part of an agreement made by the previous government.

We looked at all options to try to recover the money for Canadian taxpayers, but ultimately, the contract had been signed by the former government.

• (1205)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): That concludes question period for today.

The hon. member for Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis on a point of order.

Hon. Steven Blaney: Madam Speaker, I am rising on a point of order.

I think there was a problem with the translation during question period, because the Minister of Veterans Affairs did not really answer my question. To clarify, I have the defence policy of the Canadian government, from his colleague the Minister of National Defence and—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I am sorry, but that is not a point of order; it is a point of debate.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[*English*]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8) I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to 32 petitions.

* * *

PETITIONS

JUSTICE

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have two petitions to present today.

The first petition is with respect to Bill C-75. This bill would reduce the penalty for serious crimes such as forceable confinement of a minor, polygamy, terrorist acts, etc. The petitioners are calling on the Prime Minister to defend the safety and security of all Canadians by withdrawing Bill C-75.

FIREARMS

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Madam Speaker, the other petition is in regard to Bill C-71, an act to amend regulations related to firearms. It would do nothing to tackle firearms violence, but would add further red tape to law-abiding firearms owners. Therefore, the petitioners are calling upon the House of Commons to scrap Bill C-71 and to devote greater resources to policing in Canada.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

ELECTIONS MODERNIZATION ACT

The House resumed consideration of Bill C-76, An Act to amend the Canada Elections Act and other Acts and to make certain consequential amendments, as reported (with amendments) from the committee, and of the motions in Group No. 1.

Mrs. Celina Caesar-Chavannes (Whitby, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I listened to my hon. colleague's speech. He spent some time talking about the fact we have introduced time allocation on this legislation. We know that time allocation is necessary to advance legislation and to do the work that Canadians have sent us here to do.

I want to remind the hon. colleague that, through the committee and other work that has been done, over 85% of the recommendations made by the Chief Electoral Officer were included in Bill C-76. We heard 56 hours of witness testimony. There were 24 hours of study at committee and 36 hours of study on the recommendations of the Chief Electoral Officer. In total, over 100 hours of study have gone into what we now see as a very comprehensive piece of legislation.

I wonder why the hon. member thinks we should take any lessons from his party. When the Conservatives introduced Bill C-23, they had less than 50 hours of study of that legislation.

[Translation]

Mr. Alupa Clarke (Beauport—Limoilou, CPC): Madam Speaker, just to check, I would like to know whether I have five minutes left. I am not sure.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): There are five minutes remaining for questions and comments. I checked and that is right.

Mr. Alupa Clarke: I believe you, of course, Madam Speaker.

That is completely ridiculous in the current context. My colleague is talking about something that happened a number of years ago. However, in the current context, there are practically no bills. The government's legislative agenda is practically non-existent. What is it introducing right now?

The Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership has been signed. We are waiting for the USMCA to be examined here in the House so that it can be ratified. We voted only once this week. We are beginning to wonder what we are doing here. The Liberal government is not introducing any meaningful legislation. This week, we had the opportunity to debate an extremely important bill, and the government imposed a gag order on us. Looking at the government's legislative agenda, it seems that we should have been able to take as much time as we needed to discuss that bill.

• (1210)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I sat for a number of years in opposition when Stephen Harper brought in legislation to change the Elections Act. There was a widespread understanding across Canada that what the

Government Orders

Harper government did was very undemocratic. A good example of that was the voter identification card. Elections Canada itself had expressed a great deal of concern about issues in that regard. It was in a fact a tool that many Canadians genuinely would like to have used.

Our proposed legislation is very proactive in ensuring that we get wider participation in future federal elections. That is a good thing.

We saw a minister at committee open to amendments to the proposed legislation. We saw amendments recommended by Elections Canada accepted, and amendments from the Conservatives, NDP and the Liberals. We have seen significant progress on good legislation.

Why do the Conservatives continue to want to oppose this for the sake of opposing it? They have no intention whatsoever, if it were up to them—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): We have to allow for an answer.

The hon. member for Beauport—Limoilou.

Mr. Alupa Clarke: Madam Speaker, our critic for democratic institutions and other Conservative colleagues on the committee presented and tabled 200 possible amendments to the bill. These amendments would not only have strengthened the bill but possibly also given the Conservatives the privilege and honour of voting for the bill.

Concerning the citizens' voting cards, one million cards sent to citizens in the last election contained erroneous information. Also, as an Ipsos Reid poll indicates, 87% of Canadians do not see why it is a problem for them to be required to have another identification card when they present themselves at the polling booths.

It is at the basis of democracy that we make sure that the right person is on the card when someone goes to the polls to vote to choose the next government.

Mr. Darrell Samson (Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to stand in the House once again to speak to Bill C-76, the elections modernization act. Throughout my speech, I will share how this bill will affect many citizens in my riding.

As members know, the riding of Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook is a half circle of the city of Halifax and Dartmouth. The riding has seen the largest increase in the number of seniors in Nova Scotia in the last five years. We also have the largest number of military members and veterans, who make up 23% of the communities within our riding. We have a lot of youth and young families and many seniors. Therefore, my speech today will touch on how this bill will help these individuals.

[Translation]

There is no doubt that this new law will make the system much more transparent for voters. What is more, it will make voting more accessible for those who have difficulty getting out to their polling stations. It will also make the system much more secure.

Government Orders

[English]

When we talk about democracy, we should start at the base to see how this bill was prepared and presented here today. I want to thank the minister for her excellent work and leadership on this bill. However, let us look at how this bill came about, because that is true democracy.

The Chief Electoral Officer made 130 recommendations to improve our electoral system. Those were of course reflected on, researched and consulted on before he came forward with them. Out of those 130 recommendations, about 87% of were included in this bill. Therefore, this was not one party deciding the full framework of this bill, because a major part of it came from recommendations that were made.

Also, we should mention the committee's work. There was a lot of debate and many witnesses came forward to speak about how we could improve the system. There were many amendments that came forward. I want to make sure that the people in Canada are aware that 70 amendments that came forward were accepted. That is not one party controlling, but rather all parties coming together. We had 16 amendments from the Conservative side that were approved. We had two amendments from the New Democratic Party that were approved. Therefore, 70 amendments were approved altogether, which is a large number. We also had some feedback and information that came about through discussion and debate at the Senate level.

I want to touch on some of the key ones, such as accessibility. One of my former students is the Speaker in the House today in the Nova Scotia Legislature. Mr. Murphy, a former student, had an accident playing hockey when he was very young and is in a wheelchair. Of course he has to have accessibility not only to federal institutions but to voting as well. Therefore, we want to make sure that we are answering his needs, and the needs of other Canadians who may have other challenges or disabilities, which is extremely important. People are now able to vote at home or in residences where seniors may not be able to make their way to voting stations. We even have some reimbursements in the bill for physical changes that need to be made with respect to accessibility to accommodate others.

• (1215)

The second one I want to speak about is our Canadian Armed Forces. If we look back, the Chief Electoral Officer said that we had to improve and give much more flexibility to the Canadian Armed Forces in voting. That was a key recommendation. We would be moving forward on that, which is extremely important. Canadian Armed Forces voters could now choose the method they would like best to vote so that they could have access to that important democratic right. To guarantee the integrity of the vote, we would also increase the information exchange between Elections Canada and the Canadian Armed Forces.

Those are very important changes to respond to, as I said earlier, a big part of my riding, where 23% of constituents are in the military or are veterans.

We would be encouraging more voters to vote. There are certain things that would be reinstated in this bill that were not there before under the so-called unfair elections act the former Conservative

government had. I say so-called, because looking closely, there were a lot of issues with that bill.

We would also reinstate the voter's information card as a piece of ID and reintroduce vouching, which was removed in the Conservative's bill. This is another key measure to ensure that all eligible electors are able to cast a vote. This legislation, as introduced by the minister, contains limits on how vouching could be used to ensure that it could not be used in a way that threatened its integrity. For example, an elector could only vouch for one person in the same polling station. An elector could not vouch for more than one person. Finally, a person who was vouched for could not vouch for someone else. That would put some limitations on vouching, but it would be reinstated so that we could ensure that more Canadians were able to vote. Through this bill, over a million Canadians would have access to voting who did not have it under the Conservatives' bill, the so-called Fair Elections Act.

There were also important changes to this bill. I think it must be noted that it would ban the use of foreign money, which would be severely limited through this bill. Again, many of these changes came through the committee's work and from recommendations from the Chief Electoral Officer and others.

Social networks would have to create a registry of all digital advertising published. We would be able to better track who spent what doing what and then follow up on that. We would also put in place some protections in the new registries for the future electorate, young Canadians aged 14 to 17.

I want to finish by saying that this bill would continue the transparency our government has brought forward since 2015 through Bill C-50, which was the political financing bill, the modernization of the access to information act, and the accessible Canada act, Bill C-81, which is currently being debated.

I want to thank committee members, the Chief Electoral Officer and Canadians for their input. I know that this is a big improvement for Canadians. We are looking forward to making sure that Canadians have better access to voting for parties or individuals, whomever they desire.

• (1220)

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to correct a misrepresentation by the member. He was trying to say that we are limiting the amount of foreign funds. However, the fact remains that organizations like the Tides foundation or George Soros can donate to Canadian organizations like Dogwood or Leadnow. In fact, this legislation says that each organization can donate up to \$1.5 million in the pre-writ period, which really means it is millions and millions of dollars of influence, some of which is lefty Canadian influence and some of which is foreign-funded influence.

Would the member be open to changing this bill to either take the limit down to something that is minuscule, like \$50,000 per organization, or recognize that, in fact, the government has not plugged the hole there?

Government Orders

Mr. Darrell Samson: Madam Speaker, that is a very important question. We did the committee work. There was a lot of reflection on that.

We have severely limited the possibility of foreign funding, but what we have done that is really positive is that we will now be able to track who is spending and what they are doing and how they are advertising. We can follow up on that. We feel that the system will be right, but we will continue, of course, as we do with all bills, to look at ways to make it stronger.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, in his speech, the hon. member made reference to the unfair elections act of the previous Parliament. Coming off the last election, there was widespread agreement that those provisions should be repealed.

We are now three years into the current government and have not seen a repeal of those provisions, even though I think there was a consensus for making that simple measure. Part of it is that the Liberals decided to address many other problems in the bill.

When we ask why it took so long, the Liberals say we have understand that there are very subtle synergies at work in the various issues, so it took a long time. However, it was wrong to tie in those simple repeals with those other measures, because now we have gone past the April 30 deadline.

Certainly we should address those other issues, like foreign interference, but there is less of a consensus on how to go ahead with that, and I do not think the Liberals have everything right.

Could the member tell us why that straight-up repeal was not accomplished at some time in the last three years. Why are we still waiting to get that repeal done? There are questions about whether that repeal is going to be effective for the next election.

• (1225)

Mr. Darrell Samson: Madam Speaker, I have to tell the truth, and a lot of it is that the Conservatives are filibustering.

The Conservative filibustering started on May 29. We were only able to get to the clause-by-clause on October 15. Again, the Conservatives feel that the bill they presented was the best bill, so they are just going to filibuster, slowing down the process, because they realize that the wrongdoings in their so-called fair elections bill did not answer the needs of Canadians.

If the Conservatives had worked closely with the other parties, we would have had this legislation through a lot sooner.

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have a longer question, but we have run out of time, unfortunately.

My colleague from Sarnia—Lambton brought up the issue of foreign funding. We have seen that the U.S. Treasury Department has confirmed that Russian oligarchs' money and Russian government money has gone into Tides U.S., which in turn has sent the money to Tides Canada to interfere in our elections and in lobbying against our oil business.

Why has this bill not done more to prevent such issues as Russian money coming directly in to fund third parties attacking our democratic practices?

Mr. Darrell Samson: Madam Speaker, again, it is an important question.

What we have put in place is a structure that will ensure we will be able to determine who is investing what money, where that money is going, how it is going to be spent, and it will have to be reported every two weeks to ensure that we are able to track it closely.

This bill will allow us to do that. It also strengthens our Elections Act.

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am happy to rise here today to speak to Bill C-76, an act to amend the Canada Elections Act. I am somewhat happily surprised to get this speaking opportunity, as we are debating this under time allocation.

The irony is, if it was not so serious, it is a bit delicious debating a bill that would change the rules around our elections, the foundation of our democracy, under time allocation after only a couple of hours of debate on the committee report. It is doubly ironic because the Liberals used closure to limit debate on second reading as well back in the spring. I remember that. Maybe it is a triple irony, because in the previous Parliament, the Liberals used one of their opposition days to debate a motion that time allocation must never be used to cut off debate on any bill that touches on our electoral system, and they have already done it twice here.

The history of this bill, as the previous member touched on, goes back to the time of Conservative Bill C-23, the so-called "Fair Elections Act" of 2014. If there was ever an Orwellian name for a bill, that was it. Among other things, that act made it more difficult for many Canadians to vote and ordered Elections Canada not to educate Canadians about the electoral process.

Both the Liberals and the NDP ran in the 2015 election on a promise to repeal Bill C-23 and get rid of the first-past-the-post electoral system once and for all. What have the Liberals done with regard to the Fair Elections Act? In late 2016, they tabled Bill C-33, and then sat on it for 18 months and did nothing. Then they tabled this bill, Bill C-76, on April 30 of this year, which included the measures of Bill C-33. That is a little late, because the Chief Electoral Officer had given the government a deadline of April 30 to pass any legislation around election changes because they had to be ready for the 2019 election. The government was a bit late with its homework there.

Here we are almost two years after the government tabled C-33, its first attempt at electoral reform, two years after it broke its promise that the 2015 election was going to be the last election run under the first-past-the-post system, and five months past the Chief Electoral Officer's deadline for legislation to be passed in time for the 2019 federal election.

Government Orders

What is in this bill that we have been waiting for all these months and years? To be fair to the government, I will start with some of the good measures we are happy to see on this side of the aisle. In fact, many of them are changes the NDP has been calling on the government to do for some time. It would limit the writ period of any election to 50 days, thus eliminating the chance for another marathon election like the 70-day campaign we had in 2015. That is great news for all Canadians, not just for candidates. I would like to thank my NDP colleague, the member for Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, for suggesting this to the government in the form of his private member's bill.

I am happy to see two parts of this bill that would encourage young people to get informed and involved in the electoral process. Like many MPs, I go to a lot of schools to talk about government and the electoral process. During the Thanksgiving break I spent a whole day at Grand Forks Secondary giving classes on civics, and a couple of classes on biology as well, because I was a biologist in my former life, but that is outside the scope of this topic.

The questions I get asked at school talks are often much more informed than those I get at open town halls. Unfortunately, the turnout for young voters at elections is usually well below that of older voters, so I am happy Bill C-76 would allow the registration of future electors between the ages of 14 years and 17 years. This simple act has been shown in other jurisdictions to increase the proportion of young people who vote after they turn 18.

Unfortunately, the Liberals voted down an NDP amendment to this bill that asked the government to study the possibility of lowering the voting age to 17. We allow young Canadians to join the military at age 17, but for some reason we do not want to give them the right to vote in our elections, to give them a voice for their future in this country.

• (1230)

Second, this bill would remove the ban on public education programs conducted by the Chief Electoral Officer through Elections Canada. Why this ban was put in place in the so-called Fair Elections Act is beyond me. However, I welcome the opportunity for Elections Canada to inform and educate Canadians about the electoral process.

Bill C-76 would also bring back the process of vouching to allow electors without proper ID to vote, as well as allowing the use of the voter ID card for the same purpose. These were disallowed under the Fair Elections Act in an effort that seemed to want to solve a non-existent problem, that of voter fraud, for which there are vanishingly few if any examples of, by creating a much more serious problem that inhibited Canadians, particularly disadvantaged citizens, from voting at all. We should be encouraging Canadians to vote and this will be a step in the right direction at last.

Unfortunately, the government missed an opportunity to increase gender equality in Canadian elections, to increase the number of women running as candidates. The Liberal government talks glowingly about its commitment to gender equality, but does next to nothing in the bill to advance that.

Canada is far behind other countries in gender equity in political representation. My former colleague, Kennedy Stewart, now the mayor of Vancouver, put forward a private member's bill that would

have strongly encouraged parties to increase the proportion of female candidates in future elections. Unfortunately, the government voted that bill down and failed to include its provisions in this bill.

There is no ban on foreign third party spending or activity. We have seen evidence of how foreign activity has affected elections in the United States and the UK. We need to ban that from Canadian elections. We hear almost daily stories of election tampering in those areas and others.

Canadians are deeply concerned about privacy issues during election campaigns. Political parties amass huge amounts of personal information on voters, yet there is nothing in the bill that covers this.

The present Chief Electoral Officer, Stéphane Perrault, said in committee, "If there is one area where the bill failed, it is privacy. The parties are not subjected to any kind of privacy regime."

The Privacy Commissioner, Daniel Therrien, said that the bill had "nothing of substance in regards to privacy."

No one at committee spoke against more stringent privacy requirements. Everyone was concerned that we did not go far enough.

I will close by bringing up the big thing missing from the bill and that of course is real electoral reform.

The Liberals, the NDP and the Green Party all campaigned on a promise that 2015 would be the last election under first past the post. Over 60% of Canadian voters supported that idea. For many Canadians, that was the most important promise of the election.

Canadians were tired of elections that gave parties with less than 40% of the vote a 100% of the power in a majority government. The Harper government was an example and the present Liberal government is another. Unfortunately, once the Liberals were in power, they forgot about that promise.

The Liberals say they want to increase the participation of Canadians in the electoral process. They say that Bill C-76 is their answer to this. However, the incredible cynicism on their lack of action on real electoral reform has already had a negative effect on how Canadians feel about their elected representatives and whether it is even worth voting in the next election.

I support many of the reforms contained in Bill C-76, but it falls short in so many ways. Like so many bills we see in this place, it is a tentative step in the right direction, but we need to go further.

Let us get rid of big money in elections. Let us ban foreign interference in elections. Let us protect the privacy of Canadians. Let us get back on track to getting rid of first past the post, so every vote will count.

Government Orders

•(1235)

Mr. Darrell Samson (Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook, Lib.): Madam Speaker, my colleague was able to share with us, quite clearly, the areas of strength in the bill and the areas about which he was concerned. I really appreciate that. That is how parliamentarians work together to improve the system.

I too am an educator by trade. When I go into schools and have an opportunity to talk to young people about our political system, they tell me they want to learn more. They want those opportunities. It is our job to work with them, to try to support them, as they go through this important process.

The member spoke about electoral reform. I too am in favour of preferential voting. I believe that 51%, an absolute majority, would have been a very good system. However, Canadians did not clearly support one or the other throughout the various surveys that we did. Therefore, we must move forward.

I would like the hon. member to speak about the Canadian Armed Forces, seniors and people with disabilities in his riding and how the legislation would support those individuals.

Mr. Richard Cannings: Madam Speaker, the hon. member started his question by saying that not enough Canadians were in favour. They did not ask Canadians. They had some very bizarre, silly questionnaire that was sent out that absolutely proved nothing. If anything, it proved that Canadians wanted change.

The member spoke about talking to young people. I talked to a woman in my riding, and she and her husband and their kids got together in the last election and learned about the party platforms, and then let their kids decide whom to vote for in the election. She did not tell me whom they voted for, but she said her kids were so disappointed at the cynicism in politics that they had decided that electoral reform was the big promise that would mean more to them in the future. However, the government's going back on that promise has made her kids so cynical that they may not vote in the next election despite having wanted to increase the chances of that reform.

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Madam Speaker, my colleague shares a lot of the concerns I have about foreign meddling in elections. He talked about keeping big money and foreign funding from interfering with our elections. How does he believe this bill does not go far enough and what solutions might he have for that?

•(1240)

Mr. Richard Cannings: Madam Speaker, the NDP is very much in favour of getting rid of foreign meddling, whether through money or undue influence and hacking. That is what we want to stop. We do not want to see what happened in the United States or in Brexit.

I know that the Conservatives have put forward proposals about stopping foreign organizations from donating money to Canadian elections. We say that is fine, but let us talk about foreign corporations as well. When small Canadian organizations that are concerned about the environment get involved in our elections, they might get a bit of funding from the United States, but they are fighting foreign corporations like Kinder Morgan and Chinese oil companies.

It is a very David-and-Goliath situation. If we are going to get rid of foreign money, let us get rid of it all, not just pick who cannot donate.

Mrs. Celina Caesar-Chavannes (Whitby, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I rise today in the House to participate in the report stage debate of Bill C-76, the elections modernization act. The bill represents a generational overhaul of the legal framework that governs our federal elections, one of the most important events in our Canadian democracy. I would like to pay particular attention in my intervention to one of the key challenges that Bill C-76 addresses, that is the use of foreign funding by third parties for activities that would aim to influence the outcome of Canadian elections. Madam Speaker, I am sure you have heard a number of questions related to this, so I am hoping I will be able to answer some of them in my comments.

The use of foreign interference in domestic democratic processes is a very complex one that requires government-wide response. The government is taking these threats very seriously, and the Minister of Democratic Institutions is working closely with her colleagues to protect our electoral processes from these nefarious acts.

Before I continue with my remarks on this important issue, I would first like to thank our colleagues who are members of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs. I will refer to it as PROC or the committee from now on. They have conducted a thorough study of this important piece of legislation and have advanced the proposal that we are now considering. There was a total of 100 hours of study, and I really want to commend them for their work.

Even before the bill was introduced by the minister, the comprehensive study of the recommendations of the Chief Electoral Officer, which the committee conducted over the last year, greatly contributed to the development of this strong piece of legislation. I want to reiterate that over 85% of the Chief Electoral Officer's recommendations are included in the current piece of legislation. Further, the discussions held by the PROC committee on the bill, including hearing from expert witnesses last spring, have resulted in amendments that are making this important legislation even stronger, including with respect to combatting foreign interference in Canada's federal election.

Government Orders

I would like to take a few moments to remind members of the House of important measures that are included in the bill, as introduced by the Minister of Democratic Institutions. The government believes these measures would help ensure that only Canadians get to influence the outcome of our Canadian elections. First, Bill C-76 prohibits foreign entities from spending any money to influence elections. Previously, they were able to spend up to \$500 without being regulated. Canadians who are watching might be thinking there is no problem with \$500. While it is true that it might not seem like a lot of money, when compared to hundreds of thousands of dollars being spent by political parties and candidates during an election campaign, this gets to be problematic. That said, a zero tolerance approach tells foreign entities to stay away from our election, in unequivocal terms. It is, therefore, an important loophole that C-76 is closing. The message is clear: Canadians elections belong to Canadians, and it is not the place of foreigners to have a say in who should have a place in this chamber.

Another important feature of Bill C-76 that also contributes to this objective is the creation of the pre-election period, with spending limits imposed on political parties and third parties. This measure is necessary to respond to the reality that fixed-date elections have changed how political actors behave in the lead-up to an election campaign.

During his testimony before PROC last spring, Mr. Michael Pal, a renowned professor of constitutional law, stated that the creation of the pre-election period "...is an extremely important and overdue amendment to the Elections Act." The government believes that failing to impose limits in the lead-up to the issue of the writ would create a real risk for a level playing field, a feature of our democratic life. That is why we are committed to adapting the legislation to modern realities.

These changes related to the pre-election period also provide for additional transparency measures for third parties. Among these measures, we count the obligation that the election-related transactions be processed through a Canadian bank account, opened specifically for that purpose. Third parties, whether organizations or individuals who receive contributions for more than \$10,000 or have relevant expenses in that amount, would be obligated to submit reports to the Chief Electoral Officer detailing expenses incurred and contributions received.

● (1245)

These interim reports will be due upon registration and on September 15. A final financial report will continue to be required after polling day. Making these reports public as soon as possible in the pre-election period will provide Canadians with more tools to know who is trying to influence their votes. It is our responsibility to ensure that Canadians have access to all the information possible so they can make an informed decision.

The amendments approved by PROC will strengthen this third-party transparency regime even more. Members of the standing committee adopted an amendment that would require reporting of the expenses of third parties, organizations, or individuals during the election period. More specifically, they would have to submit reports to the Chief Electoral Officer 21 days before polling day and seven days before polling day. This is an important improvement for

ensuring greater transparency, particularly when we think that third parties do not face the same limits as political parties and candidates in receiving contributions from individuals or other entities. I commend the members of PROC for this measure, which nicely complements the set of amendments to the Canada Elections Act that were already introduced in the bill by the minister.

There is another key amendment that was adopted by PROC that relates to foreign influence. Indeed, PROC adopted a new prohibition on third parties using foreign funding for their partisan activities at any time. Let me be clear that the Canada Elections Act already prohibits the use of foreign funding for election advertising by third parties during the election period, irrespective of when the money is received. Bill C-76 has already expanded the scope of third party activities that are covered by this prohibition. Not only will it be prohibited to use foreign funding for advertising, but it will also be prohibited to do so for partisan activities or election surveys.

Further, the Elections Modernization Act also extends this prohibition to activities during the newly established pre-election period. The amendment to the bill that was passed by the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs extends this idea further by prohibiting the use of foreign funding by third parties for partisan advertising and activities at any time. This addition to Bill C-76 will reinforce the rules that frame the participation of third parties in our federal elections. What will this prohibition mean concretely? It would mean that it would be prohibited for anyone, an individual, a corporation or a non-government organization, to use foreign funding to conduct activities or transmit advertising supporting or opposing a specific political party.

I will say it once more that Canadian elections belong to Canadians. Bill C-76, which was improved by the work of our colleagues on the PROC committee, makes giant steps toward ensuring that our elections will be protected from foreign intervention.

Once again I would like to thank the members for their insightful study of Bill C-76. The elections modernization act will make our election processes more secure, transparent and accessible and will modernize the administration of elections in this country. It is an important piece of legislation to reinforce the protections against foreign interference in our democracy and for the future of Canadian democracy.

● (1250)

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have a question for the member for Whitby. At the beginning of her speech she talked about foreign funding and how foreign funders cannot contribute to Canadian elections. Here in Canada we know that. However, what happens when it is a third party? What happens when that money is received six months in advance and then used? Can she share with me how that would not contravene what we are talking about here today?

Government Orders

Mrs. Celina Caesar-Chavannes: Madam Speaker, the amendments and the act itself have made it very clear that we strongly want Canadian elections to remain in the hands of Canadians. Therefore, no foreign investments are allowed at any particular time. However, as my colleague said, if investments are made in partisan activities, they need to be reported and registered with the Chief Electoral Officer and be transparent for Canadians to see. One of the things we want to ensure is that Canadians are aware of who is trying to influence their elections at any time. Therefore, steps have been included in this legislation to ensure that the parties report when they receive money and how that could unduly influence an election in the future.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am pleased that a number of the Conservative attempts to suppress votes through the identification system that they used to target indigenous people is being replaced.

However, the government's decision to ignore the all-party committee recommendation from the ethics committee regarding the need to put political parties under a credible form of privacy regime is very disturbing. The Privacy Commissioner has spoken about this. We studied the Cambridge Analytica scandal. Europe is talking about the new digital political arms race that can undermine elections by allowing political parties and third-party operators to maintain very large amounts of data that can be used to interfere and suppress votes. We saw this in the United States and in England.

Why did the government ignore the recommendations of the Privacy Commissioner and the all-party recommendations, including from the Liberal members who sit with her, on the need to ensure a quality and credible privacy regime for this coming election?

Mrs. Celina Caesar-Chavannes: Madam Speaker, one of the foundations of our democracy is ensuring that our electoral process is inclusive and that Canadians are given the opportunity to vote. This legislation introduces more equitable opportunities and more accessible opportunities for people to vote. In fact, it would make it more inclusive for individuals to vote in our electoral system.

When we talk about individuals who possibly do not have the proper identification to vote, the voter information cards would provide proof of address and that combined with ID would allow individuals to vote. We reinstated vouching. We have made provisions to have increased participation of women in our electoral process by having their expenses for child care paid, for example. There are provisions for individuals with a disability to work at home, redefining what disability means and using the term "accessibility". There are a number different initiatives within the legislation.

Again, I thank the PROC committee for its work to make this proposed legislation allow more Canadians to be included in our electoral process and have democracy stay in the hands of Canadians.

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is always a good day when we can stand in the House and talk about electoral reform. This piece of legislation is so important. The government says this is a critical piece of legislation that is significant and important to the government. It is so important that the Liberals have once again forced closure on debate.

Let me refresh the memories of those who are paying attention and those in the gallery. It is a packed gallery today on a Friday, which I am glad to see. I know there are many Canadians listening in to this riveting debate and this speech is going to be another one of those riveting speeches.

In 2015, the member for Papineau was campaigning on the Liberal plan for real change. He said that under their government, they would be the most open and transparent government in Canadian history. We have seen how that is. He also said that they would let the debate reign and then he targeted the former administration and how closure was used and how unacceptable that was and that Prime Minister Harper was silencing Canadians and those they elected to be their voice. Here we sit, and over 50 times closure has been enacted on legislation. Why? Because if the Liberals do not like what they are hearing, then they just pick up their toys and run off to another sandbox, which is sad.

I have said this before, but on a piece of legislation that is so important, I would remind my colleagues across the way and the Prime Minister that the House does not belong to him. It does not belong to those of us who are here. It belongs to the electors, those who elected the 338 members of Parliament to be their voices. When the Prime Minister and his team enact closure, he is essentially saying to Canadians and those who elected the opposition that their voices do not matter. That is shameful.

The government would like us to believe that the electoral changes that were implemented by Prime Minister Harper and his team in the last administration somehow targeted some of our most marginalized Canadians, that they were unfair, and that they were just another way for the Conservatives to attack Canadian democracy. The 2015 election had the highest voter turnout. The changes that our previous administration enacted increased the number of acceptable forms of identification, making it easier for those who might not have a driver's licence or a passport. The changes made it easier for people to vote and say that they are Canadian. We hope all Canadians and members in the House believe that we need to make sure that who is voting is who should be voting. Only Canadians have a say as to who we are electing to govern this beautiful country of ours.

It is important that those who are sitting in the House are here representing Canadians. They are not backed by, let us say, foreign funds. It is really interesting that we listen to talking points time and time again. The gentleman from Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook stands and is very animated. I love listening to his speeches and love that he ties it back to his community. I have to take a moment to remind everyone that it was his family that received a lucrative surf clam quota from the former fisheries minister.

Government Orders

●(1255)

Open and transparent? What is transparent is that if people have Liberal connections, they get the quota. If people have Liberal connections, they get the appointment. For those who are connected to the Liberal Party in any way, and it might be a foreign entity, Liberal legislation is geared to helping them out, whether it be Bill C-68, Bill C-69, Bill C-55, or what we are now seeing, Bill C-76.

In 2015, a total of 114 third parties poured \$6 million into influencing the election outcome, and many of those third parties were funded by U.S.-based Tides Foundation. That should strike fear in every Canadian.

If I seem a little more animated than I normally am, it is because there was an organization called Leadnow. In 2015, Tides Foundation donated \$1.5 million U.S. to Canadian third parties, such as Leadnow. Leadnow actually, right after the election in 2016, won an international award. Canadians can go to their website, www.leadnow.ca. I cannot guarantee that the report will be on there after this debate, but it is on there now and the pictures are on there. It proudly boasts how it organized and funded, dollars going into Canada, the third-party groups. I know some of my colleagues across the way are quickly going to their iPads and iPhones to check this out right now.

There is a picture of Leadnow receiving an international award for defeating Stephen Harper. It proudly boasts that this is how it did it. It had hundreds and hundreds of paid volunteers. "Paid volunteers" is an oxymoron. It sounds like they are in the military, except if they were in the military under this Liberal government, they would be asked to do more but would not necessarily be paid for what they did. Their sleeping bags would be taken away, as well as their rucksacks. They would be given used aircraft.

These paid volunteers went all over the place to 29 target ridings, ones where they thought Conservatives would be the most vulnerable. They hammered the ridings with all of their media, all of the fliers. They went to universities and all of these groups, and they said that we have to get out the dirty Cons, and this is the way to do it. There was Fair Vote, www.fairvote.ca and www.votetogether.ca/. They always use the .ca to make it look like they are Canadian companies. It was all funded by U.S.-based companies.

My riding was one of those ridings they targeted. They succeeded in 25 of those 29 ridings, but they did not take my riding. I challenge them to come back.

For those who are listening, this is very real. It is not that we are trying to be divisive or to sow the seeds of fear. This is real. Canadians should pay attention to where that money is coming from, whether it is Greenpeace, WWF, or the Tides Foundation, all of whom are based on making the planet a better place.

Many of the people who are those organizations' senior offices take up senior positions in the government. What did Gerald Butts do previously? He was president and CEO of WWF, the World Wildlife Foundation. Where do they get the core funding? It is the Tides Foundation, which is calling the shots for the guys across the way, and probably setting all the policy objectives in some of our most senior cabinet ministers' offices, all tied to foreign-funded groups with an agenda.

●(1300)

What we see with this bill right here is payback. What we see with Bill C-68 is payback. What we see with Bill C-69 is payback. What we see with Bill C-55 is payback.

I have heard fishermen and fishing industry organizations say they cannot get a meeting with the minister unless they go through an NGO. That is shameful.

Going back to this bill for my last 10 seconds, the only people who matter, the people who matter the most, are those who elect us here. They should be Canadians. We stand here for Canadians. Canadians should have a say on who votes and who represents them. They should also have a say in the debate.

●(1305)

Mrs. Celina Caesar-Chavannes (Whitby, Lib.): Madam Speaker, again, I want to thank the PROC committee and others for their strong study of this bill. I preface my comments by saying that I want to thank them, because they made a number of amendments to this piece of legislation and did a lot of work. One of the amendments made to this bill would make foreign funding for partisan activity illegal in Canada. With all the member has just said, with this amendment will they now be supporting this piece of legislation?

Mr. Todd Doherty: Madam Speaker, as has been brought up time and again in this debate, these foreign groups are still funding their Canadian entities. Therefore, the Canadian entities can take out advertising, the Canadian entities can have programs, and they are still seen as Canadian entities. However, where does their core funding come from? It comes from the U.S. It is foreign funding. The Liberals can pivot all they want.

It is interesting. How soon they forget when they get in the House. Here is a quote from the member of Parliament for Gatineau, who, in the last administration, said,

The misuse of voter information cards is quite simply out of control. We have reports of neighbourhoods where individual single-family dwelling mailboxes, not apartments, were systematically de-mailed

How soon they forget.

They were going to let debate reign. Over 50 times, there has been closure on debate. They were going to be open and transparent. We have seen how that is. Now, all of a sudden, sanctimoniously, they can stand up and say that they are solving the world and this and that. We have them on record. I will remind all of our colleagues that as to what they say in the House, we can always go back to those records.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is an interesting process we have been able to witness. From an opposition point of view, when we had Stephen Harper's legislation, there was a general consensus from every region of this country that what he was doing was very much undemocratic. I compare that to the legislation we have today. Generally speaking, there is fairly wide support in all regions of the country.

Government Orders

We had a Harper government that would not tolerate any amendment unless it was a Conservative amendment. Here we have Elections Canada advocating changes that were accepted as amendments. We even had some of the Conservative amendments recognized as good and accepted. We had New Democratic amendments that were accepted and passed.

Those are two different approaches of two governments: the Harper government, which, thank goodness, is gone; and the current government, a government that truly believes in democratic principles.

I wonder if my friend across the way would, at the very least, acknowledge that what I have said is accurate, because it is, and that if we were to let the Conservatives go indefinitely on this, they would never let this bill come to a vote.

Mr. Todd Doherty: Madam Speaker, I want to remind the House, again, that in the previous administration, when the parliamentary secretary was at the same committee meeting, the MP for Gatineau, who at the time was also the national director of the Liberal Party, said:

I was going to comment on Mr. Hawn's observation about the bus with 40 people. Suffice it to say that we are concerned, as he seems to be, about what we call serial vouching, and we are profoundly troubled by the number of on-site registrations: 55,000 at advance polls, plus 795,000 at election day polls, for a total of 840,000, or an average of over 2,700 people per riding.

That is shameful. How soon they forget.

It is always interesting hearing from my hon. colleague across the way. I love listening to his speeches. He gets up every day. However, sometimes I wonder if it is not so much about the substance of the debate as about getting his word count up.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I can assure the member that when I am afforded the opportunity and privilege to rise in the chamber, it is in good part because I am a very opinionated, passionate individual who understands and appreciates the many issues on which the former Conservative Harper government messed up. Sometimes members opposite need to be reminded that they brought in legislation in such a way that it needed to be fixed. In good part, this legislation would do that. It even goes further than that.

I made reference to Elections Canada and some of the recommendations it brought forward at committee. The committee spent numerous hours debating line by line and having dialogue with individuals and stakeholders from all different regions of the country. Some of those representations came from Elections Canada, both in a formal way through the committee process and informally through the other mechanisms it has.

In the committee stage we saw wide support for the need to look at ways in which we could improve the legislation, with an open mind and a general attitude from the Liberals that one did not need to be a government member to have an amendment passed.

I sat on the PROC committee for a number of years. The Elections Act was one of the bills we reviewed. The Harper Conservative government seemed to be of the opinion that only government amendments would be passed. In fact, when representatives of Elections Canada, an independent agency, made a

presentation, virtually pleaded on many different issues, more often than not the Conservative government would close its ears to them.

Our government made a great deal of an effort in consultations prior to bringing the legislation to the House. After bringing it into the House, a number of individuals had the opportunity to address the legislation. It went to committee and the review was very extensive. Not only were there long discussions at the committee, but as I pointed out in my question, the government listened and made amendments as raised by some of those stakeholders, including Elections Canada. It also went further to include members of the New Democratic Party and the Conservative Party, which were able to present their amendments. If we could move forward on some of those amendments, we did just that.

The bill has passed through committee and we are into report stage. The Conservatives have moved another 170-plus amendments. The real intention of the Conservative Party is to kill the legislation. It affirms exactly what I just said. It would not take much. It does not need to move 179 amendments to do that. It is easy for the Conservative Party to attempt to kill it. That is why at times the government needs to use the tools it has to ensure we can pass the legislation, which is important.

Even when I was in opposition, at times I would argue that the government needed to use the tools it had in order to pass legislation. At times, opposition is so obstructive that it will prevent good, solid legislation from passing, legislation like the one before us. That is why we do what we do to get legislation through.

• (1310)

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): It being 1:15 p.m., pursuant to order made on Thursday, October 25, it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the report stage of the bill now before the House.

• (1315)

[*English*]

The question is on Motion No. 1. A vote on this motion also applies to Motions Nos. 2 to 17, 19 to 28, 33 to 36, 41 to 44, 50 to 74, 80 to 83, 85 to 92, 106 to 114, 116, 117, 120 to 130, 134 to 137, 139 to 146, 149 to 157, 159 and 163 to 179.

[*Translation*]

A negative vote on Motion No. 1 requires the question to be put on Motions No. 29, 118 and 160.

[*English*]

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

Government Orders

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): In my opinion the yeas have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The recorded division on Motion No. 1 stands deferred. A vote on this motion also applies to Motions Nos. 2 to 17, 19 to 28, 33 to 36, 41 to 44, 50 to 74, 80 to 83, 85 to 92, 106 to 114, 116, 117, 120 to 130, 134 to 137, 139 to 146, 149 to 157, 159 and 163 to 179.

The question is on Motion No. 18.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): In my opinion the nays have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The recorded division on Motion No. 18 stands deferred.

The question is on Motion No. 75.

[*Translation*]

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): In my opinion the nays have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The recorded division on Motion No. 75 stands deferred.

[*English*]

The question is on Motion No. 77. A vote on this motion applies to Motions Nos. 93 to 99 and 131 to 133.

[*Translation*]

A negative vote on Motion No. 77 requires the question to be put on Motion No. 78.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): In my opinion the nays have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The recorded division on Motion No. 77 stands deferred.

The question is on Motion No. 84.

• (1320)

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): In my opinion the yeas have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The recorded division on Motion No. 84 stands deferred.

[*English*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The question is on Motion No. 115. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

Private Members' Business

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): In my opinion the nays have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The recorded division on Motion No. 115 stands deferred.

Normally at this time the House would proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded divisions at the report stage of the bill. However, pursuant to Standing Order 45, the recorded divisions stand deferred until Monday, October 29, at the ordinary hour of daily adjournment.

Mr. Steven MacKinnon: Madam Speaker, if you canvass the House, you would find unanimous consent to see the clock at 1:30 p.m.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Does the hon. member have the unanimous consent to see the clock at 1:30 p.m.?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): It being 1:30 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's Order Paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[*Translation*]

PARLIAMENT OF CANADA ACT

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): At this time, the House still has not designated a sponsor for Bill S-234, an act to amend the Parliament of Canada Act with regard to the parliamentary visual artist laureate. Therefore, in accordance with the statement made on Monday, September 17, the bill is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the Order Paper, pursuant to Standing Order 94(2)(c).

The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. The House stands adjourned until Monday next at 11 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 1:23 p.m.)

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