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Monday, November 5, 2018

—

Speaker: The Honourable Geoff Regan

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, November 5, 2018

The House met at 11 a.m.

Prayer

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

• (1105)

[*English*]

CANADA REVENUE AGENCY ACT

The House resumed from September 25 consideration of the motion that Bill C-316, An Act to amend the Canada Revenue Agency Act (organ donors), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I was honoured to have a few minutes in the first hour of debate and I am now honoured to have the opportunity to continue my thoughts in this second hour of debate. In the first hour, I talked about what an elegant solution my colleague put forward in terms of organ donations, which is to have it on our tax returns and then the information going to the provinces. It is an inexpensive solution. It is an elegant solution that is not going to impact what is provincial jurisdiction or what is federal jurisdiction.

I talked about my experience as a nurse in rural communities. Many times, people were severely injured in accidents. We wanted to transfer them quickly and it was difficult for families to make those decisions. They were dealing with the very difficult situation of a loved one who was traumatically or fatally injured and did not know what their wishes were. From my experience, that helps me recognize how important it is to have those conversations up front. As we do our tax returns, what better time to think about those sorts of issues.

I put out householders in our community and I like to highlight some of the different private members' bills that have been put forward in the House that I think are particularly compelling. I sent out a householder that arrived on people's doorsteps a few weeks ago. If anyone thinks that their community is not on board with this, I do not think I have ever had such a positive, strong response to a private member's bill. I had people writing and phoning my office to ask how soon can this happen and say what a fantastic idea it is. As we look at our vote in the House, we can be quite reassured that Canadians from coast to coast to coast see it as a positive option.

I want to make a quick note. When people do their tax return, they would indicate what their wishes are; this is called consent. I want to contrast that with another issue, where government is trying to extract information from people. Right now we have an issue with Statistics Canada where it wants to have all individuals' private banking information, line by line, e-transfers, the times people went to Costco, how many times they went to Shoppers Drug Mart and so on. It is asking the banks to do basically a data dump with all that private financial information. I contrast where I have had an overwhelming response to that issue also where people are saying that is their data and their information and Statistics Canada cannot touch that without their consent.

There is a lesson to be learned here. When we ask Canadians to make a difficult decision, but it is their decision and the government is facilitating the decision, which is what is happening in my colleague's private member's bill, where people are making a decision around being an organ donor or not, and they want their wishes to be translated to the province, that is something that Canadians get behind.

When something imposes our personal information going to a big government bureaucracy, there is an incredible amount of mistrust. As we are looking at these two very different issues, it becomes important to recognize that Canadians typically want and rightfully need to give consent for these sorts of issues.

I hope when it comes to the vote as we finish the debate, I will then be able to do my 2019 tax return and have the opportunity to check that box. Many people would be very grateful to have a seamless way to add their names to the list.

Mr. Ron McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak to the private member's bill of the member for Calgary Confederation, Bill C-316. The member is to be commended for his work and advocacy to facilitate organ donation in Canada. I fully support what the member is trying to accomplish with Bill C-316 and co-seconded the bill, and will vote in favour of it at second reading.

Private Members' Business

●(1110)

In light of a chronic shortage throughout Canada, there can be little doubt that measures must be taken to increase the number of organ and tissue donations available for transplantation. Bill C-316 would enact a provision that would authorize the Canada Revenue Agency to enter into an agreement with a province or territory regarding the collection and disclosure of information required for establishing or maintaining an organ donor registry in the province or territory. This would give Canadians an additional opportunity to become organ donors; as such, it is likely to increase the number of donors across the country over time.

In the spring of 2018, the House of Commons Standing Committee on Health, HESA, of which I am a member with the hon. member, examined the status of Canada's organ and tissue donation procurement system. The committee heard from numerous witnesses, who shared their insights on how the federal government could strengthen Canada's organ donation and transplantation system. The committee tabled its report on this study on September 25, 2018. Among the seven recommendations made, recommendation number 4 reads as follows:

That the Government of Canada identify and create opportunities for Canadians to register as organ donors through access points for federal programs and services in collaboration with provincial and territorial organ donation programs.

This is exactly what Bill C-316 would do by making the Canada Revenue Agency, which interacts with millions of Canadians every year, an additional vehicle in the organ donation ecosystem.

It was no surprise to hear witnesses express support for Bill C-316 during the committee's study. According to the Canadian Transplant Society, more than 1,600 Canadians are added to the organ wait-list every year. While 90% of Canadians support organ and tissue donation, fewer than 20% of Canadians plan to donate their organs or tissue.

There is no question that more must be done to address the serious need for organs and tissue available for donation. In 2017, more than 4,333 people were waiting for transplants across Canada. These are our relatives, friends, neighbours and colleagues. That same year, 2,979 organs were transplanted. However, hundreds of Canadians could no longer wait. In 2017, 242 people died while waiting for a transplant.

To address this situation, the attitudes and behaviours of Canadians must change. Individuals need to be informed that it is not complicated to register to be an organ and tissue donor. Individuals can register at any time. It is not necessary to wait until the end of one's life to become a donor, nor is age necessarily an impediment. We know that one donor can potentially save as many as eight lives and improve the quality of life for up to 75 people. This became clear to Canadians recently, following the terrible tragedy that hit the Humboldt Broncos. After the accident, it was revealed that one of the victims had registered to be an organ donor and went on to save six lives. This prompted Canadians from all walks of life, young and old, to become donors themselves. Registrations skyrocketed across the country.

The government recognizes both the importance of donations and the role the transplantation of organs and tissues plays in the protection of the health and safety of Canadians. Canadians can be

assured that we are committed to improving the organ and tissue donation and transplantation system in collaboration with provinces and territories and key stakeholders.

From 2008 to 2009 and from 2017 to 2018, provinces and territories, excluding Quebec, and the federal government provided over \$70 million in funding to Canadian Blood Services to play a role in coordinating the organ and tissue donation and transplantation system by focusing on four areas: developing and implementing a national strategic plan, including a mandate, roles and responsibilities in a nationally coordinated system; establishing leading practices, professional education, knowledge translation, and public education and awareness campaigns; enhancing system performance reporting, including public reporting; and developing and maintaining interprovincial organ-sharing programs through the Canadian Transplant Registry. During this period, Quebec also contributed \$845,000 per year to Canadian Blood Services to participate in certain elements of its program.

At the moment, only a fraction of Canadians are registered donors, despite it being easy to become one. Depending on where people live, there are different ways to register and decide what they want to donate. Of course, if Canadians opt to become organ and tissue donors, it is important to discuss this decision with those closest to them. People must ensure that family and friends are aware of their wishes.

●(1115)

For many Canadians it may just be a matter of becoming more aware and taking a step that could dramatically change the lives of thousands of Canadians facing health crises.

It is only by working together that we will continue to improve the organ and tissue donation and transplantation system and ensure that Canadians have timely and effective access to care. Rest assured that the government will continue to assist on the important issue of organ and tissue donation and the transplantation needs of Canadians.

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to be joining the debate on this private member's bill from my colleague from Calgary Confederation.

Before I get into the contents of this private member's bill, I am just going to say that, from private conversations I have had with my colleague, this bill is really dedicated to Robert Sallows, a great activist for the Progressive Conservatives and for all Conservatives in Calgary, who passed away a few weeks ago. I know that the member who is proposing this bill was at his memorial service.

Robert was that guy in the room who just lifted up the entire room and made everything better. He brought volunteers from different factional sides of the Conservative Party together and just enjoyed being on a political campaign and meeting people. What many people did not know about Robert was that he was a double-lung transplant recipient. One would never know that, with the level of energy and dedication he had in political campaigns. This was his avenue of release, how he would meet people and make friends and make himself incredibly useful.

Private Members' Business

I will miss Robert greatly. I never got to know him as much as I would have liked to, but I know a great many activists in Calgary, from all political parties, who knew Robert. We will think of him very fondly for many years to come. As I said, this bill is dedicated to his memory, because he was a double-lung transplant recipient, and organ transplant issues are of concern, obviously, to the member from Calgary Confederation. In a previous life, as he mentioned, he was actually able to pass a private member's bill in the Alberta legislature to create the electronic Alberta organ donor registry. This is a continuation of his work to better that Alberta registry and to better all registries across Canada.

There is a Yiddish proverb that says, "Wisdom is more precious than pearls." It speaks to how information is much more valuable than any type of earthly good. We know that our donation rates are low because people do not realize that they can sign up on these registries. Maybe people who would like to have never actually taken the time to, either online or by signing the back of a driver's licence, whatever way their provincial or territorial governments have determined they can make that choice.

I am an organ donor. I am registered in my province of Alberta, because we have made it easier in the province, thanks to the member for Calgary Confederation for making it possible to do that. I am one and my wife is one as well. Many others have chosen to do that.

We could raise the rates even further by passing this private member's bill to make it possible for members of the public to do a public service, to do a public good, by filling out their tax forms. We already have a box there for someone to be added to the national list of electors, which is not strictly a tax issue. I know that some members may have qualms about it being a jurisdictional problem to add on another box and have the information transferred. However, we would simply be asking the CRA to collect and then send on the information, just as it does with many other parts of the tax schedule it passes on to the provinces so that they know that individuals are filing their taxes, what they are filing for and if they are eligible for welfare benefits. Therefore, I think the jurisdictional question is easily solved. We would just be passing on information. We would not be creating a new national registry; we would be trying to empower provincial registries.

On the jurisdictional question, the member who is proposing this bill is a former member of the Alberta legislature. He also happens to be a former provincial cabinet minister. I would think that if there were issues of jurisdiction and protecting the jurisdiction of provincial or federal governments, that member, of all members, would know exactly where that fine line should rest.

The contents of the bill are quite simple, but they would achieve a great public good, which would be to allow members of the public to anonymously give of themselves. The day will come when each of us will pass away. That is something each of us knows, or should know. The moment we are born, we already have a foot set in the grave, and we will pass away. It is a great equalizer in life and gives us an opportunity to think about what type of life we want to have lived and what type of gift we want to give to others around us.

● (1120)

In this situation, we should make it simpler and easier for people to give of themselves, if they can and wish, to donate organs and tissues to others and for research via whatever method they would prefer.

Many provincial governments and territorial governments have already moved to make it simpler for people to donate. We want people to do it themselves, to make that choice themselves. It is a very personal choice and it should always remain a personal choice.

This bill meets a lot of my requirements for voting yes on private members' business, namely, whether it is reasonable and logical, and whether it empowers individuals to do more for the public. People giving of themselves in this situation is something that we can all agree is a good point in this bill.

As I mentioned before, the tax forms have a box that allow people to be added to the national list of electors. Maybe some members will be concerned about where we draw the line and what other types of information we could start adding and passing on to provincial governments or other bodies, such as Crown corporations. Where do we draw that fine line?

It should be up to this chamber to decide where that fine line should be drawn. Adding another box on the tax form, especially now with the advent and popularity of electronic tax filing, would be a good thing. We made it much simpler for people to file their taxes and join the national list of electors. If this bill passes to the next stage, through to the Senate, on to every other stage and gets royal assent, it will be easier for people to register with their provincial or territorial organ donor registries.

The advent of electronic tax filing makes it much easier for people to register, and that is a good thing. It gives people an opportunity. It prompts them to do something good for society. Again, as I said, it is a deeply personal choice, so we should leave it to the individual. However, at least once a year we would be asking people whether they wish to do this, yes or no, just as we do with the national list of electors.

People can change their minds. People can say yes, and then maybe five or 10 years down the line they can change their minds. Provincial registries typically make it quite simple, if people change their mind at some other point, to change their decision.

In my family's case, as members know, my kids suffer from a rare disease called Alport syndrome. I have mentioned this at committee and in the House. Someday the boys in my family will most definitely need a kidney transplant, because kidney failure is the end stage of the disease.

I have done the kidney march. I have volunteered for The Kidney Foundation. I have met many kidney donor recipients. In fact, one of them was a kidney marcher and a marathoner. He is on his second or third kidney now, and he is still faster than I am. He is still faster than almost every other person I have met who has done the kidney march.

Private Members' Business

These people lead incredible lives, but they could not do so without the generosity of others. In the case of kidneys, since we are born with two of them, people can give the gift of life by giving one, living the rest of their lives on the one they have. Unfortunately, though, we still rely on people who have passed away to have signed the back of their driver's licence or joined an electronic registry to give that gift of life.

For many of my constituents who have received a kidney or liver transplant, that gift of life is incredibly important to them. I have met Conservative staffers on Parliament Hill who have been recipients of organ donations. They could not live the lives they live today without that generous gift from someone else.

We should make it possible and easier for people to make the choice, and whether someone wishes to donate should always remain a choice. Everyone files a tax return. Even those who do not pay taxes have to file a tax return to qualify for many Government of Canada benefits, so all of us will file one eventually. Actually, many more people file taxes than get a driver's licence, and that is an important thing to remember. It is about giving more opportunity and giving more eyeball time to the question to be considered.

Many of us members spend quite a bit of time on our social media accounts trying to figure out how to reach our constituents, how to get them to answer questions and how to get them to tell us what is important to them. I think using the tax forms to offer people a choice as to whether they would like to be organ donors and tissue donors at the end of, or during, their lives is an incredible public good. It is an opportunity we are giving them. We should take it, and we should pass this private member's bill.

• (1125)

Mrs. Deborah Schulte (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Government of Canada recognizes the value of organ and tissue donation and transplantation, and has an important role to play in protecting the health and safety of Canadians. We all recognize that more work is needed to address the chronic shortages of organ and tissue donations for transplantation across the country. It is only by working together that we will continue to improve the organ and tissue donation and transplantation system, and ensure that Canadians have timely and effective access to care.

The Canadian Transplant Society notes that more than 1,600 Canadians are added to organ wait lists every year. That is because transplants are often the only treatment for end-stage organ failure. In addition to treating conditions like cornea blindness, diabetes, and birth defects, organ transplants and tissue and organ donations can also help burn victims recover, remove the need for long-time dialysis, reduce amputations, repair childhood heart problems, assist in heart bypass surgery and heart failure, replace cystic fibrosis diseased lungs with healthy ones and provide a new cosmetic solution for disfigured facial accident victims.

We know that transplants both improve the quality of life of their recipients and also save lives.

The government recognizes that too many Canadians are on organ wait lists. In 2017, more than 4,333 people were waiting for transplants across Canada. That said, over the past decade the number of deceased organ donors has gone up by 42%. While that is

encouraging, unfortunately, the number of people needing a transplant has also gone up in that time. In many ways, we not making the progress we need and many people are continuing to suffer and are dying waiting for a donor organ.

As our population ages, the need for transplants will only increase. Any one of us could one day find ourselves in need of a donation. I just want to tell a private story. This is very close to my heart. I did not know this when my boys were born, but both of them have a very serious heart defect that will ultimately require them at this point in time to have a transplant. Obviously, I am very excited about the technological changes in medical services today and I am hopeful maybe that will not be the case. However, I am mindful that both of my boys may need a transplant in their future. This is an issue that is very close to my heart.

That is why the Government of Canada continues to work with Canadian Blood Services and the provinces and territories to help increase organ donation rates and raise public awareness about organ donation across Canada. People need to know that registering to donate is not complicated and that registration can be done at any time. It is not necessary to wait until death. In fact, that is often too late, especially if loved ones are not aware of your wishes.

Living donors who are the age of majority and in good health can donate a kidney, part of their liver, a lobe of their lung and continue to lead full and rewarding lives. What could be more rewarding than saving someone's life? We know that one donor can potentially save as many as eight lives and improve the quality of life for up to 75 people.

I want to tell a personal story. In my riding we had a wonderful teacher and outstanding member of our Ahmadiyya Muslim community who died suddenly of a brain hemorrhage. The family and she had decided to donate her organs if she died, and their decision saved the lives of eight members of our community. Those community members would not be living if it had not been for her tragedy. Thus, from one family's tragedy, eight other families have been blessed to have their loved ones still with them.

This is a huge gift, not only for the individuals with serious health problems who are direct beneficiaries of donations, but as I mentioned, also countless family members and our whole community at large. Their lives are also transformed with these miracles of life.

As I stated earlier, the government recognizes the value of organ and tissue donation and transplantation and has an important role to play in protecting the health and safety of Canadians. The Minister of Health is working with the provinces and territories to facilitate collaboration on an organ and tissue donation and transplantation system that gives Canadians timely and effective access to care. Canadians can be assured that we are committed to improving the organ and tissue donation and transplantation system.

In collaboration with provinces, territories and key stakeholders, we are establishing leading practices, strengthening professional education and raising awareness to improve organ and tissue donation. The Government of Canada also continues to work with Canadian Blood Services and our provincial and territorial partners to increase the donation rates of blood and blood components because we need to raise public awareness about that all across Canada. The need for blood donations is also great.

● (1130)

There is a constant demand. People do not realize that it takes five donors to save someone who needs heart surgery; 50 donors to help just one person in a serious car accident; and eight donors a week to help someone going through treatment for leukemia. I am sure many members are aware of people in their communities who have been dealing with that disease. This is why it is so crucial to get the message out that it is in everyone to donate.

Canadians can count on the government to continue to improve the organ and tissue donation and transplantation system. To demonstrate this commitment, the Minister of Health announced on October 18, renewed funding of \$3.3 million for the Canadian Donation and Transplant Research Program.

This funding also allows the CDTRP, Canadian Donation and Transplant Research Program, to continue its research to advance organ and tissue donation and transplantation in Canada. It is through research that we can increase the availability of transplants for Canadians and transform clinical outcomes for transplant patients from coast to coast.

Our government is committed to supporting the organ and tissue donation and transplantation needs of Canadians and is looking closely at Bill C-316 and other opportunities to determine how best to support that objective.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is with enormous pleasure that I stand here today to speak in support of Bill C-316, an act to amend the Canada Revenue Agency Act, organ donors. This initiative was brought forward by my friend and colleague, the member for Calgary Confederation. The member has worked tirelessly in this Parliament to get this organ donor bill passed.

There are some issues that transcend party lines and this bill is certainly one of them. We have a responsibility to support one another when something as simple as an adjustment on our tax form can save the lives of hundreds and thousands of Canadians.

Canada is a nation that has much to be proud of, but where organ donation is concerned, too many Canadians are dying while on the wait-list. Although 90% of Canadians support organ donation, less than 20% have made plans to donate. According to global comparison statistics from the Council of Europe, Canada has a donors per million people rate of 20:1. This low ratio places us 18th internationally in organ donation, behind Italy with a donor rate of 24:7 and the U.S. with a rate of 30:8. Spain has the highest national donors per million people rate at 43.8. This is a ratio that we should set our sights on as a country.

We have the opportunity to drastically change the lives of individuals and their families.

Private Members' Business

In a 2016 study, the health committee found that close to 4,500 people were on the wait-list, and a staggering 6% of people died while waiting for an organ. Furthermore, according to the data, while about two-thirds of people on the wait-list received an organ, that meant that one-third of people on the wait-list did not receive an organ. This wait-list is ever-increasing. It is estimated that over 1,600 Canadians are added to it every year.

While true that the number of organ donors has increased over the past decade, they are not increasing at a high enough rate to meet the demand. People are still dying needlessly because there are not enough donors on the list. We must make every effort to ensure that every Canadian who needs an organ can be matched with someone who can and is willing to donate an organ.

Again, these deaths are not because Canadians do not support organ donation, but rather opportunities and infrastructure are missing. This is not something we can hope will get better without action, and many people and organizations have worked determinedly over the years to address this.

The current version of Bill C-316, as tabled by my colleague from Calgary Confederation, builds on legislative and advocacy work done over the past 20 years around creating a system of organ donation.

Similar legislation has been introduced numerous times since 1999.

Lou Sekora, a Liberal MP, introduced a bill calling for the establishment of a national organ donation registry in 1999 and again in 2000. Judy Wasylcyia-Leis, the former NDP MP from Winnipeg South, introduced legislation on this topic in 2002, 2003 and again in 2008. Malcolm Allen, a NDP MP from Welland, introduced similar legislation in 2009 and 2013. In 2016, my colleague from Edmonton Manning reintroduced legislation calling for the establishment of a national organ donor registry. Now we are once again presented with an opportunity from my colleague, the member for Calgary Confederation. That equals nine times over the past 20 years that this has been introduced by people from all political parties. This many attempts over the past two decades clearly demonstrates that there is a huge void this bill can fill.

We should do better, we need to do better and we can do better.

Private Members' Business

In February 2016, I stood in the House with the other MPs from the NDP caucus and the Conservative caucus who unanimously voted yea for the earlier version of this bill, Bill C-223, which was a private member's bill put forward by the member from Edmonton-Manning. MPs have worked tirelessly to get legislation in place that facilitates organ donation and once again to encourage all MPs to vote in favour of this important legislation. Indeed, along with many of my colleagues here, I look forward to and will work toward a day when every Canadian in need of an organ has access to one.

It is not a stretch to say that this incarnation, Bill C-316, is the ninth version of a long line of attempts to get some legislation put in place around this very important subject. Let us ensure that we do not have to sit here for a 10th. Let us put partisan blindness aside and stop letting it get in the way of good legislation.

A piecemeal approach with different programs in different provinces was the exact reason why we asked for the creation of a pan-Canadian organ donor program in the first place. Federal legislation is needed to fill the legislative void on this subject. We need to pass this. This is not a simple matter of provincial jurisdiction. We need a centralized list of people waiting for an organ. By way of this legislation, we are simply looking for co-operation in the service of people who sent us here, Canadians.

• (1135)

Many organizations have repeatedly asked for a national strategy and national oversight of the organ donation system.

Dr. Lori West, the director of the pan-Canadian National Transplant Research Program, aptly said, "we cannot afford to be stymied by the makeup of our country. We can turn it to our benefit and really use those sorts of strategies to get where we want to go."

The Kidney Foundation of Canada stated, "[We] recommend that the federal government take steps to improve Canada's Organ and Tissue Donation and Transplantation system and save more lives by: Implementing a national strategy and oversight to ensure every potential deceased donor is identified and that every person awaiting transplant has equitable access to organ transplantation across the country."

Dr. Philip Halloran, who is a professor of medicine at the University of Alberta, stated, "Donations in Canada are not performing at the standard that our colleagues in the United States are performing and there isn't really any excuse except organization and accountability."

The testimony from these experts underscores once again that there is a dire need for federal legislation and oversight over this very critical issue.

Once again, I want to urge my colleagues to support this bill and a commitment to progressive co-operation and getting results for Canadians.

I want to thank my friend from Calgary for championing this very important issue.

• (1140)

Mr. Matt Jeneroux (Edmonton Riverbend, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to speak today in support of the private member's bill sponsored by the member for Calgary Confederation to

streamline organ donation. I want to thank the member for his work on the bill, as well as his hard work in helping to create the organ donation registry in our home province of Alberta when we served in the provincial legislature together. I had the opportunity to speak to both his provincial bill and now to the federal bill, hoping that we will see similar results in passing both of them.

Almost every Canadian has heard about someone whose life was impacted by organ donation, whether in the media or through personal connections. The organ donation of one person can save up to eight people, and a tissue donation can impact more than 70 people. Of course, even more people than that are impacted as families get to keep their loved ones alive longer because of donation. However, only a quarter of Canadians are registered to donate.

Our organ donation rate is among the lowest in the world. Currently, almost 5,000 Canadians are waiting for a transplant on which their lives depend. Sadly, about 260 Canadians lose their lives every year while waiting for a transplant that, sadly, never happens. That is about five deaths per week, or one death about every 30 hours, that could be prevented if they had a viable donor. Ninety per cent of Canadians say that they support organ and tissue donation. However, in practice, less than 20% have actually made plans and registered to donate.

In the past 10 years, the number of deceased organ donors has gone up by 42%. The number of people needing a transplant has also gone up in that time. Therefore, a more effective method is needed in order to increase the size of the organ donor base in Canada. The proposal of the member for Calgary Confederation is so simple and yet so smart. Implementing it could mean a huge increase in the number of organ donations in Canada, and my friend is proposing to add an option on tax revenue forms, where people can declare whether they would like to register to be an organ or tissue donor. If they check yes, their names and information are given to their provincial government and added to an organ donor database.

Almost every Canadian fills out these forms annually. Making registration for organ and tissue donors easier will save more lives. It will be the same process for everyone, no matter what province they live in. There is no need to create new computer and database systems, because the existing system can do that job.

This method will reach the most potential donors at the lowest cost. It will also help identify organ donors when someone dies outside of his or her province of residence. The new system proposed by the member for Calgary Confederation will be more efficient at identifying donors, resulting in more lives being saved.

Private Members' Business

Earlier this year, our country suffered a horrible tragedy when 15 young men and one young woman from the Humboldt Broncos hockey team died after a bus crash. After that tragedy, there was a spike in the number of people who signed up to become organ donors. I wish it had not taken such an unfortunate accident to encourage people to become organ donors. However, I am glad to see organ donation on the rise.

The current process to register to become an organ donor in my province of Alberta involves going online to put one's name on the organ donation registry. This was spearheaded by the member for Calgary Confederation while he was a member of the legislative assembly, and it is so great to see him work so hard to continue this good work on a national scale here in Parliament.

It is so important to have the registry, and the number of organ donors has risen since it was implemented in 2013, but it is just not front of mind for most people. With so many things going on in our lives, we do not always remember to complete this type of task. Bringing the option of organ donation right to Canadians instead of waiting for Canadians to come to a website will no doubt result in an increase in the number of registered donors in Canada.

Currently, the only proactive approach by governments is to register Canadians via the driver's licence registration process. However, the percentage of Canadians with a driver's licence is dropping in every age category. While young Canadians are our future donors and they have the healthiest organs, less than 70% of 19-year-olds obtain a driver's licence. This indicates a 20% drop from the previous generation.

In Canada, only 1,600 people are added to organ transplant waiting lists each and every year. On top of that, there is also a limited time in which organs can be viable for transplant to a matching donor on the waiting list. It is typically less than a day after death. With the continuous decline of driver's licence registrations, Bill C-316 is a sensible solution to gather more donors, decrease the numbers of Canadian patients on donation wait-lists and, ultimately, save more lives.

Kidney donations are the most common organ transplant in Canada, followed by the liver, lungs and heart. A study done by Canadian Blood Services examining organ transplants between 2006 and 2015 found that transplants benefit both patients and provincial health services. According to the study, "Kidney transplantation is the best therapy for patients with end-stage kidney disease. Compared to dialysis, it can more than double a patient's life expectancy. Although the data in this section speaks primarily to the benefits of kidney transplantation, other types of transplantations, such as lung, heart and liver, are also beneficial."

● (1145)

The same study found that transplants can save governments money because of reduced hospital stays. It is estimated that Ontario alone already loses approximately \$100 million every year to support the care of those on the waiting list for a donated kidney. The study states:

Liver, heart and lung transplants may also reduce costs for governments. Although there is limited information on the cost avoidance associated with the transplantation of organs other than kidneys, a U.K. report states, "there is some evidence that the care of patients with life-threatening organ failure may involve

many days or weeks of in-hospital care, including significant time in intensive care (which is very expensive), that would be avoided if transplantation had taken place."

It is evident that organ and tissue donation benefits patients, families and taxpayers because of decreased health care costs. However, other countries are far ahead of Canada in terms of successful transplants. As I said earlier, Canada has a low organ donation rate. Figures from 2015 show that only 1% of Canadians who die in hospital donate their organs. We lag behind many other countries, including the United States, in registered donors.

In Europe, many countries have opt-out organ donation systems. This means that all citizens are automatically registered as organ donors and have to deregister themselves if they do not wish to be a donor. It is because of this system that Spain leads the world in the number of registered donors.

However, the system proposed by the member for Calgary Confederation achieves a happy medium. It will reach almost all adult Canadians without being heavy-handed. Canadians do not want the government telling them what to do. With the tax form system, Canadians can decide for themselves what they want to happen to their bodies. This would be a most convenient system for potential donors.

Additionally, it would be practically free to implement, because it would utilize existing documents. This system is economical for taxpayers and would ultimately help to save more lives.

Many of us do not like to think about it, but we never know when or if we will need an organ donation. Our lives could change in an instant. Many families have been put in a position where they have to wait for life-saving organs or tissue to become available. This is an incredibly nerve-racking wait. Often, families do not know whether the donations will come in time.

In Edmonton right now, a young girl from Okotoks is waiting to receive a number of life-saving organs. Thousands of other Canadians are in the exact same situation. The wait is agonizing for these families. I would like us as parliamentarians to do everything we can to decrease the number of families in this situation.

Mr. Speaker, Bill C-316 would be a great amendment to the Canada Revenue Agency Act. As I have said, it would reach more Canadians, increase the number of donors, save taxpayers money and ultimately save more lives. This is a sensible solution to our problem of low donor numbers. It is a very straightforward private member's bill, and I am pleased to support it today. I urge all members of this House to consider supporting Bill C-316.

I want to thank my friend, the member for Calgary Confederation, for bringing this bill forward. I also want to thank him for all the work he has done on organ donation, both here and in Alberta. He was instrumental in bringing in Alberta's organ donation registry, and he has stayed true to his word to continue to fight right here in Parliament for strong organ donation access.

Private Members' Business

I hope the next time we all do our taxes, we see the option of becoming an organ donor right there on the forms.

• (1150)

Mr. Bill Casey (Cumberland—Colchester, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise on Bill C-316 today. I sit on the health committee with the hon. member for Calgary Confederation, and if there is one thing I have learned about him, it is that he is dedicated and persistent when he has an issue he wants followed up. He has done a great job on this bill.

It is interesting that two of the last four speakers have said they have children who will need organ transplants. It just reminds me that we are all people, experiencing the same things everybody else in Canada experiences. We all have the same challenges. That is an incredible thing to have to face. I hope it works out well for both those members.

I would bet that if all 338 members could stand up and speak, they would all have stories about organ transplants. I have a story myself, which I will not go into, but it affects us all. It is critical that we do something about this. This is at least one step in the right direction, and I support it a hundred per cent.

It is almost embarrassing to me that Canada is in 18th place in the world in organ donation. It is almost not Canadian to be in 18th place, behind so many other countries. We should be doing much better. It would not take a lot to improve. A lot of it is just communication. A lot of it is focus.

In Spain, where they have twice the organ donation that we have, they have a very organized method. They educate doctors, and they have emergency rooms ready and available. They train people to improve the organ transplant success rate, as well as on the preservation of organs and so on. These are things we could do. They are not hard to do, and we should be doing them.

As one member said a little while ago, eight lives could be affected by one organ donor. Imagine, eight lives could be saved by one organ donor, and 75 lives could be affected one way or another. It is an incredible thing that we are so far behind.

I notice some of the members of the health committee are here today. In our committee, we have studied so many different diseases and health issues that could benefit from improved organ donation. For many of the subjects that we talk about, the only answer is organ donation, and here we are in 18th place in the world. It is hard to believe that we, as Canadians, accept that and continue on in that direction.

There are a lot of things we could do. We could expand the number of potential organ donors. We could change the rules to allow more people to donate organs, and we could educate our doctors in emergency rooms to these changes. That would help. We could have better transfer protocols. We could train doctors to help patients understand organ donation.

We heard at committee, over and over again, that it is difficult for a doctor who has worked so hard to save someone's life to then tell them that it might be a good idea to donate their organs. We heard that from doctors and health care providers. We could help doctors

and the medical field in general to prepare patients for organ donation when the time comes.

A national registry is the key. We are not there yet, but hopefully we will get there. New technology could help preserve organs after they are harvested, so they last longer and can get to the people who need them the most. This is technology that we have within our reach. It is within our grasp. We can do it.

All of these things are very doable. They are very simple things to do, and would move us from 18th place closer to first place, which is where Canada should be. Canadians should not accept that we are in 18th place in this comparison. I do not accept it, and the member for Calgary Confederation certainly does not accept it.

I will be supporting Bill C-316, and I look forward to hearing about it at committee, hearing the pros and cons. I am sure there will be far more pros than cons, and perhaps we can find solutions to some of these problems I have listed and that some of the other members have talked about.

It should be easy to register. Just a little while ago, some of us checked our driver's licence to see if we were donors. I am a donor, but it is not on my licence. Maybe if something happened to me, it would not be known that I was a donor. It should be on my driver's licence. That is a simple thing we could do. It is on my health card. It says "donor" right on it, but it is not on my driver's licence. If the wrong card is picked to look at, somebody might lose. The opportunity to help eight people might be lost. I do not want that to happen.

That is really all I wanted to say. I want to say that I support Bill C-316. I congratulate the member. I know how determined and persistent he is on this, and he is right. All of us should accept the challenge to not accept that we are in 18th place in the world in organ donation. I look forward to the bill progressing through the system.

• (1155)

Mr. Len Webber (Calgary Confederation, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank all members who spoke to this legislation both today and a month ago during the first hour of second reading. The majority were very supportive, some I am not too sure about, like the hon. member for King—Vaughan. She did not quite mention where she was, but she is not in. I feel confident that she is along with the rest of the speakers who spoke to the bill.

This legislation really will make a difference. I truly believe that it will save lives. I sincerely ask all members of the House to please support it.

The bill is supported by many organizations throughout Canada, organizations such as the Trillium Gift of Life Network in Ontario, the Kidney Foundation, the Canadian Transplant Association, and I could go on. Many organizations support the bill with letters of support and lobbying efforts to all of us as well, which I appreciate.

Points of Order

Twenty of my colleagues here in the House of Commons from all parties have seconded the bill. I am truly honoured that they would second my bill. I appreciate that sincerely.

The hon. member for Edmonton Riverbend mentioned that I did some work in the Alberta legislature. I did create the Alberta organ donation registry along with help from many individuals, individuals like Nancy MacDonald, Ivonne Martinez, Karen Korchinski and Robert Sallows, who was mentioned earlier today by my hon. colleague from Calgary Shepard.

I spoke about Robert a month ago here in the House. He was an inspiration to me for the bill. Sadly, he has passed away. I was at his funeral, his celebration of life, this weekend. He continues to be an inspiration to me. He was a young man of 17 when he received his double lung transplant. He survived for 14 years. Unfortunately, he died from cancer at the age of 31 just a few weeks ago. He was unable to donate his organs like he had wished, but he was able to donate his eyes, and that would have been really important to him. I think of Robert often, and I wish him well in the other world, wherever that is.

I am a little disappointed about the registry we started in Alberta because it is not going as well as I hoped it would. Ninety per cent of Canadians support organ donation, yet only 20% of Albertans, and basically 20% of Canadians, have registered on their provincial registries. That to me is unacceptable and very disappointing.

I had to think of a way to get registration up, and what better way than to target Canadians through their income tax form. Most Canadians do their income taxes, so I thought it would be a good idea to just ask them on the form. It makes sense to me and I hope it makes sense to everybody in this room. I truly believe that the bill will significantly raise our registration rates and also create awareness.

I would also like to thank my health committee colleagues, a number of whom are here today, including our chair, the hon. member for Cumberland—Colchester. We completed a study on organ donation, as he mentioned. I know that I cannot hold up a prop, but I do have the study here.

I want to indicate one specific recommendation in the report that was brought forward earlier by the hon. member for Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam. The recommendation states, “That the Government of Canada identify and create opportunities for Canadians to register as organ donors through access points for federal programs and services in collaboration with provincial and territorial organ donation programs.”

The income tax form is an access point that reaches all Canadians. This legislation will do wonders to increase our organ donation system.

I would ask my colleagues to please support the bill and honour the work of Robert Sallows and help promote organ donor and tissue awareness here in Canada.

• (1200)

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Deputy Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Deputy Speaker: In my opinion the yeas have it.

And five or more members having risen:

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 93, the recorded division stands deferred until Wednesday, November 7, immediately before the time provided for private members' business.

[*English*]

Before we get to the next part of the rubric, we are going to a point of order. The hon. member for Etobicoke Centre.

* * *

POINTS OF ORDER

MEETING OF THE CANADIAN NATO PARLIAMENTARY ASSOCIATION

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj (Etobicoke Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to address the issue raised in this House in regard to the annual general meeting of the Canadian NATO Parliamentary Association held on October 30, 2018.

In our Westminster parliamentary system we govern ourselves by custom and convention, and by rules and procedures. According to long-standing custom and convention, the chairs of committees and formal associations of Parliament are held by government members, the exception being committees meant to hold the government to account, such as the public accounts committees, which, for good reason, are chaired by the opposition. Accordingly, a government member chairing has been the convention in the Canadian NATO Parliamentary Association. When the member for Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill of her own volition walked across the aisle to the opposition, by custom and convention she ought to have resigned her chair position. Having breached this custom and convention, a process was triggered according to rules and procedures.

On October 1, 2018, 10 members of the association sent a letter to the secretary of the association that, pursuant to section 10 of the constitution of the Canadian NATO Parliamentary Association, they were writing to call a special annual general meeting for Tuesday, October 30, 2018 at 6:30 p.m. The secretary of the association then sent a notice of an annual general meeting, followed by a reminder notice on the morning of October 30, 2018.

Points of Order

The meeting began with the adoption of the draft agenda. After the draft agenda was adopted, and as the meeting moved to the second item on the agenda, which was adoption of the minutes of the March 28, 2018 annual general meeting, two points of order were raised. The first was raised by the member for Dufferin—Caledon, which was ruled out of order. The second, raised by the member for Prince Albert, was that two weeks' notice for nominations was not given and the vote for chair would not be legitimate, and suggested that we adjourn. The chair, after consultations including walking over to the opposition House leader and opposition whip and other members of her caucus at the side of the room, came back to the front table and ruled in favour of the point of order. The member for Longueuil—Charles-LeMoine was at the microphone challenging the ruling of the chair as the chair brought down the gavel declaring the meeting adjourned.

According to the *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, Third Edition, the committee cannot adjourn the meeting without the consent of the majority. Adjournment can be done by adoption of a motion; explicit consent, which did not occur; or by implied consent of the majority, typically occurring when the business of the meeting has been completed. The meeting's business, as per the adopted agenda, had not been completed, and there was clearly no implicit consent of the majority for the chair's adjournment. What made the breaching of the rules on adjournment particularly egregious was the chair bringing down the gavel as the member for Longueuil—Charles-LeMoine was challenging the ruling of the chair on the point of order. The chair then departed the room in haste.

I believe that adjournment had not occurred and, as vice-chair, I approached the House of Commons staff at the front of the room to quickly consult. After consulting, and confirming my belief that the meeting was not in fact adjourned, according to House rules, I resumed the meeting as acting chair. I began by informing parliamentarians that the meeting had not in fact been adjourned, and read into the microphone the relevant section on adjournment, found on page 1,099 of the *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, Third Edition. The meeting then proceeded by the member for Longueuil—Charles-LeMoine being allowed to complete her challenge of the chair's ruling. A vote was then called on this challenge.

A number of opposition colleagues stated the ballots had been discarded and hence individuals may be able to vote more than once. At this point, I consulted with the House staff, who confirmed that they had additional ballots of a different colour, as well as lists of all members of the association. I informed the assembled parliamentarians that, thanks to the preparedness of the staff, we would be able to proceed with the vote. Members of both the government and opposition, commons members and senators then lined up to be registered, were issued new ballots and then proceeded to drop their ballots into a slotted box provided by the House staff. When it appeared the vote was complete, I requested the clerk, the secretary, to go to the registration table to confirm no one was still in line to register for a ballot. Upon receiving his confirmation that this was in fact the case and, out of further caution, I advised the room I would provide an additional two minutes for voting. I asked the clerk to time the two minutes. When the two minutes were up, and no additional members had voted, I informed the room.

● (1205)

At this point, several members, including the member for Richmond Centre and the member for Yorkton—Melville, stood up to say that they had not yet voted. I then stated that those who had not voted would be allowed the time to do so. When several members, including the member for Richmond Centre, had finished taking a rather leisurely and circuitous route around chairs and had voted, the voting was closed.

At this point, the staff did the vote count, with the result being the chair's ruling was not upheld on the point of order that had claimed that the vote for a new chair would not be legitimate.

It should be noted that throughout this process, the official opposition House leader and whip were present and actively engaging their members and the House staff during the course of the meeting.

We then proceeded to the second item on the agenda, the adoption of minutes of the March 28 annual general meeting. Then we proceeded to the third item, the motion pursuant to section 10 of the constitution of the association, which was put up on the screen by staff and read as follows:

That the Chair no longer has the confidence of the members of the Canadian NATO Parliamentary Association and, therefore, that we proceed immediately to the election of a new chair.

Once this motion passed, I suspended and left the front table. The association staff requested a member who was not being nominated for a position to chair. Subsequently, I was nominated from the floor and elected by acclamation.

At this point, I resumed chairing the meeting as duly elected chair of the NATO Parliamentary Association, and a motion for adjournment was made and passed.

Throughout the meeting, I did visual counts. I also confirmed with the association secretary that quorum, as defined by the rules of the Canadian NATO Parliamentary Association that quorum of a general meeting shall be set at 20 or one-third of the total membership, whichever is the lesser amount, provided that the Senate and the House of Commons are represented, was maintained.

There is an additional point in regard to adjournment. A chair can adjourn when the chair decides that a case of disorder or misconduct is so serious as to prevent the committee from continuing its work. It should be kept in mind that it is the chair's obligation to maintain decorum and that there are tools at the disposal of a chair to do so.

Up to the point when the previous chair brought down the gavel, there was no question that at any point decorum was not being maintained. On the other hand, as the meeting progressed, there were unprecedented challenges to decorum in what appeared to be an attempt to disrupt the meeting and call into question its legitimacy.

Points of Order

A group of young male official opposition staffers assembled, to whom songbooks were distributed. They were then encouraged by their members to sing loudly so as to interfere with and disrupt the meeting. I gave notice into the microphone that I would request the association secretary to call the Sergeant-at-Arms to have the disrupters removed should they not cease and desist. They did not, and appeared to be encouraged by a number of official opposition members, and particularly the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan.

As members were involved, I suspended. I walked over to the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan and attempted to collegially advise him to desist by stating that he is doing good work on a number of very important human rights files and his conduct was a mistake.

I then went back to resume the meeting. As the group continued to disrupt even more loudly, I requested the House staff to summon Parliamentary Protective Service staff. When one security official was unable to get the individuals to cease, as they were being encouraged by opposition members and seemed to have lost their inhibitions, three or four additional security officials arrived and the staffers departed, at which point the meeting continued.

We are referred to as “honourable members” in this House. I deeply believe in the honour of elected public office and the dignity of this institution. In the most trying of circumstances on the night of October 30, I did my utmost, my best, to live up to the respect and honour this institution is deserving of.

• (1210)

The Deputy Speaker: I thank the hon. member for Etobicoke Centre for his additional comments on this item that is before the House, the matter that has currently been taken into consideration.

I see other members standing. I will accept other interventions on this point of order. I am mindful, though, that today is an opposition day. Therefore, I would encourage additional members who may want to add their thoughts on this matter to keep them concise and to an area that may not have also been commented upon earlier. I acknowledge that last week, I believe on Wednesday, there were numerous interventions on this point of order as well. Therefore, I would ask hon. members to keep their additional comments, any new comments, concise.

We will go to the hon. member for Moose Jaw—Lake Centre—Lanigan first.

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Moose Jaw—Lake Centre—Lanigan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will keep my comments extremely short. I know it is the NDP opposition day and I do not want to cut into its time unduly. However, I would point out two facts.

First, I agree totally with the member when he says that according to procedures and practices, the chair is allowed to adjourn a meeting if there is serious disorder within the meeting itself, which clearly was the case there. The chair of the meeting at that time was perfectly within her right to adjourn the meeting and, in fact, as was pointed out before, the chair did consult and get concurrence from the clerk who was on duty that day at that meeting. It was done appropriately.

Second, I would simply point out for my friend opposite that there was another way in which the Liberal members present could have handled this, and that was simply to wait until the next meeting of the NATO association. They clearly would have the numbers and sufficient force to ask for non-confidence in the chair, then hold a vote and vote the chair out. It would have been done procedurally fair and accurate. They would not have needed the mob rule we saw the other night in that meeting and we would have avoided all of this controversy before us.

I would suggest for my friend opposite that it was not the actions of the chair that caused the reaction we have seen in subsequent days. It was the meeting itself, the meeting that was attended by almost every member of the Liberal cabinet and almost every member of the Liberal caucus, because they were whipped into attending. Why? Because one of their former colleagues crossed the floor and this of course, from a political standpoint, from the Liberals' standpoint, could not be tolerated. That was impetus. That is the genesis of this whole situation, and we all know it.

The Liberals simply could not accept the fact that one of their own flock had crossed the floor to the Conservative Party so they were going to do everything within their power to ensure that the chair was removed from her position, and they were ultimately successful. However, it did not have to be that way. They did not do it procedurally fair and they certainly did not do it in a manner which behooves the conduct of every member in this place.

• (1215)

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I too will try to keep my comments to just a couple of minutes, but it is important to intervene. We are talking about the NATO Parliamentary Association. If we look at what the purpose of NATO is, it is to safeguard freedom and security of all its members, collective defences at the heart and a spirit of solidarity and cohesion among members. It goes on to talk about the values of NATO. What happened last week was absolutely, totally inconsistent with what the spirit of NATO should be about.

When the meeting was adjourned, there were buses full of people leaving because they thought the meeting was over. Then the desk was stormed and it was taken over and reopened by the Liberals. As someone who left the meeting, it was not until the next morning that I even heard the meeting continued, that it was reopened illegally and there was more to it. As a member of the association, there is no question in my mind that there was a serious breach of what was appropriate protocol.

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, keeping in mind that today is the New Democrats' opposition day and they are going to be talking about veterans, it is important to point this out. The former chair, or the current chair, in my opinion, of the Canadian NATO Parliamentary Association, the member for Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, is a veteran herself. The Liberals claim that they are a feminist organization, yet they used Soviet-style antics to remove her from the chair. I am embarrassed and ashamed that the Liberals would employ this type of heavy-handed approach in taking over a parliamentary assembly. It completely violated the Constitution.

Business of Supply

The member for Etobicoke Centre talked about the power of the chair to adjourn a meeting to maintain the decorum of the meeting. That was done. Then, after all the Conservatives left the room, cabinet members, including the Liberal House leader and the Liberal whip who were in the room, proceeded to empower the member for Etobicoke Centre to carry out a Soviet-style coup and took control of the NATO Parliamentary Association.

That is despicable and I ask you, Mr. Speaker, to make the ruling that this should not have been allowed to happen, that there are proper processes and procedures, both the Standing Orders and House procedures, as well as the constitution of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, that the association should be following about the proper removal of a chair and then having a proper nomination process, with proper notice given to all members of the NATO Parliamentary Association.

The Deputy Speaker: I see other members standing. We should be appreciative of the time limit we are under because of the orders of the day before us.

The hon. member for Elmwood—Transcona.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Continuing with the theme of your remarks, Mr. Speaker, one of many important responsibilities we have is to prioritize work in the chamber. The opposition motion is about veterans in the week leading up to Remembrance Day. We spent a lot of time on this already. I know the member did not have to raise this point of order this morning, although it is his right and no one contests that, but there is a question of timing and prioritization. I would appeal to the members of the chamber to get on with the debate that has to do with serving veterans better.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would not want the Speaker to necessarily buy into everything that has been said. For example, my understanding is that the government House leader was not at the meeting. I am not even sure why this issue is before the House, but that will be for the Chair to ultimately decide. Some of the information I have heard and read is disturbing, such as drinking in committees and so forth. They are very concerning.

• (1220)

The Deputy Speaker: I thank hon. members for their additional comments on the matter and for keeping them reasonably concise. We are certainly taken up with this issue and all of the interventions will be considered in the decision on this matter relatively soon.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—SERVICE STANDARDS FOR VETERANS

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP) moved:

That, in the opinion of the House, the government should automatically carry forward all annual lapsed spending at the Department of Veterans Affairs to the next fiscal year, for the sole purpose of improving services for Canadian veterans, until the Department meets or exceeds its 24 self-identified service standards.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with my good friend and colleague from Jonquière.

Canadians love our military and RCMP veterans and their families. We thank them for their service and sacrifice. However, thanking veterans and their families is not enough. Words must be backed by action, so I am pleased to rise in this place today and put forward this motion. If passed and implemented by the government, the motion will dramatically improve the lives of veterans and their families at no additional cost to taxpayers.

The motion seeks to end the practice of leaving hundreds of millions of dollars unspent each year at Veterans Affairs Canada and instead transfer those dollars to the next year for the sole purpose of improving services for veterans.

While the motion is inherently non-partisan and forward-looking, we must provide some historical background to demonstrate why it is needed.

In the nine years of the Harper Conservative government, more than \$1.1 billion of spending that was approved by Parliament for the Department of Veterans Affairs was left unspent. This money was left unspent while the government cut more than 1,000 full-time jobs at Veterans Affairs and closed nine regional offices. The effects of those cuts are still being felt today, as there is a tremendous backlog in the administration of nearly every program and service delivered to veterans through Veterans Affairs.

Canadians were unhappy with this practice among others and voted for change in 2015. Throughout the 2015 election campaign, the Liberals campaigned on ending lapsed spending and improving services at Veterans Affairs Canada. Unfortunately, they have been unable to deliver on either commitment in their government.

In its first three years, the Liberal government has left \$372 million unspent at Veterans Affairs and has done so while meeting just 12 of its own 24 service standards for that department.

Some may argue that lapsed spending is nothing more than an administrative issue and that this money is inconsequential in the grand scheme of things, but New Democrats disagree. Presently the Department of Veterans Affairs employs 2,609 full-time employees across the entire department. Had it chosen to spend the \$372 million that was left unspent, the government could have hired over 5,000 more full-time caseworkers instead of the 260 it has done so far. Making use of the lapsed spending in this department could make a real difference in the lives of veterans, especially if it is dedicated solely for the purpose of improving services as prescribed in this motion.

Ending lapsed spending in the department is important, but the motion proposes so much more than that. Passing and implementing it will ensure that each and every one of the 24 service standards at Veterans Affairs are met and do so within the existing operating budget of that department.

What does that mean exactly?

Business of Supply

We can view all of the 24 service standards on the Department of Veterans Affairs website, but in real life it means that when veterans or family members call the department for help, they will actually get their calls answered quickly. It means that hundreds of caseworkers, who are so desperately needed, can finally be hired and that the veteran to caseworker ratio will never be more than 25:1 again. It means that those caseworkers will finally be able to clear the backlog of applications for disability benefits and that future applicants will receive their decision in a timely manner.

Indeed, if the motion is passed, it will clear all the backlog for all programs and services at the department: for long-term care applications, for rehabilitation programs, for career transition programs, for earning-loss benefit applications and for the war veterans allowance program. It will mean that if veterans or their families are unhappy with the department's decision to deny them benefits, they will be able to appeal those decisions and receive a resolution quickly.

In short, if the motion is passed, it will mean that we can finally fix the Department of Veterans Affairs once and for all, without spending a dollar more than what is budgeted and approved by Parliament. Carrying forward unspent money at Veterans Affairs and using it to improve services is a no-brainer, but make no mistake. We know that meeting all 24 of the existing service standards is just as difficult as it is important.

However, I was greatly concerned to read in a *Globe and Mail* article, published on October 9, that a departmental official confirmed that Veterans Affairs was actively working on lowering its service standards instead of trying to meet its current targets. Lowering the service standards at Veterans Affairs is not a solution to these problems and it is not in the best interests of veterans and their families. We can and we must do better.

I am proud that New Democrats were the first to uncover the problem of lapsed spending at Veterans Affairs in 2013 and I am proud to rise today on behalf of New Democrats to offer a solution.

Lapsed spending at Veterans Affairs was first raised in the House by former New Democrat member of Parliament John Rafferty back in 2013. As the Conservatives cut 1,000 jobs and closed nine regional Veterans Affairs, John sought answers on behalf of the constituents of Thunder Bay—Rainy River. Why were they losing their regional office? Why would his constituents be forced to drive to another province to receive face-to-face service from Veterans Affairs? Surely there was \$5 million available somewhere at Veterans Affairs that could keep the Thunder Bay and other offices open.

● (1225)

As usual, John's instincts were correct. He requested a departmental briefing, and during that presentation, a budget line simply titled "lapsed" was discovered.

Veterans Affairs officials confirmed that this money that had been approved by Parliament was left unspent. In the same year the Conservatives were closing nine Veterans Affairs offices to save \$5 million, New Democrats found that the department was failing to spend more than \$170 million of its approved budget. With \$170

million, the government not only could have saved those nine offices, but could have opened hundreds more.

On behalf of New Democrats across Canada, we need to thank John for working so hard on behalf of veterans and his constituents. There is no doubt in my mind that the Thunder Bay Veterans Affairs office was reopened as a direct result of his hard work. Everyone in this place sends him strength, good wishes, and all the best while he fights his health battle right now.

While it is true that the government plans to spend more money in the future, and some benefit levels are increasing for some veterans, the current level of service provided by the department to the same veterans is completely unacceptable. After all, what good will more program spending be for veterans and their families if no one in the department is there to answer their phone call or process their applications. The \$10 billion the government talks about will not help anyone if there is no one there to answer the phone.

Finally, I have heard that some in this place believe that the transfer of lapsed spending from one year to the next is prohibited. This is false. In a 2015 report titled, "Why does the government lapse money and why does it matter?", the Parliamentary Budget Officer wrote:

The Government manages an administrative framework to accommodate the shifting of lapsed funding from one year to the next.

I have a copy of that report in both official languages for tabling at the conclusion of my remarks.

New Democrats have a proud tradition of supporting Canada's veterans. I would also like to thank former NDP MP Peter Stoffer and the current member from London—Fanshawe for their outstanding work on behalf of veterans and their families.

To my colleagues here in all parties, we have a real chance today to do something very special for Canada's veterans. Together, we can finally end lapsed spending at Veteran Affairs, and deliver the high level of service that Canada's veterans and their families need and deserve, and were promised.

I urge my colleagues across political lines to support this motion so that we can all return home and deliver this good news in person to our veterans and their families this Remembrance Week.

● (1230)

Mr. Darrell Samson (Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for his dynamic presentation. He does an excellent job. He is on the veterans affairs committee with me. I want to thank him for his continued advocacy.

Business of Supply

I would also like to thank Peter Stoffer for his excellent work on veterans affairs, as I continue to work closely with him and with veterans in my riding of Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook.

I want to thank the member as well for underlining the important investment that our government has made in support of veterans, almost \$10 billion, whereas the former Conservative government closed down nine offices. The Liberals brought back the pension for life. When I was doing town halls in my riding, I heard how important that is to veterans. The education program is a big investment as well. There are also the additional 470 service employees. Those are very practical and important benefits that will help, and continue to help, veterans.

I want to thank the member for that. Maybe he could share some of what veterans in his riding have said to him about these programs, the opening of nine offices that were closed by the Conservatives, the education program, or even the disability awards, which—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Courtenay—Alberni.

Mr. Gord Johns: Mr. Speaker, my hon. friend and colleague and I sit together at the veterans affairs committee, meeting veterans and hearing from them. He often hears from veterans who have been waiting too long; waiting too long for their benefits and for someone to answer the phone. He knows full well that the backlog is growing. He has heard testimony at committee.

Therefore, I hope my colleague will support this motion today so we can fix this problem once and for all. This could be a really good day for veterans, as we can fix a long-growing problem. However, I will talk about some things my friend also spoke about, such as standards.

Only 43% of the time does the department meet its target of deciding on a veteran's disability benefits within 16 weeks, and with the career transition program, it only meets its target 31% of the time. The backlog is growing. We learned that it was 29,000 last November and that it had grown 50%. We learned in June that it had grown another 10%.

Here is an opportunity to use money that has not been spent but was approved by the House to hire people back that the Conservatives let go and promised to hire back. They promised to fix this problem. It is getting worse and there was money approved by Parliament that is not being spent that could fix this problem. Here is an opportunity to do that.

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Moose Jaw—Lake Centre—Lanigan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to set the record straight for both the members of the NDP and the government side regarding the closure of nine Veterans Affairs offices by the former Conservative government.

While it is true that nine offices were closed, all of the staff in those offices were transferred to Service Canada locations within the same ridings. In fact, because of that, all of the Service Canada outlets were then able to provide services to veterans without those veterans having to go to a regional office.

Here is a concrete example. In Saskatchewan, prior to the change that made veterans services part of the core responsibilities of Service Canada, there were only two regional Veterans Affairs offices, one in Saskatoon and one in Regina. That meant that anyone

who wanted to go speak in person to an official in a Veterans Affairs office had to travel to one of those two centres. We are a rule-based economy. We are also a rule-based province. I spoke to several veterans who had to make the trek from Estevan to Regina or Saskatoon, which is sometimes two to two and a half hours to get to an office. When we made the change to incorporate veterans services into Service Canada that meant that in almost every mid-sized town in Saskatchewan, there was a Service Canada official prepared and trained—

The Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. member for Courtenay—Alberni.

• (1235)

Mr. Gord Johns: Mr. Speaker, when the Conservatives were in government, they left \$1.1 billion on the table. The ratio of caseworkers to case need was 47 to one under the Conservatives at the end of the last Parliament. They failed veterans miserably.

The government promised to fix the mess that the Conservatives left and it has not been able to do that. We are hoping that the Conservatives will acknowledge their mistakes, acknowledge the over 1,000 employees who were fired. It is the problem we have today that we are trying to fix. The Conservatives had \$1.1 billion and did not need to fire anyone.

When my colleague talks about centralizing services into regional offices, I would point out that I was just north of 60 with the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs studying indigenous veterans. There is not one Veterans Affairs staff member north of 60, not one. There are over 1,900 veterans and 500 who are getting services from Veterans Affairs and 85 case files there right now, and not one staff member. I will not accept that. I hope they will support this motion and help fix this problem.

[Translation]

Ms. Karine Trudel (Jonquière, NDP): Mr. Speaker, before I begin my speech, I would like to salute the men and women in uniform who are watching us on TV right now here at home or abroad.

I feel fortunate to have this opportunity to talk about veterans. They represented Canada proudly, but I find that government after government has neglected them.

Business of Supply

Veterans do not have access to all the services they deserve and are entitled to. That has to change. One example of how little consideration governments have shown veterans is the Harper government's decision to close regional offices. That decision felt like a harsh betrayal to veterans, who felt they should be able to count on personalized help, and they said so.

They felt the closures would make it harder for them to get the essential front-line services they need because of their health issues. They were right. At the time, veterans and Public Service Alliance of Canada people representing employees at the shuttered offices went to Ottawa to meet with the minister in an attempt to reverse Veterans Affairs' decision to close the regional offices, but their efforts were in vain.

Things have not gotten any better under the Liberals, either. As I said in question period last week, the Liberals are making promises to our veterans that they cannot even keep. They authorize spending but then keep the money, just as the Conservatives did. On the surface, this might look good, but the reality is altogether different.

The Liberals left \$89.9 million unspent in 2016, \$143 million in 2017, and \$148.6 million in 2018. Without that money, veterans cannot access the services they are entitled to. As everyone knows, other departments also do not spend all the money allocated to them. When it comes to veterans, however, the full budget must always be used in order to give veterans a better life.

Since the government is accumulating a surplus within the department, since it is not spending all the money it budgeted for veterans, I definitely agree with my colleague's motion, which we are debating today. This is an absolute necessity, and I hope that all parties will vote to support the motion.

If the government is not sure how to spend the money that is allocated for veterans, I will gladly offer some suggestions today.

I am the granddaughter of a Canadian Armed Forces veteran who worked as a mine clearance expert on small navy vessels during the Second World War. My father worked for the Royal Canadian Mounted Police for 35 years. He is currently retired. I am all too aware of what these people need and the challenges they face.

I have also been involved with legions and veterans since my election in October 2015. I am very attuned to their expectations and especially their needs. I also want to acknowledge the dedicated efforts of all the men and women who, day after day, volunteer in the legions in my riding, Jonquière, and everywhere in Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean. They give their all to their volunteer work, without counting the hours, because they believe in what they are doing and they want to help their loved ones. I learned a lot from talking with them about what they do and also about what we could do to fix certain problems.

Today, I would like to talk about a few projects aimed at improving the situation in my riding of Jonquière and in Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean. I would like to propose some solutions in case the government has money left over. That money could be invested. We see that there was a surplus, that the money was not all spent. Branch 235 in Chicoutimi already has a project that it wants to implement. The president of that branch told me what had been discussed with Legion members. They want to open a care facility

for people in uniform, a place where men and women in uniform with operational stress injuries could get treatment. They could be treated directly in Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean. Right now, because of service cuts, they are unable to receive care in the area. They have to travel over 250 kilometres to get treatment, to have access to services.

That would take its toll on anyone. Often, when people have to leave their region, their home, and travel long distances, their family has to go with them. That can sometimes cause collateral damage and it creates stress. When people are unable to receive care in their own region, their injuries may take longer to treat.

● (1240)

The centre for military members project is ready to go and it could already be under way. The problem is that there is no appropriate federal program to make this project happen.

Presentations have been made to the government and Veterans Affairs. The department responded that it cannot buy the building because there is no program for this type of project. There is definitely a will to see this care facility open, but there is no program.

This could be a great opportunity for the government to develop a program that would make it possible for our veterans, like members of the Chicoutimi Legion Branch 235, to get this project off the ground. This centre for military members would finally be able to provide care to our men and women in uniform, who could then receive services in the Saguenay—Lac-St-Jean area.

As I was saying, I have been regularly attending these events for three years. I salute the members of the Arvida Legion branch 209. I will be there on November 9 to mark the 100th anniversary of the armistice and on November 11 to join them in remembrance of our men and women who fell in combat.

Every time I go there, which I will be doing again soon, the men and women talk to me about infrastructure. Many legion branches have facilities that require considerable investment over time. I already know that the government will say there are programs available to help. That may be true, but most of the programs they apply for require them to supply 35% to 50% of the funding themselves.

For these organizations, that is a lot of money. If the government could tweak its programs, it would make a huge difference, because these gathering places are tremendously important. Many veterans who are watching right now could tell us how vital it is for them to have places where they can meet up, reflect and talk about what is going well and what is going not so well.

Business of Supply

I want to mention a wonderful initiative that, again, was created as a way to address the lack of services. Once a month starting in 2019, the Royal Canadian Legion branch 235, Chicoutimi, will open its doors for anonymous meet-ups where men and women suffering from operational stress can come to share their experiences and unburden themselves, as well as to learn about best practices and feel better knowing that they are not alone.

My time is running out, but I just want to close by saying that I hope that any future funding allocated to veterans is spent and goes towards services. Our men and women in uniform have worked to keep us safe. They are present every day in our communities.

I hope the government and all members in the House of Commons will vote in favour of the motion put forward by my colleague from Courtenay—Alberni today. I want to thank him for his work in the community and for bringing this motion to the House.

• (1245)

Mr. Nick Whalen (St. John's East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member from Jonquière for her excellent speech on this very important debate.

I want to reassure her that the government is already ensuring that money returned to the treasury for quasi-statutory programs is used the following year to fund demand-driven veterans programs. She must already know this, since we sometimes serve together on the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates.

We have already instituted the pension for life, reopened nine offices closed by the Conservatives and hired 470 new employees. Does she think that we are heading in the right direction to support our veterans?

Ms. Karine Trudel: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague, but that was a rhetorical question.

We had to move a motion in the House because there are still people waiting. The government's website shows that 12 of its 24 service standards have not been met. That is not even at 80%.

I said this in my speech, but I want to repeat it. The Liberals left \$80.9 million unspent in 2016, \$143 million in 2017, and \$148.6 million in 2018. We are debating this motion moved by my colleague in the House today because there are still problems.

I have many more examples of the glaring lack of services, which I could perhaps talk about in response to another question.

Mr. Francis Drouin (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for her excellent speech.

I was not an MP between 2011 and 2015, but I know there were a lot of budget cuts under the previous Harper government, and I know my colleague was a member in the House at that time. Could she talk about the consequences of those budget cuts?

Furthermore, we just hired 470 new employees at Veterans Affairs, and I wonder whether she thinks that was the right thing to do.

• (1250)

Ms. Karine Trudel: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

There has been a bit of progress, but the government promised us major investments. It allocated funding, but now the department has a surplus. That money is not being used.

Last year we worked with one of my constituents for a year. We supported this individual and listened to him. However, when I asked him simply how he was doing, he said he has not been able to reach a person by telephone, just to ask whether his application was accepted. This means that problems still exist, if our constituents still have to come to our local offices to let us know that they have not been able to speak with a person.

Investments have been made, but right now we are talking about services and money that was allocated. Surpluses are accumulating, so there must be a problem somewhere.

[*English*]

Mr. Jim Eglinski (Yellowhead, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask a simple question. The Liberal government talks about its contributions to our military veterans, yet in the last two years, it has spent over \$38 million taking our veterans to court. I wonder if the member would speak about that money maybe being better spent somewhere.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Karine Trudel: Mr. Speaker, the Conservative Party closed nine offices that provided direct services to veterans and left \$1.1 billion sitting in the coffers for 10 years, so the Conservatives are in no position to lecture the government.

However, we are talking now about services. Earlier, I talked about some of the projects that would help my region of Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean. There are people who volunteer in our legions every day to provide services to our men and women in uniform. These people are ready. I therefore hope that the government will be open to the idea of the care centre for people in uniform that I spoke about earlier. That would be a great help to the people of my riding.

Mr. Francis Drouin (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, before I begin my speech, I would like to inform the House that I will be sharing my time with the member for Scarborough North.

Canada's veterans bravely defend the peace and security we all enjoy. Making sure that veterans and their families have access to the support and services they need when they need them is a major priority for me and for our government. That is why our government committed to do more to support the families of Canadian veterans. That is also why we are keeping our promise.

Business of Supply

Veterans Affairs Canada has changed considerably over the past three years. The department is guided by a new vision focused on the general well-being of our courageous Canadian Armed Forces members, veterans and their families. Every year, we are putting more money toward programs and benefits for veterans based on their comments and recommendations. We are providing more and better support for veterans and their families. They told us of the need for flexibility, and we incorporated that into many of the programs and benefits we offer.

Every year, Veterans Affairs Canada estimates the number of veterans who will be applying for and receiving program benefits and calculates the amount of money needed accordingly. If fewer veterans use the programs or if fewer benefits are needed in a given year, then the money is returned to the fiscal framework, but never at the expense of a veteran who needs our services. What really matters is that every veteran who is entitled to a benefit receives it, whether we are talking about 10 veterans or 10,000. I think the minister has made that statement several times.

Veterans Affairs Canada is committed to providing flexible programs and services that are able to meet the changing needs of veterans and their families in order to ensure the smoothest transition possible. That is why we have launched a number of new and improved programs this year after consulting the veterans community and stakeholders on what factors contribute to a successful transition.

Family is a recurring theme. I know that we all understand the importance of families to the well-being of veterans. If a soldier becomes sick or injured in the line of duty, families and caregivers become an essential part of the veteran's post-service life.

Consequently, the Minister of Veterans Affairs increased the benefits available to veterans and their families. On April 1, we rolled out eight new and enhanced benefits connected to education, training, financial security, families and well-being. All of these benefits were developed with the well-being of veterans in mind.

I am pleased to say that, so far, the response from veterans has been exceptional. The career transition services were revamped to provide access to more people who have completed basic training. Furthermore, eligibility was expanded to include veterans, their survivors, their spouses and common-law partners, as well as members of the Canadian Armed Forces. They now have access to job search training, career counselling, information on the labour market, and information on the education and training they need to meet their career objectives.

All of these benefits were developed with the help of professionals who understand military culture. We have approved more than 950 applications since April 1.

We have also established a new education and training benefit to help veterans achieve these goals, fulfilling another campaign promise of helping veterans return to school and obtain the education or training of their choosing after their service. Veterans receive funding to attend the college or university of their choice. This new benefit covers up to \$40,000 in tuition and other expenses for veterans who served six years and up to \$80,000 for those who served up to 12 years. The money can be used to pay for tuition,

course materials and living expenses. This is a flexible benefit that includes \$5,000 for personal and professional development training. Almost 1,400 applications have been approved to date.

Those are just two of the new initiatives put in place since April 1 of this year. Six other measures were also implemented early in the year to better support members of the Canadian Armed Forces in their transition to civilian life after military service. The numbers speak for themselves. We are in a better position today to meet the needs of veterans and their families than we were in the past.

Leaving military service means big change for service people and their families. We know that community support can help. That is why Veterans Affairs Canada expanded the veteran family program to all 32 military family resource centres to ensure uninterrupted access. Military family resource centres used to be for active military personnel only. Now medically released veterans and their families will have access to military family resource centres across Canada where and when they need support. They will also have access to an information line and www.cafconnection.ca.

We know that when military personnel are on active duty, their families serve as well. That is why family members are part of the equation in developing veterans' rehabilitation plans. Family members can also access counselling and other services if that can help their veteran.

That is also why Veterans Affairs Canada eliminated the time limit for spouses, common-law partners and survivors to apply for its rehabilitation services and vocational assistance program. This change removes unnecessary pressure and provides more flexibility to adapt to post-service life.

Another new initiative is the veterans emergency fund. Now, a veteran or family member can request emergency financial support 24 hours a day, seven days a week. After all, emergencies do not just happen from nine to five Monday to Friday. We know that many veterans need our help.

These new benefits are part of an overall well-being package that combines financial recognition of pain and suffering, income replacement, and a host of wellness services and programs to help veterans and their families successfully transition to life after service.

With the pension for life announced by Veterans Affairs Canada, our government's total investment in veterans over three years comes to \$10 billion.

The Government of Canada's support for Canadian Armed Forces members, veterans and their families starts not at the end of their mission, but at the beginning.

Business of Supply

We pledged to make sure they get the respect, support, care and economic opportunities they deserve, and we are delivering on our promise every day.

• (1255)

That is why we go back to Treasury Board throughout the year to ask for more money to make sure all veterans and their families get the benefits they are entitled to. If there is money left over at the end of the fiscal year, that just means we were prepared to support even more veterans and their families.

We have made a lot of progress on supporting our courageous veterans, and there is still a lot left to do. The government will never stop working to improve the lives of our veterans and their families.

• (1300)

[English]

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the numbers speak for themselves. The backlog is growing. As I outlined earlier, it was at 29,000 last November. It grew another 10% in June. These are veterans who are waiting for their disability benefits to be approved. These are the very men and women who served our country, who put everything on the line for us.

The Liberals have hired back some people, but they have not hired back even half the people the Conservatives cut. They promised to fix this. They also promised to end lapsed spending, which clearly they have not done. They have left \$372 million on the table, like the Conservatives, who left \$1.1 billion.

I would like the member to explain to this House and to veterans why the Liberals have continued to use the same lapsed spending instead of serving our veterans. The member and the Liberals need to explain that to the Conservatives, because they told everyone in 2015 that they would not do it anymore, and they are continuing to do it. It was \$80 million last year, enough to hire all the staff the Conservatives fired in the last government.

Mr. Francis Drouin: Mr. Speaker, I can assure my hon. colleague that I agree with him that services to veterans were depleted under the previous government. That is why we reopened nine offices. That is why we have hired 470 new staff so we can better serve our veterans.

With respect to the lapsed funding, I know the member understands what demand-driven services are. Whether it is 10 veterans or 10,000 veterans, they will always continue to get services. It is demand driven. The money is not put away so that we do not serve our veterans. It will be put back in the fund the following year, as long as veterans need their services, and not at the expense of our veterans. I can assure the hon. member that veterans will continue to get services under this Liberal government.

Mr. Gord Johns: Mr. Speaker, there is a demand. There is a backlog that is growing. It was over 29,000 last November, and it was 10% higher in June. There is a demand right now that is not being met. If it is demand driven, and the current government says that it is meeting and fulfilling the demand, why is it not hiring enough staff to deal with the backlog and meet the 12 measures it has not even met with respect to its own service standards?

We could hear this rhetoric all day long. The money is there. The government has not spent it. It is lapsed spending. The government

promised to end it. The member needs to explain that to this House, because the numbers speak for themselves. It has not met 12 of its 24 service standards. When is it going to meet them?

Mr. Francis Drouin: Mr. Speaker, I am glad that the member is talking about numbers, because I too remember a number, in particular from the former leader of the NDP, who ran on a platform promising to balance the budget at all costs. Therefore, he would have balanced the budget on the backs of veterans.

We chose to invest. We chose to invest \$10.2 billion in our veterans. We will continue to do that.

Mr. Gord Johns: Mr. Speaker, it is shameful that the Liberals are trying to go back and throw the former leader of the NDP under the bus.

Speaking of balanced budgets, the current government is running massive deficits, it is not spending money that has been allocated by this House, and it is not meeting service standards veterans need, while veterans are falling through the cracks, the very people who put everything on the line for this country. The government is not spending the money it promised to spend on them.

The member needs to explain. When are the Liberals going to meet the 12 service standards they are not meeting? When are they going to hire back the staff the Conservatives fired?

Mr. Francis Drouin: Mr. Speaker, I will remind the member that we have hired 470 new staff, staff that in 2015 were not working to serve veterans. I will also remind him that those 470 staff would not have been able to be hired under an NDP government, because it would have balanced the budget at all costs. That is not some marvellous payday story, it is a fact. The NDP ran on that platform. I am simply reminding—

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

• (1305)

Mr. Francis Drouin: Mr. Speaker, someone is heckling me and I cannot hear the question. All I want to say is that they ran on a balanced budget, and they would have balanced the budget on the backs of veterans. We chose to invest, and we are investing \$10.2 billion in our veterans.

Mr. Shaun Chen (Scarborough North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my fellow members of Parliament have brought up an issue that is important not only to me and this government but to all Canadians, and that is the well-being of our veterans, members of the Canadian Armed Forces and their families.

Business of Supply

First and foremost, it is important to recognize that we might not be here in this place having this conversation were it not for the sacrifices made exactly 100 years ago during the First World War and the sacrifices made since then all over the world by the women and men of the Canadian Armed Forces. It is with that formidable legacy of service and sacrifice in mind that our government is committed to providing all veterans and their families with the services and benefits they need, when they need them.

As the veterans community evolves and expands, so do its needs, hence the required flexibility and demand-driven nature of the programs and services Veterans Affairs Canada provides. Many departments within the government deal with lapsed funding each year. They make estimates on spending, and the money can only be used for the purpose for which it was intended. In other words, this is part of regular operating procedures.

Veterans Affairs Canada, similar to many government departments, faces the challenge of accurately forecasting its variable funding requirements due to the quasi-statutory nature of its programs. This necessitates Treasury Board approval before program funding can be adjusted.

It is very important that Veterans Affairs funding be quasi-statutory. In Canada, the veterans population consists of over 600,000 former Canadian Armed Forces members and their families. The population of ill and injured veterans served by the department is closer to 200,000. Since we stand ready to help any veteran who needs assistance, that 200,000 grows as more and more veterans come forward. Whether 10 or 10,000 more come forward, the funding model allows Veterans Affairs to provide programming and benefits without having to go back to Parliament every single time more resources are needed.

Over 90% of Veterans Affairs programs and benefits are considered quasi-statutory in nature, meaning they meet the definition of being non-discretionary, demand-driven and based on need or eligibility. The amount of this funding is dependent upon the number of clients who apply for benefits and their eligibility for programs. This is what makes it so hard to estimate exact numbers.

It should also be pointed out that over the past three years, 98% of the funds available for these quasi-statutory programs was spent to support veterans and their families with the benefits and services they needed. The remaining 2% represents the flexibility required to ensure sufficient funding within the budgets of each of 26 separate programs to support all veterans who are approved for benefits and services.

These are the very programs at the heart of this department and our government, the very programs that ensure our veterans have access to the services they need, and the very programs that our veterans and their families rely on to live their very best lives.

Nothing called for in this motion is not already being done.

Funds for Veterans Affairs quasi-statutory programs are returned to consolidated revenue and then used again in subsequent years to ensure access to these programs and benefits.

Our government is committed to supporting the health and well-being of our veterans. Just as veterans and their fallen comrades have

made sacrifices to preserve our future, our government is committed to protecting them and their future.

That is why we committed almost \$10 billion over the last three years to make it easier for the women and men in uniform who have served this great country to access the benefits they deserve.

In 2015, we pledged to make it easier for veterans and their families to access services, to do more to support families, to streamline benefits, to reduce the administrative overhead, to improve the client experience with Veterans Affairs Canada and to help our brave women and men make a successful transition to life after the military. These were ambitious goals, and our government has delivered progress and real change.

A lot of time and money has been spent on establishing new programs and improving existing ones, and now the focus is on service delivery excellence. We know this is an area that requires our utmost attention.

In 2016, we increased the disability award to \$360,000, the amount that veterans and the veterans ombudsman said it should have been at for years.

We increased income replacement to 90% of a veteran's pre-release salary.

We expanded access to better address career limitations as a result of illness or injury.

We reopened the nine offices closed by the previous Conservative government and, given the need, we opened a brand new office in Surrey and expanded our outreach to the north to assist underserved communities.

We started the process of hiring more staff after the previous government made cuts, creating an artificial budget surplus.

We established an education and training benefit. We improved the career transition benefits offered to veterans and their families.

We introduced the pension for life, a monthly tax-free payment for life recognizing pain and suffering that resulted from a service-related illness or injury.

The veteran community has told us loud and clear that we need to make it simpler, easier and more user-friendly to access the programs and services provided by the department. They have told us about the effect of the backlog of applications for benefits and services and the time they have had to wait for decisions to be made.

That is why our government has taken concrete measures to improve service delivery, taking the initiative to reach out to veterans and their families to get the information needed to support claims and to explain benefits.

Business of Supply

It is also why, with all of these new and enhanced benefits and services and increased efforts to inform veterans of what is available to them, application rates have increased exponentially in recent years. For example, over the past three years there has been a 32% increase in disability benefits applications.

This means veterans are more aware of the benefits they may be eligible for, which is good news. It also means the department needs to add to the capacity to respond and to evaluate those applications in a reasonable amount of time. This will allow them to respond more quickly and with increased flexibility, so that veterans can choose the suite of benefits and services that suit their particular needs.

Many changes have already taken place. Staff now triage claims to ensure that veterans who apply for mental health services receive priority in their evaluation, so that they can receive treatment without any delay.

Through additional staffing and process improvements, the department has been able to increase the number of disability claims processed and allow a larger number of veterans to receive decisions on their applications. For example, 96% of first applications completed for PTSD are approved.

To keep up with the rise in demand and ensure that veterans get services and benefits when they need them, our government is spending \$42.8 million over two years, starting in the 2018-19 fiscal year, to improve service delivery at Veterans Affairs Canada.

The increasing number of applications continues to outpace the increase in capacity at the department, so progress is ongoing to hire new employees to help ensure that veterans, Canadian Armed Forces members, RCMP personnel and their families are provided with the best possible services when and where they need them.

● (1310)

Change like this cannot happen overnight and efforts are under way to create an easy-to-access, simple-to-navigate, veteran-centric process. We owe veterans the means to get back on their feet and on with their lives, and that is what our government is committed to delivering every day: to help veterans accomplish a successful transition after serving, rebuild their lives and enjoy a healthy state of well-being. Lapsed funds at the end of a fiscal year have no impact on that commitment or on the department's ability to deliver on that commitment. Funds returned to the fiscal framework cannot be redirected for a new purpose nor would they have any impact on the department's ongoing efforts to improve service delivery.

Make no mistake, our government continues to strive to provide faster, more efficient and higher-quality service for our veterans. We know that we are not finished with this work, but our commitment and hard work continue to make improvements in the lives of the women and men who have dedicated their lives to Canada's peace and security.

● (1315)

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, while the Liberals are patting themselves on the back, the backlog is growing. More and more veterans are waiting for their applications to be opened. More and more veterans are calling Veterans Affairs and not getting someone to pick up the phone. The government said

it would fix the problem, under the Conservatives, of the 1,000 jobs that were cut. They are patting themselves on the back, saying that they are spending over \$10 million. They should tell that to veterans at home waiting for their applications to be opened.

We know that lapsed spending can be carried over to the next fiscal year because the Parliamentary Budget Officer tells us it is allowed, up to 5%. That is a lot of money. When we look at the last three years alone, that is \$372 million, more than enough money for the government to fix the 12 service standards, which is half of the service standards, that it is currently not meeting. This is the same party that said it would end lapsed spending.

I have to ask the member why Liberals have not honoured their promise, which they made during the 2015 election campaign, to stop lapsed spending? They have not explained themselves at all today as to why they made that promise and why they have not followed through. They are saying it is irrelevant now, but in 2015 there was a lot of relevancy when they talked to veterans and when Conservatives left \$1.1 billion on the table.

Mr. Shaun Chen: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member opposite for his passion in supporting our veterans.

I am on the same page with the member when it comes to ensuring that veterans receive the benefits and services they need. We already know that money is returned to consolidated revenue funds for quasi-statutory programming and used again in subsequent budget years. That is why we continue to make smart investments. In fact, our government has invested \$10 billion. Ninety-three per cent of the department's budget goes directly to programs and benefits that help our veterans.

Our veterans have served and given so much to the peace and security of our country and we are working very hard to repair the damage that was done under the previous government. We opened nine offices that were previously closed and hired 470 new staff. That good work is going to ensure that veterans receive the programs and services they need for a successful life after the military.

Ms. Tracey Ramsey (Essex, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am a bit stunned, because what I am hearing from the other side sounds like they will not support putting this \$372 million in lapsed spending into programs to help our veterans.

I have a very simple question for the member. Will the Liberals support putting the money that was left on the table back into spending for our veterans, yes or no?

Business of Supply

Mr. Shaun Chen: Mr. Speaker, we are supporting benefits and services to help veterans. That is exactly why our government put in a joint suicide prevention strategy. We created a veterans emergency fund. We invested in a new career transition service. We created a pension for life for veterans who have served our country. We created the education and training benefit. We have expanded the medical tax credit for psychiatric service dogs. We also continue to invest in a centre of excellence for PTSD research.

These important investments are helping ensure veterans have a successful transition to life after they have served hard to defend our country and create peace and security for Canada and all around the world. We will continue as a government to make sure our veterans are well served and that we support them—

The Deputy Speaker: We have time for just one more short question and response.

The hon. member for Rivière-des-Mille-Îles.

[Translation]

Ms. Linda Lapointe (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened closely to my colleague. I would like him to go over what the former government cut and our government restored again. That way, people tuning in, including those in Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, will know what we have done to make things better for veterans and ensure they are well taken care of.

• (1320)

[English]

Mr. Shaun Chen: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her continued advocacy and work on this particular file.

The fact is, whether 10 or 10,000 veterans need help and come forward for benefits, our government is ready to provide them with the benefits and services they need. That is why we have increased accessibility by reopening nine offices that were previously closed by the last government. We have hired 470 new staff. We understand there is a backlog to address, but veterans oftentimes need service immediately, which is why we have made targeted investments into, for example, areas on PTSD research. We are creating more benefits and programs so veterans get the supports they need.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am so pleased to rise today to speak to issues concerning our Canadian Armed Forces veterans in response to the opposition supply day motion put forward by my colleague, the member for Courtenay—Alberni.

I enjoy serving with him on the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs. I appreciate the opportunities we have to collaborate on ways that have the potential to see our veterans better served, if the government were to implement our recommendations.

The motion before us states:

That, in the opinion of the House, the government should automatically carry forward all annual lapsed spending at the Department of Veterans Affairs to the next fiscal year, for the sole purpose of improving services for Canadian veterans, until the Department meets or exceeds its 24 self-identified service standards.

Today, in response to the motion, we have heard from the Liberals and they tell us that lapsed funding does not result in anyone receiving less than they should. They have said that it is just how the government keeps its books. They have said that nothing nefarious is

going on. The Liberals have explained that most spending at Veterans Affairs is statutory and that the government needs to be prepared to cover the cost of these benefits, whether 10 or 10,000 eligible veterans make a claim.

The Liberals have advised us that each year the spending estimates for Veterans Affairs are put before the House, based predominantly on those very same statutory requirements. In other words, the funding that has lapsed will be in the spending estimates this year and the year after that and the year after that.

The Liberals are saying that the motion is a moot point. Actually, for the most part, they are right. However, I know they hope veterans will forget that when in opposition, the Liberals sang a very different tune.

It is true that the funding for Veterans Affairs is regulated by statute. It seems the Minister of Veterans Affairs is aware of this fact now. The other day, he was explaining to Global News that he was statutorily obligated to provide programs and services owed to veterans, so any lapsed funding would not affect services to veterans. A Veterans Affairs spokesperson agreed with the minister and said that lapsed funding did not result in anyone receiving less than they should, that it was simply an administrative process.

Services from the Department of Veterans Affairs, under the Liberals, is demand driven, just as it was during the previous Conservative government. The hypocrisy here is that when the same thing happened in the past, the Liberals falsely claimed that the then government was stealing from veterans. Now when they find themselves in government and are faced with the exact same situation, the Liberals say that they are not stealing, that they are following an administrative process.

I am not going to come to the House today and claim that lapsed funding in the Department of Veterans Affairs under the Liberal government is somehow stealing from veterans, because it is not and it never was. However, I will ask the minister, now that he and the Liberal government are aware of how Veterans Affairs budgets work, if they will apologize for accusing my former colleagues of thievery? Will they apologize to Canadians for completely misrepresenting in the past how this Veterans Affairs budget works? Will they apologize to veterans for the stress they caused them by suggesting the former government was taking money from their benefits, when they knew it was not true?

The department makes estimates for what it expects to spend and in the event that all the money is not spent, it lapses. The way the department is set up, it is required to have enough money for the demands of our veterans, each and every year. This motion by the member for Courtenay—Alberni is somewhat moot. However, there are many areas of concern where my colleague and I are of one mind that I believe are the force behind his intent today.

Business of Supply

What are the reasons this funding remains there at the end of the budget year? Why does it fail to reach veterans? There are two significant reasons why that happens. One is incredible inefficiencies within the department, an inability when it creates programs to get them through the door and out to the veterans. The other reason is a significant culture of denial. Veterans always have to fight for something they should be able to receive without an increased level in their mental health problems, without an increased level of PTSD and struggling through the transition process and without an increase in the number of veterans who contemplate or actually go through with suicide and homicides because they simply cannot take another problem added on to the problems they are already facing.

For example, the fact that \$37 million taxpayer dollars abused by the Prime Minister to fight veterans in court was a blow to the guts, the hearts and the minds of our veterans. When asked why we were fighting certain veteran groups in court, the Prime Minister responded, at the Edmonton town hall, in February 2018, with this statement, "Because they're asking for more than we are able to give."

● (1325)

The previous Conservative minister of Veterans Affairs had worked with Equitas, firing the government lawyer and instead putting the case in abeyance, with the goodwill to work together to move toward acceptable solutions to improve outcomes for injured veterans, as they were requesting.

The outcomes this motion is trying to achieve are very important. I am very disturbed by the increasing backlog of applications for disability benefits. Despite the \$10 billion the minister is always quoting, the backlog is 29,000 and growing.

The government sees itself as succeeding, because it indicates that cases are being processed and moved to VRAB, the Veterans Review and Appeal Board, more quickly. How could any government claim this as a success, that basically, initial request from veterans are moving quickly to an appeal board, where once again they have to go through the process for applying and requesting that funding? In most cases, once they make it through that process, it is provided. Why are we putting our veterans through this added difficulty that causes them great angst and only means they are not receiving their funding or their services in a timely manner?

When VAC finally communicates to Canadian Armed Forces members, veterans and their families using veterans-centric plain language and when it ensures all veterans have a clear understanding of every benefit they qualify for upon release and every benefit they may need to access over time, we will be on the road to succeeding to care more effectively and efficiently for our veterans.

One of the biggest challenges to veterans receiving their benefits is an over-complicated chain of command, where upper management does not embrace change and case managers are not empowered to do what is best for veterans as quickly as possible. There does not appear to be a desire to work with DND to create a seamless transition for our veterans if it means a change to the structure or the composition of VAC.

There continues to be a culture that insists VAC must determine if medical release is due to service before VAC will provide benefits,

when DND already makes the determination when a member no longer meets universality of service and is released. Yes, of course future decisions by VAC will need to be made as veterans age. However, upon medical release, there is complete clarity already provided by DND on whether they qualify for services from VAC. It is already there at release.

Timely service and peace of mind for an injured veteran should be the determining factors, not protecting the turf of a department. The truth is that the majority of the cohort of case managers the Liberals claim they have put in place, 400 of those 470, were already budgeted for by the previous Conservative government.

At the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs, we heard that case managers were not properly trained and up to speed on veterans benefits. They are overworked, stressed and often feeling helplessly caught between veterans in dismay and those up the chain of command. VAC needs to stop operating like an insurance program.

VAC needs to be transparent in what it is actually providing to veterans. Today, we heard one of the members of the Liberal Party talk about the education benefit, \$40,000 for someone who has served for six years and \$80,000 for someone who has served for 12 years. Unfortunately, that is not a transparent presentation to veterans or Canadians because those funds are a taxable benefit.

● (1330)

Therefore, when veterans think they are going to get \$40,000 to go to school, at the end of the year they find out that it is a taxable benefit and they owe the government in taxes. I wonder if the government has come to any decision as to how much of that benefit it hands out is actually clawed back and how much it gets back through taxes from our veterans. It is misleading.

As well, the member across the way said that with the education benefit, veterans would get to go to the school of their choice. I have been approached by many veterans who wanted to take advantage of that program. One of them was actually okayed to go ahead and registered with the institution. The veteran then heard back through the case manager that the people higher up did not think the school qualified. It was devastating.

Points of Order

As well, the member across the way said that the emergency funds were available 24/7. What he is saying is that people can call in 24/7, but he did not tell truthfully how long it took for the department to actually get those funds out the door to a veteran who was in an emergency crisis situation. Our committee should take a look at that.

Under no circumstances should the men and women who have served and have come home physically or mentally injured find themselves fighting for benefits they were told would be there for them and their families when they signed on, willing to die for their country.

The minister has indicated on numerous occasions that the backlog is because veterans are better informed and they have more services to apply for. I hope there is a certain amount of truth to that. However, in actuality what is not being said is that the backlog is going to get even worse, as VAC is facing a significant increase of service members ready to retire now after serving 25 years. The department is not prepared.

It is no secret that there is no clarity for veterans or service and case managers with the rollout fast approaching of the so-called pension for life. The plan provides no new funds. Instead it consolidates and rolls in existing benefits.

In an article in *Esprit de Corps* Canadian military magazine, dated April 18, Sean Bruyey and Robert Smol, comparing the old Pension Act and the Liberals' new so-called pension for life, stated:

Furthermore, under the same category of non-taxable benefits for pain and suffering, injured veterans will have a choice between a lump-sum payment of up to \$360,000 and a monthly "Pension for Life" up to a maximum of \$1,150 to compensate for their injuries. There are no additional amounts for spouses or children. The average "Pension for Life" likely will be around \$200 per month. For the 60,000 veteran recipients still receiving the Pension Act, they are paid an average of \$680 per month plus amounts for spouses and children.

In the announcement of the Liberals' budget for 2018, with the new life-long pension included, the example that was given was of someone who had served the full 25 years and ended up at the last moment having a very horrific injury, including major loss of limbs. That individual qualifies for the maximum amount. There are many of our boots on the ground who get injured and never make it to 25 years. It is misleading in that document.

Another glaring problem is the inability of VAC to administer funds in a timely manner. One example is the emergency relief fund. It takes days, not hours, to get the funds to a veteran in a crisis situation. I am going to mention an organization called "Veterans Emergency Transition Services", known as VETS Canada. It is operated by veterans for veterans. A non-profit corporation with volunteers across Canada, it provides emergency aid and comfort to veterans who are in crisis and who are at risk of becoming homeless.

● (1335)

If a veteran or someone on their behalf reaches out to VETS Canada, it can have a person at their door very quickly with help. If it gets a call about a homeless veteran, it works that same day to get them off the street. The new VETS Canada drop-in centre is just blocks from Parliament Hill and it is so effective in its mandate that we heard that 65 of its emergency clients went there in its first two months of operation.

The problem at Veterans Affairs is not a lack of money. We all know that the minister says he has \$10 billion to spend, because he says that at every opportunity, yet it seems the desire of the government is to get dollars out the door elsewhere, providing taxpayer dollars to colonize overseas countries, to get Canadians to submit to its attestation values, to pay out terrorists and help murderers, rather than focusing on our veterans, elderly and those working hard to join the middle class.

Veterans want to see more veterans as caseworkers so that they can talk to people who understand military service and speak their language. They want transparency when they file a claim, with an honest, accurate estimation provided as to how long it will take. Veterans want to be made aware of available services. For example, I recently returned from a committee trip up north and discovered that 89% of our Canadian Rangers are not aware of their Canadian Armed Forces health care entitlements or their veterans benefits. An excellent recommendation came forward in the north that a VAC service agent simply be included with the existing team at the Service Canada building in Yellowknife.

Understanding that Veteran Affairs services need to start shortly after enlistment with ongoing contact, we need to ensure that when an forces member retires or is released from the Canadian Armed Forces and becomes a veteran, he or she is armed and trained with the clear, concise information that empowers them to access everything they need and deserve as they transition from serving in our military.

* * *

POINTS OF ORDER

MEETING OF THE CANADIAN NATO PARLIAMENTARY ASSOCIATION

The Deputy Speaker: I see the hon. member for Perth—Wellington rising on the same point of order that was raised earlier today. As I indicated, as we have limited time for the opposition motion, could the member make sure that the additional points are new and inform the process and keep his remarks concise.

The hon. member for Perth—Wellington.

● (1340)

Mr. John Nater (Perth—Wellington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be as concise as possible, with new points in reference to this point of order. I do apologize to the members of the NDP for taking time. However, I understand that this is time sensitive before the making of a ruling.

Points of Order

The House will recall that on Wednesday of last week I asked the Chair to direct, under Standing Order 151, the correction of the House's records related to the leadership of the NATO Parliamentary Association. In light of the submissions by the hon. member for Etobicoke Centre, I want to respond with a number of procedural authorities concerning the conduct of Tuesday evening's business.

As the House will recall, the chair of the association, the hon. member for Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, declared that the conditions precedent for a special general meeting were not met and, therefore, adjourned the meeting. I refer the Chair to the precedents of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights of May 2008. On May 7, 2008, the committee met to consider a request submitted by four members under the provisions of Standing Order 106(4). The chair, Art Hanger, declared as out of order the business that was the subject of the notice. Therefore, the meeting, having no further valid purpose, was adjourned.

A week later, May 14, 2008, the committee met again to consider a slightly different request. Mr. Hanger declared that the nature of the request offended the provisions of Standing Order 106(4), and therefore could not be entertained at the meeting. The committee, having no valid business, was therefore adjourned by the chair.

I commend those two precedents to you, Mr. Speaker, as being analogous to the nature of the special meeting requested by 10 members of the Canadian NATO Parliamentary Association and the ruling of the association's chair that the association's constitution had not been followed.

Additionally, in reaching a ruling, you will find of interest the following committee proceedings from recent years. On May 4, 2014, at the procedure and House affairs committee, the vice-chair, Alexandrine Latendresse, adjourned the meeting without the implied consent of the committee. When the committee convened at a subsequent meeting, which I will speak about later, the chair, Joe Preston, said the following: "I left the chair and went to take care of some health issues, so I can't tell you exactly what occurred". Mr. Preston later added: "There was a motion earlier today that we wouldn't concur in an adjournment motion, so how we got there, we're not certain".

On June 11, 2013, at the citizenship and immigration committee, the vice-chair adjourned a meeting without the implied consent of the majority. At the committee's next meeting, the vice-chair again adjourned the meeting without implied consent, this time in the early hours of June 13, 2013.

On April 3, 2008, at the justice committee, the Liberal vice-chair, Brian Murphy, adjourned a meeting with the consent of the majority, alleging there was disorder. Twice more, on April 8 and 15, Mr. Murphy, the Liberal vice-chair, adjourned the justice committee without the consent of the majority.

I will now revisit the 2013 and 2014 cases, because they speak to a further and important proposition that once the gavel had fallen, the meeting was fully adjourned. The committee could only be reassembled at a fresh meeting after being called by the proper authority. In the case of the PROC committee, Ms. Latendresse adjourned meeting no. 18, at 4:23 p.m. A notice for meeting no. 19

was issued at 4:28 p.m., for members to convene at 4:30 p.m., and Mr. Preston called the meeting to order at 4:31 p.m.

I have been told by individuals who were present that Mr. Preston was on his way to the rest room at the moment of adjournment. Instead of trying to seize the chair to un-adjourn the meeting, he observed correctly that the meeting had been adjourned and used his own prerogative to call a fresh meeting mere minutes later.

In the case of the immigration committee, the vice-chair adjourned the first June 11 meeting, meeting no. 82, at 4:17 p.m. The committee's chair, the hon. member for Dufferin—Caledon, whom I understand was part of an official delegation to London at the time, instructed the calling of another meeting. Notice of meeting no. 83 was then issued, convening members for 4:45 p.m. Meeting no. 83 was also adjourned without the consent of the majority at 12:39 a.m. on June 13. The hon. member for Dufferin—Caledon directed that another meeting be held. A notice of meeting no. 84 was issued—

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

The hon. member for Timmins—James Bay, we are in the middle of a point of order at the moment. I have laid out the conditions for the member to add some additional points.

You are raising a new point of order, in fact. As I said, the hon. member for Perth—Wellington has the floor. That said, I am prepared to hear these additional comments.

I insisted that this be concise. The member is getting to his point and then we will get back to the item at hand.

The hon. member for Perth—Wellington.

Mr. John Nater: Mr. Speaker, the member for Dufferin—Caledon directed that another meeting be held. A notice of Meeting No. 84 was issued at 1:57 a.m., for a meeting of members at 2 a.m. The vice-chair, accordingly, called the meeting to order at 2:01 a.m. and promptly suspended the meeting for six and a half hours without the committee's consent.

Again, from these 2013 and 2014 cases, the lesson is perfectly clear. Once the assembly has adjourned, it may only be reconvened at a fresh meeting with proper notice issued by the appropriate authorities.

On page 1040 of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, third edition, it states:

Committee Chairs have considerable administrative responsibilities, starting with those involving the committee's program of activities. In compliance with instructions from the committee or an order from the House, the Chair:

calls committee meetings;

On page 1042, Bosc and Gagnon is quite clear on the role of committees vice-chairs:

a Vice-Chair has no administrative or representative responsibility, such as convening or cancelling meetings, unless he or she is acting on the instruction of the Chair.

Business of Supply

Speaking personally as my time as vice-chair of the Standing Committee on Official Languages, I can inform the House that when the chair was absent from a scheduled meeting, he always personally reached out to me or my office to inform me of his absence and made me chair of the meeting. That is an important rule that ensures that the authority of the elected chair is maintained. Moreover, these points are reiterated on page 1095 of Bosc and Gagnon as follows:

Committee meetings are convened by the Chair acting either on a decision made by the committee or on the Chair's own authority.... Only the Chair of a committee may convene a meeting; Vice-Chairs have no such power.

I think it is clear that the hon. member for Etobicoke Centre was not acting on the authority or instruction of the hon. member for Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill.

The constitution of the Canadian NATO Parliamentary Association is clear: the vice-chair has no authority to call meetings. General meetings of the association memberships may only be called with at least two weeks' notice by the association's executive committee, or by the written request of 10 association members. That did not happen in this situation. Certainly, two weeks has not passed since the hon. member for Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill adjourned the meeting.

The second matter I want to put before the House is the comments of the Speaker and the Deputy Speaker made in another venue. I want to ensure that these comments are properly ventilated here in the House so that all hon. members can be familiar with them.

On Thursday, at a board of internal economy meeting, I understand that the Speaker told the board that “the matter...is one on which I have rulings pending”. At the same meeting, the Deputy Speaker, attending in his capacity as co-chair of the joint interparliamentary committee, stated:

I think certainly members will be cognizant on the points of order that were raised in the House yesterday, and that covered much of that ground. I think members are well aware that this has become a matter of some dispute, and it ultimately has been taken before the House to you, Mr. Speaker, for some kind of guidance or resolution.

Nonetheless, I regret to inform you, Mr. Speaker, that it is my understanding that as of this morning, no changes have been made to the parliamentary website since my point of order, to reflect that the hon. member for Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill remains the chair of the association, nor even a change to leave the name of the chair blank or to indicate that it is, in the words of the Deputy Speaker, in “dispute”.

Indeed, since my intervention on Wednesday, I understand that the Canadian NATO Parliamentary Association has updated its website concerning the 2018 annual session to be held in Halifax to indicate that the member for Etobicoke Centre is Canada's head of delegation. That could only have been done, I presume, on the basis of a report that the assembly's secretary received from our own Parliament. We are truly running the risk of Canada's being misrepresented on the world stage. This begs the question of whether you can advise that these reports about the websites are a sign of the clerks acting in defiance of you and the Speaker's office and your own need to prepare rulings, or whether you have already ruled privately on this matter.

● (1345)

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—SERVICE STANDARDS FOR VETERANS

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

Mr. Scott Simms (Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, back to the regularly scheduled programming, I want to thank the member for Yorkton—Melville. At the beginning of her speech when she described the statutory elements the minister goes through when administering the department, I appreciate that her comments were well researched and well done. She outlined the way we do things here. As a member of Parliament, in a non-partisan way, I thank her very much for that. However, in comparing the former administration with this one, there was a glaring omission.

I am reticent to say this, because I know a lot of people get into comments to the effect, “this is what you did and this is what we did”, and those sorts of thing. However, the glaring omission here, which should be looked at, is on the point of entry for a particular veteran.

I can say from experience, not as a veteran, but as someone who has dealt with veterans, that when they want to reach out to someone when they are going through major issues, there is always the element with a government department of where one goes. Many government departments are siloed into different areas, and a lot of people get confused with what direction to take if they do not get it from their local member of Parliament. Therefore, one of the things we did was to transition back to a point of entry that was more familiar to a veteran in the sense of having Veterans Affairs offices, as opposed to regular bureaucrats.

I am sorry if I am interrupting the NDP heckling, but the question is simply about what had to be done in that circumstance, and that was different from the last administration.

● (1350)

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: Mr. Speaker, in fairness, I think it is very important that we reach out to veterans in a way that is accessible to them. Whenever there is change, it is difficult.

I note that one of the offices reopened in my province, and I had veterans coming in to talk to me. The frustration was that no one came to talk to them about reopening them. This is the government that consults on all things. The veterans said that the government put it back where it was. It is downtown, in the middle of a very busy area. There is no parking, and they cannot get upstairs. They really liked it when it was in a mall with Service Canada.

Up north, in Yellowknife, veterans asked why we do not have someone come to be part of Service Canada there so that there is an expert on the ground.

With regard to reopening offices across the south, I have not seen any results to see what they have cost the government or how effective they have been. I know that there are some veterans who still very much prefer meeting face to face, but even in those offices, I have heard that they usually respond by telephone.

Statements by Members

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, when veterans signed up, the people who went from my region did not read the small print. They served their country. They took the risks. They came back expecting that there was a contract for life. The present government has argued in court that there is no moral contract for life.

What I have seen over my 15 years in Parliament is that politicians always love to stand by veterans on Remembrance Day, and then they ignore them for the rest of the year. We saw the previous government go ahead with a lump sum pension that we knew was going to be problematic. We learned that there was a \$165-million shortfall in veterans pensions under the previous government.

However, the most staggering thing we have seen again and again is that a government announces funding for veterans and then renounces it and then announces it for a third time. They seem to be sure to thank themselves for announcing it, then the money goes back to the Treasury Board and is not spent. Veterans are ripped off, and their families are ripped off.

We have an opportunity in this House to do something right, to say that if the money is committed to veterans services, it is going to be spent on veterans services and is not going to be clawed back. The Parliamentary Budget Officer said that this is possible, and we can make this change in this Parliament.

I would like to ask the Conservative Party if they will be standing with us to support veterans when this motion is passed in the House. Will they support us and veterans, or will they stand with the present government, which continues to fight veterans on their basic pension rights?

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: Mr. Speaker, veterans are incredibly important to Canadians. Serving at committee for veterans affairs as the shadow deputy critic, I find that this is probably one of the most emotional files in the House of Commons. That is why I am pleased to say today that everyone on this side of the floor represented in the Conservative Party of Canada will be voting in support of this motion.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I had the privilege and honour of serving in the Canadian Forces for just over three years.

When I reflect on Stephen Harper when he was the prime minister and compare that time to what we have witnessed over the last three years, I believe that our veterans are quite satisfied with the degree to which this government is going out of its way to ensure that all retiring veterans, and veterans in general, get the type of support necessary. We have invested literally hundreds of millions of dollars. We have reopened offices for veterans. There is a lot of good news out there.

The simple message I would try to communicate today to those who might be following the debate is that if people are aware of a veteran who is not getting the services required or who has unresolved pension issues, they should bring that to the attention of the department in one form or another.

• (1355)

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: Mr. Speaker, I hear from a great number of veterans, and their frustration is with the very department the member says to bring their concerns to. That again shows that we have work to do in making sure that VAC is there to serve veterans and not itself.

I would ask a rhetorical question. Now that the Liberal government is aware of how the Veterans Affairs budget works, is it prepared to apologize for accusing my former colleagues of thievery?

Mr. Bob Saroya (Markham—Unionville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my question is simple and short. When the Prime Minister was in the third party, he promised veterans that they would never have to fight the government in court. After \$38 million spent over the last two years, what has happened?

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: Mr. Speaker, a lot of what the government says and does is not compatible. A number of promises were made to veterans during the last election campaign, after significant consultation with them, very much giving them the impression that they were heard. It was even in writing what the Liberals were prepared to do. One was that they would never take them to court, that they should not have to face their government in court. That came right from the mouth and the heart of the Prime Minister of the Liberal government. Veterans are so upset, hurt and angry about what the government has done in basically completely turning its back on the promise made to veterans.

Over and over again, veterans are seeing Liberals truly live out the statement the Prime Minister made, that veterans are just asking for too much, yet they have the money to send \$650 million overseas to battle other countries in court on their values on different values. They have the money to pay off a convicted terrorist. They have the money to give veterans money to a convicted cop killer. There is no question that the government is not on the right track when it comes to caring for our veterans.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

1984 ANTI-SIKH RIOTS

Mr. Raj Grewal (Brampton East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I stand to mark the 34th anniversary of the tragic events of November 1984. These orchestrated and targeted massacres against the Sikh community were an atrocity that resulted in the loss of thousands of innocent lives, for which justice has not been served. All these years and numerous inquiries later, those responsible for these brutal massacres have still not been brought to justice.

The burning questions from 1984 need to be answered. It is vital that we continue to call on the Indian government to pursue the truth, to pursue justice for those who carry the scars of 1984 and, most importantly, to pursue accountability for the people of India.

Statements by Members

Truth and reconciliation have strengthened Canada, and they can be of great benefit to India too. We must remain steadfast in our commitment to openness, justice, human rights and fairness, both at home and abroad.

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ADDICTIONS

Mr. Glen Motz (Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner, CPC): Mr. Speaker, communities across this country are grappling with proposals for supervised consumption sites in an effort to reduce the negative impacts of drug addiction and abuse. We all recognize the important public health benefit of keeping people safe and minimizing death, disease and injury, but there has to be room for different harm reduction strategies.

I recently visited Vancouver's Downtown Eastside and saw what was really happening first-hand. I talked to addicts, heard their stories and listened to what they said. This is a failed social experiment. It is a crisis that is not getting any better. While there, I met with members of the Odd Squad, a charity run by serving and retired police officers who volunteer their time to educate youth and the community about substance abuse and, more importantly, about approaches to avoid addiction in the first place.

Governments must ensure that appropriate funding is directed toward detox and treatment-on-demand facilities, plus organizations like the Odd Squad, to give hope to the hopeless. The human cost is far too high to refuse to consider altering the current course.

* * *

• (1400)

[Translation]

VETERANS WEEK

Mr. Yves Robillard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on Remembrance Day this year, we hope that every Canadian will take a moment to pay tribute to all those who served. We remember the service and sacrifice of all the soldiers, sailors and aviators who answered the call of duty and paid the ultimate price. We honour those who continue to serve our country to make our world a safer place.

During Veterans Week and on Remembrance Day, Canadians from coast to coast to coast lay wreaths, take part in ceremonies, share their stories and wear the poppy with pride.

We are grateful to our veterans and our active military personnel.

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[English]

1984 ANTI-SIKH RIOTS

Ms. Tracey Ramsey (Essex, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this year marks the 34th anniversary of the 1984 Sikh genocide. Over three days, almost 3,000 Sikhs were killed, and their property was looted and destroyed. Sikh men were burned alive, women suffered horrific sexual violence, and children were murdered in gruesome fashion. Many have pointed out that state resources were instrumental in these premeditated killings, but 34 years later, justice and accountability for these horrendous crimes remain elusive.

That is why I stand today to express my solidarity with the thousands of Canadians who live with this pain as survivors and as bearers of intergenerational trauma. It is also why efforts for healing and reconciliation must be prioritized.

The path to reconciliation will not be easy, but for the victims and survivors, today we remember.

* * *

[Translation]

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. Ramez Ayoub (Thérèse-De Blainville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Blainville is home to Quebec's first high-tech weather radar. As a result of climate change, we will be seeing more and more extreme or unusual weather events, like the tornadoes in Gatineau and Ottawa. That is why I am pleased that our government is investing \$95 million to replace weather radars across the country.

The new radars will have an extended detection range of 240 kilometres, as compared to the 120-kilometre range of the old ones. Communities within that range will benefit from more accurate weather warnings. That will enable individuals and families to quickly take appropriate action when bad weather is forecast, including planning related to road safety, snow removal, airports and school closures.

That is good news for my region and for the safety of Canadians.

* * *

[English]

MERITORIOUS SERVICE AWARD

Mr. Mel Arnold (North Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this morning I had the pleasure of being present at Rideau Hall, where a constituent, Mr. Norman Crerar, received the Meritorious Service Award. Mr. Crerar was recognized for his vision and dedication in creating the Okanagan Military Tattoo.

With the help of numerous enthusiastic volunteers, Norm founded the tattoo, a musical spectacle that brings pipers, drummers and dancers from across the country and abroad to the Okanagan each summer. As a result of his leadership and hundreds of hours of time, the event is a boost for the local economy and a showcase of military and cultural traditions that is unique in Western Canada.

This is not the first trip to Rideau Hall for Mr. Crerar. He was also recognized in 2017, the 50th anniversary of his role in the 1967 voyageur canoe trip across Canada as part of the 1967 Olympics.

I would like to offer my congratulations and thanks to Norman Crerar and to his loving wife Nancy for their dedication to our community and our country.

*Statements by Members***REMEMBRANCE DAY**

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz (Davenport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this week as we prepare to honour those who have so bravely served and/or died for our freedom, it is especially important to recognize and remember those who fought in the Great War, as this year marks the 100th anniversary of the end of World War I.

This year's Remembrance Day ceremony in my riding of Davenport is extra special, because as veterans returned home from the Great War in 1918, the Government of Canada identified the need to recognize their valour and patriotic service to our country. No military burial ground existed at the time.

Prospect Cemetery in Davenport was chosen as the preferred location to create a field of honour, and Canada's first veterans section was established. Today, Prospect Cemetery is the final resting place of more than 5,300 Canadian and Allied forces veterans, making it the largest First World War veterans section in Canada.

I encourage everyone on November 11, those in Davenport and across the riding, to attend Prospect Cemetery, which holds an annual sunrise ceremony every Remembrance Day. Let us pay a special tribute to those who have so bravely served our country.

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●(1405)

CANADIAN AGRICULTURAL HALL OF FAME

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Dr. Wilf Keller, chair of the Agricultural Institute of Canada, on his induction into the Canadian Agricultural Hall of Fame for his contributions to the advancement of agriculture through numerous research initiatives. Dr. Keller is a giant in the scientific community, with over 40 years of experience including the study of genomics in canola improvement, the development of industrial bioproducts from vegetable oil, and the production of bioactive natural products in plants for enhanced human health and quality of life.

Dr. Keller has received many accolades, including a lifetime achievement award by the Society for In Vitro Biology, the Saskatchewan Order of Merit and induction into the Saskatchewan Agricultural Hall of Fame. Today, we recognize Dr. Wilf Keller for his extraordinary career in the scientific and agricultural community.

I would like to extend a big thanks to Dr. Keller.

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REMEMBRANCE DAY

Mr. John Nater (Perth—Wellington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this year marks 100 years since the armistice that ended the war to end all wars. When the call to serve king and country went out, more than 600,000 Canadians answered that call, including many from Perth-Wellington. Among those who served were Frederick Campbell of Mount Forest and Samuel Honey from nearby Conn.

Lieutenant Campbell was killed in the north of France, while single-handedly providing cover to allow his comrades to withdraw.

Lieutenant Honey was among those who took Vimy Ridge. Later at Bourlon Wood in France, he took command of his company after all other officers had become casualties. He would repel four counterattacks and personally capture 10 prisoners before falling. For their courage, both men were awarded the Victoria Cross.

This Remembrance Day, we honour the courage and the sacrifice of all who served. Lest we forget.

* * *

[Translation]

COMMUNITY SERVICE AWARDS

Mr. Emmanuel Dubourg (Bourassa, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I had the great privilege to pay tribute to six men whose exemplary actions are a credit to the riding of Bourassa, which I represent here in the House.

I awarded a certificate of honour and merit and the MP's medal to these extraordinary men at a ceremony I organized in Montreal North under the theme of "eminent men in Bourassa".

These men's volunteer activities in recent years have helped make Montreal North a better place to live. It is a great pleasure for me to bring the names of these award winners to the attention of the House of Commons of Canada. They are Guillaume André, Christian Desautels, Jean-Paul Guiard, Roger Lagacé, Roger Petit-Frère and Roger Trépanier.

I commend them for their contributions.

* * *

DESJARDINS MARIA-CHAPDELAINÉ THEATRE

Mr. Richard Hébert (Lac-Saint-Jean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, built in 2008, the theatre in Dolbeau-Mistassini is undoubtedly one of the most beautiful in Quebec.

Inspired by 19th-century theatres in Europe, its smaller scale provides for a better acoustic experience. Its scarlet velvet, black and gold accents and incredible luxury all combine to create an intimate ambiance of contrasts.

Designed by architect Paul Laurendeau, the Desjardins Maria-Chapdelainé theatre in Dolbeau-Mistassini celebrated its 10th anniversary on September 29 during the Journées de la culture, or "culture days" event.

That was also when the Orchestre symphonique du Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean celebrated its 40th anniversary. We were therefore treated to a wonderful concert led by conductor emeritus Jacques Clément and Jacinthe Couture, with pianists and guest musicians.

Lac-Saint-Jean has a rich cultural heritage, and we are proud to have such a performance venue in our region. I again want to recognize the anniversaries of the theatre and the Orchestre symphonique du Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean, which are both so important for showcasing our culture.

Statements by Members

●(1410)

*[English]***ELGAR PETERSEN**

Mr. Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon—Grasswood, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Elgar Petersen is a well-known name in the hockey community worldwide, but especially in the city of Humboldt. Elgar helped many minor hockey teams and when the Broncos were formed in 1970, he became their trainer and equipment manager. He washed the jerseys and he looked after water bottles, tape, whatever was needed, but most of all, Elgar always had a pat on the back for each player who put on a Humboldt jersey.

In 2000, the City of Humboldt named its uni-plex after him: the Elgar Petersen Arena. He filled the role of coach, friend, volunteer and mentor. He was at the rink morning, noon and night. He tied countless skate laces over the decades, including mine many times.

This weekend it was at the same Elgar Petersen Arena in Humboldt, all too familiar with grief, when his recent passing was announced prior to Saturday's Broncos hockey game. All Broncos feel this loss today. Today, we mourn for Elgar and Humboldt again.

May Elgar rest in peace.

* * *

REMEMBRANCE DAY

Mrs. Deborah Schulte (King—Vaughan, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge the eighth annual poppy campaign by Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at Canada, supporting the Royal Canadian Legion under the banner "Muslims for Remembrance Day". This nationwide campaign is a demonstration of Ahmadiyya Muslim support and respect for our veterans and troops and for all those who paid the ultimate sacrifice to keep Canada strong and free.

Ahmadis are assisting the Royal Canadian Legion in distributing poppies and collecting donations. On November 9, at the beautiful Baitul Islam Mosque in my riding and at chapters all across Canada, Ahmadiyya Muslim communities will come together for a ceremony of remembrance. Members of the Ahmadiyya community have expressed to me how important it is to remember the brave soldiers who fought for our freedom and for those still fighting for peace around the world, especially on this very special 100th anniversary of the armistice.

I would like to thank the Ahmadiyya Muslim community in my riding and all across Canada for its support of our troops and veterans and for its commitment to never forget.

Lest we forget.

* * *

HOUSING

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, housing is unaffordable for nearly half of people in Victoria. Rental vacancy levels remain below 1%, one in five Victorians is spending more than half his or her income on rent and utilities and owning a house is virtually a fantasy. Between 2000 and 2016, the median income for a family in Victoria increased by 64% and the price of a single family home by 340%.

In 1993, the then Liberal government cut the national affordable housing program, which would have supported the construction of 100,000 units in B.C. between then and now and the current Liberal government refuses to spend 90% of its promised funding for housing until after the next election.

Affordable housing is a fundamental right. I will be holding a town hall this Saturday to discuss what the government is refusing to do: make affordable housing a reality for Canadians.

* * *

*[Translation]***INTERNATIONAL TRADE**

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, given how badly the Prime Minister has repeatedly failed Canadians, should we be surprised that he has no concrete plan to deal with U.S. protectionism and prepare industries for that possibility?

The Liberals announced new measures to prevent a harmful influx of steel imports into the Canadian market as a result of American tariffs. Since October 25, a surtax of 25% is being applied to imports of seven steel products over a specified volume level. The seven products are concrete reinforcing bar, heavy plate, hot-rolled sheet used in auto manufacturing, energy tubular products, painted steel, stainless steel and wire rod.

The Conservative Party of Canada's top priority is eliminating those harmful tariffs from Canadian steel and aluminum. It is truly sad that the Prime Minister failed in his duty by signing an agreement without any assurances that those tariffs would be lifted, because they are undermining the Canadian economy.

* * *

*[English]***VETERANS WEEK**

Mr. Darrell Samson (Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, during Veterans' Week, all Canadians come together to honour the Canadian Armed Forces members, veterans and police officers who have served Canada and to remember those who have died in service.

As the member of Parliament for Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook, I am particularly aware of the work and sacrifices of our armed forces, as its members and veterans make up 23% of the population of my riding, and Nova Scotia has the highest per capita of veterans in the country.

●(1415)

[Translation]

This year marks a number of important anniversaries, including the 100th anniversary of Canada's Hundred Days and of the armistice of the First World War, as well as the 65th anniversary of the Korean War armistice.

*Oral Questions**[English]*

Let me take this opportunity to thank all veterans and Canadian Armed Forces members for their service. Their country is grateful and will always remember their sacrifices.

Lest we forget.

ORAL QUESTIONS

*[English]***PRIVACY**

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this weekend the Canadian Chamber of Commerce warned that the Prime Minister's plan to spy on Canadians' banking transactions could put our trade with the European Union at risk. The chamber expressed serious concerns about unintended consequences on our trade with Europe, which would then affect Canadian small businesses.

Instead of dismissing legitimate questions coming from Canadians who do not want to be spied on and now further legitimate questions from the business community, will the Liberals just do the right thing and stop this unauthorized surveillance of Canadians' bank accounts?

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to highlight for the member opposite that our government has been very clear that data protection and protecting the privacy of Canadians are very important.

I also want to highlight that this particular initiative undertaken by Statistics Canada is a pilot project. No data has been collected, and Statistics Canada is working very closely with the Privacy Commissioner and with banks to make sure the privacy of Canadians is protected.

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, why does the Liberal government not understand that Canadians do not trust it when it comes to protecting their private information? The response of the government over the last two weeks has not given Canadians any more confidence. They are worried about their financial transactions being spied on. The business community is concerned, and instead of saying they will fix this mess, the Liberals are doubling down and defending it. That is the wrong response.

Canadians want to hear that the Liberals will stop this unauthorized surveillance of their bank accounts. Why will they not do the right thing?

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we recognize the concern that Canadians have around privacy and around data protection, but what is really problematic is the over-the-top rhetoric by the members opposite. Let me give an example.

Under section 17(1) of the Statistics Act, no police, RCMP or CRA official can actually access any personal information. The courts cannot even compel Statistics Canada. They never have and never will compromise on personal information when it comes to Canadians' privacy.

[Translation]

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if that were true, the government would not be under investigation over this.

The Liberal government is collecting confidential personal information on Canadians without their consent. Just yesterday we learned that this could jeopardize trade with Europe.

Will the Prime Minister finally realize that this situation is unacceptable? People's privacy is under attack.

When will the Prime Minister take responsibility and immediately put an end to this unacceptable situation?

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government takes Canadians' privacy very seriously. Let me be clear. This is a pilot project that is still in development. No information has been collected. Statistics Canada is working with the Privacy Commissioner.

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MEMBER FOR SAINT-LÉONARD—SAINT-MICHEL

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, no information has been collected, but the Privacy Commissioner has started an investigation. That is interesting.

I now want to talk about another issue that is worrying more and more Canadians.

On April 25, the member for Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel announced that he was quitting politics. On June 12, he gave his farewell speech here, in the House, to all parliamentarians, saying that he was quitting politics. On September 27, he suddenly announced that he would take a month to reflect on his future in politics. In a recent development, we have learned that the Prime Minister apparently gave him a secret mandate.

What is this secret mandate that the Prime Minister gave Liberal agent 007?

● (1420)

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, each member of Parliament is accountable to his or her constituents for his or her work in Ottawa. The member in question said that he was reflecting on his plans for the future.

[English]

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, five months ago, the member for Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel stood in this place and gave what we all thought was his resignation speech. Five months later he is still an MP being paid by the taxpayers, but appears to have not shown up for a day's work since then. The member said that he has been working on a very special government responsibility assigned to him by the Prime Minister.

Could the Prime Minister tell the House what this highly important government job or assignment is that he gave to the member, which means the member does not have to show up for work?

Oral Questions

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what I have just said in French, I will repeat in English. Members of Parliament are responsible to their constituents for their work in Ottawa. The member has stated that he is reflecting on his next steps.

* * *

[Translation]

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, 10 days ago, Mexico announced that it will not approve the United States-Mexico-Canada trade agreement unless President Trump lifts the U.S. tariffs on steel and aluminum. Now that is what I call guts.

Steelworkers have come to Ottawa to demand that the Liberal government do exactly the same thing, because these tariffs could force many Canadian companies out of business, but the Liberals continue to turn a deaf ear.

My question is very simple. How come the Mexican government has a backbone but our government here in Ottawa does not?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this reminds me that last Tuesday I attended a reception hosted by Unifor to celebrate the USMCA. To my surprise, the leader of the NDP was there too to join in the festivities. His Quebec lieutenant, the member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, said at the microphone that it was a very good deal.

What is the NDP's position on this matter?

* * *

CANADA REVENUE AGENCY

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to know why the Mexican government has a backbone, but the Liberal government does not.

Today also marks a sad anniversary. One year ago the paradise papers scandal broke. Before that, we had the Panama papers, the Luxembourg leaks, the Swiss leaks and the offshore leaks. There was the scandal involving KPMG, which helped Canadians send their money away and then repatriate it tax free. In every one of these cases, the Canada Revenue Agency has seemed powerless to act, or it simply gave amnesty to the guilty parties. However, the agency is very good at going after Canadians who receive benefits.

Why the double standard? When will it take concrete action on the paradise papers?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, allow me to quote the NDP member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie. He told the Canadian negotiators that he just wanted to congratulate everyone in the room for their fantastic work. He then said that the USMCA represents the best possible agreement and protects Canadian workers. We agree. This agreement is in keeping with the commitments we made concerning stability, maintaining employment, growth and protecting thousands of Canadian jobs.

[English]

Ms. Tracey Ramsey (Essex, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am not surprised the Liberals do not want to talk about the paradise papers.

The paradise papers constituted a huge leak of financial documents that revealed how politicians, multinationals and the wealthiest evade taxes.

I would like to see working-class Canadians try dodging taxes and see how that works out. Not only have the ultra-wealthy rigged the system completely for them, but we are all paying the price. Tax dodging deprives Canadians of public services like health care, and the government is doing nothing to stop it. Instead of going after the big bucks, Liberals continue to go after the little guys.

When is the government going to find some courage and stop tax evasion in Canada?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Tourism, Official Languages and La Francophonie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague is comparing apples and oranges. The reality is that we reinvested in CRA. We have made sure to counter tax evasion by investing more than \$500 million. At the same time, we have been reinvesting in the public service to make sure Canadians have access to really good public service and good services in terms of programs and support all across the country.

We can do both, and that is exactly what our government is doing.

* * *

● (1425)

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Ms. Tracey Ramsey (Essex, NDP): Mr. Speaker, New Democrats are calling on the Liberal government not to sign the USMCA until steel and aluminum tariffs on Canadian workers are removed. This is about jobs. This is about Canadians' livelihoods. This is about keeping Canadian shops open.

Trump's unjustified tariffs are having a devastating impact on Canadian workers and their families. No wonder Mexico announced that it would not sign the deal until the tariffs on its workers are gone.

Will the government do the right thing and not sign this deal until steel and aluminum tariffs are removed?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have to say I am surprised again. Once again, I have to remind my colleague from the other side that the leader of the NDP was at a reception celebrating the fact that Canada had arrived at a deal on USMCA.

In fact, their Quebec lieutenant, the member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, actually said that this was the best deal possible. He said this at an occasion that was multipartisan, and very clearly indicated that the NDP is quite pleased with the deal this government arrived at.

*Oral Questions***PRIVACY**

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last week the Prime Minister went to extraordinary lengths to defend the Liberals' plan to engage in the unauthorized surveillance of Canadians' personal banking information. We also learned that the Liberals have already seized 15 years of the private information of potentially millions of Canadians from a credit rating bureau. They did all of this without the knowledge or consent of any impacted Canadians.

Will the government delete all the information it has already secretly collected and end its plans to collect even more information?

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have been very clear about our concerns around privacy and data protection.

That is why our government introduced new regulations when it comes to PIPEDA, to further strengthen privacy. That is why we are actually engaged with Canadians around further data protection.

With respect to personal information and the request made under this pilot project, it is clear that all this personal information will be removed. Under section 17(1) of the Statistics Act, the government cannot compel Statistics Canada, nor can the opposition, the courts or the national security agencies.

The bottom line is the privacy of Canadians has been and will always be protected.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for his patience. I would ask all members to be patient and listen when someone else has the floor. Remember, we each get our turn eventually.

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on Friday the government claimed that this pilot project was also still in design, but it actually was secretly getting the accounts of potentially millions of Canadians from a credit bureau.

Specifically, Conservatives have sponsored a petition calling for the end of this program. In just a few days, it has already received 14,000 signatures. Canadians care about their privacy, even if the government does not.

The chief statistician says that the government cannot ask for consent, because most Canadians will refuse to give it. Is it seriously the position of the government that if it cannot get consent from Canadians to collect this data, it will just do it secretly, behind Canadians' backs?

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we already had this debate in 2015, when the members opposite said they wanted to make the long-form census voluntary. That resulted in 1,128 communities not receiving good-quality, reliable data. That impacted communities, businesses and Canadians right across this country.

We are willing to have this debate. Statistics Canada has been very clear that it will continue to protect the privacy of Canadians and to protect data. The members opposite just do not trust good-quality, reliable data.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I think the Liberals simply do not understand the seriousness of the situation they themselves have created.

Honest Canadians do not want people from the Liberal government snooping around their bank accounts. It is simple, but the Liberal government refuses to see it. It is a direct attack on people's integrity and privacy. The Liberal government has no business sticking its nose in Canadians' bank accounts.

Why does the Liberal government insist on going down this road?

[*English*]

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is pretty ordinary behaviour from the members opposite. That is Stephen Harper's party, and it is about fearmongering, about going over the top with rhetoric, about scare tactics.

The Conservatives fail to disclose to Canadians that first, all the personal information is removed from any information that Statistics Canada collects. Second, Statistics Canada has been very clear that it will never, ever disclose that information to anyone. With regard to the pilot project, Statistics Canada has engaged the Privacy Commissioner and will address any issues around privacy and data protection.

● (1430)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what is ordinary behaviour is the Liberal government wanting to stick its nose in the bank accounts of honest Canadians. That has no place in our democracy.

The government says this is a pilot project. Whether it is a pilot project or not, it is wrong. A pilot project means that it is a trial, but there is no point in trying this out because Canadians want none of it. Canadians in my riding told me on the weekend that they do not want this.

The Canadian Chamber of Commerce told Global News this weekend that this could have an adverse effect on our trade relations with Europe.

Why is the government continuing down this road?

[*English*]

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians understand the importance of privacy. They understand the importance of data protection. They also understand the importance of good-quality, reliable data.

This data that is under process under the pilot project, for example, could help the Bank of Canada look at how to make monetary decisions around interest rate policy. This helps around the consumer price index and to make sure that individuals get the appropriate benefits under OAS and CPP. This is about evidence-based decision-making.

The members opposite have a problem with Statistics Canada, and they have a problem with good-quality, reliable data.

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC): Yes, Mr. Speaker, Canadians do take their privacy very seriously, which is why they do not want the government stealing their financial information without their consent. There is documentation, 800 pages worth, of the government violating the privacy of hundreds of thousands of Canadians just in the last 19 months alone. Now what the government is saying is that if Canadians will not willingly give their private financial data, it will just take it by force and without their consent.

Why do the Liberals not put an end to that today and stop this unauthorized surveillance of Canadians' personal, private data?

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, not one single breach of any information is on the servers. The members opposite again are over the top with their rhetoric. They are over the top when it comes to fearmongering and to misleading Canadians. They fundamentally do not believe in good-quality reliable data.

They had this debate with the mandatory long-form census. We won that debate. Canadians understand the importance of reliable data to help communities, to help Canadians, to help businesses. We are going to have this debate. When it comes to privacy and data protection, Canadians respect Statistics Canada.

The Speaker: Order, please. There is far too much noise in here.

The hon. member for Chilliwack—Hope.

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last week, the government said that Canadians trusted it with these data and that we in the official opposition should just get on board with this program for the government to harvest the financial data of Canadians. No, we will not do that.

We are standing up for Canadians who have not given their consent for the government to go snooping around their private financial transactions, their credit transactions, their debit transactions, their mortgage payments. All of it is on the table.

Why does the Prime Minister not put an end to this invasion of privacy and unauthorize government surveillance, and do it today?

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, all personal information will be removed. The members opposite know that. The members opposite also know there have been no breaches when it comes to Statistics Canada's server.

The problem is that the members opposite just do not trust Statistics Canada. They do not like good-quality, reliable data. They do not want Canadians to see a government make decisions based on evidence. They have a fundamental problem against data, against the facts, against science. We have had this debate before and we

continue to have this debate. We look forward to debate come the next election.

The Speaker: Order, please. I remind members that most members are able to sit through question period and hear things they do not like, without reacting. It may be hard, but most members are adult and can do it. Most in all parties are able to do it, and I am sure the rest can as well.

The hon. member for Jonquière.

* * *

[*Translation*]

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Ms. Karine Trudel (Jonquière, NDP): Mr. Speaker, since 2016, the \$372 million promised to our veterans has been left on the table. Our veterans deserve high-quality services. It is not like there are a hundred different ways to improve services; the Liberals have to invest the money they promised.

The motion we put forward today calls for the government to automatically carry forward all annual lapsed spending to the next fiscal year, which would solve the Department of Veterans Affairs' financial problems.

Will the Liberals make the right choice, put partisanship aside and support our motion?

● (1435)

[*English*]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to stand on behalf of the government and talk about the support our government is giving to veterans. Any time when it comes to motions for veterans, we will support it.

We have listened to our veterans. That is why we delivered a pension for life, reopened the nine offices previously closed by the Harper Conservatives and hired over 470 staff as well, put forward a joint suicide prevention strategy, created the veterans emergency fund, and the list goes on. When it comes to our veterans, we will support them.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, while backlogs for processing the veterans applications for disability, earnings-lost benefits and every other program are growing, the Liberals have left \$372 million unspent at Veterans Affairs. The government is failing our veterans, meeting just 12 of its 24 self-identified service standards, and has not hired the case workers it promised.

First, the Conservatives left over \$1 billion unspent. Now the Liberals have followed suit. Canadians know that veterans deserve better. Will the government support our motion and make use of the lapsed spending so veterans get the services they need?

Oral Questions

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I stated, when it comes to any motions supporting our veterans, our government will be supporting the motions. The benefits are demand-driven, so whether 10 or 10,000 veterans come forward, they receive benefits. These are based on estimates and this process guarantees that whether veterans come forward this year or the following year, we will always have the resources available for veterans.

When we took office, we immediately increased financial support, putting more money into the pockets of veterans, increasing mental health support and delivering on the promise we made to veterans.

* * *

CARBON PRICING

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government admits that when its carbon tax reaches \$50 a tonne, the cost to the average family will be around \$300. Even if we believe those bogus numbers, they do not take into account a document released just last week wherein the government admits that after the next election it will consider raising the carbon tax even further. If that is the case, it should be honest about it now.

Could the government guarantee whether the tax will go higher than it has currently admitted, yes or no?

Mr. Sean Fraser (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased the hon. member opposite contemplates that the Liberals will still be in power after the next election.

The fact is that we have been transparent from the beginning about our plan to protect the environment and grow the economy. Our national climate plan has been posted on our website since the day it was negotiated. Part of that plan, and I am proud to stand by it, is to put a price on pollution that will max it at \$50 a tonne by 2022. We will conduct a review of the policy at that time.

If the hon. member is so concerned with transparency, I would suggest he looks inward and asks the hon. Leader of the Opposition why he deleted his plan from his leader's website in May of 2017.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there we have it. There will be a review of the price in 2022, after the election is over. Therefore, Canadians would have to wake up to that nightmare after having voted to choose the next to govern.

The government already broke its promises on the deficit, already broke promises on taxes for the middle class. Now it is setting up for yet another broken promise with a carbon tax on gas, home heating and other essentials that will be much higher than the government admits.

Will it rule out that the tax will be higher than it now admits, yes or no?

Mr. Sean Fraser (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is interesting now that the Conservative Party of Canada seems opposed to reviewing policies periodically. It seems to prefer basing their decisions on ideology rather than facts, science or evidence.

We campaigned on a commitment to protect our environment and grow the economy at the same time. I am proud that we have implemented a price on pollution that will leave middle-class families better off.

If there is a nightmare, it is going to be during the next campaign when the Conservatives are trying to take money from their constituents so they can make pollution free again.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pollution under the Liberal plan is absolutely free for any large industrial polluter that emits more than 50,000 tonnes of greenhouse gases. However, it is not free for a grandmother trying to heat her home in -30° weather. It is not free for a middle-class single mom taking her child to soccer. It is not free for a small business. They all deserve to know this. Will the tax go even higher after the next election if by some God-forsaken outcome that party wins that election?

● (1440)

Mr. Sean Fraser (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, just because the hon. member opposite has the ability to repeat a falsehood does not make it true. The fact is that we put a price on pollution, including a price for big emitters. There is a standard set in different industries and if the big emitters exceed that standard, then they pay a price on pollution.

Stephen Harper's former director of policy has indicated that families can expect to be better off. Doug Ford's chief budget adviser has advocated on behalf of putting a price on pollution. Even Stephen Harper back in 2008 suggested that the plan going forward should involve an effective price of \$65 a tonne. The fact is that families will be left better off under our plan and it is—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Carleton.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is suggesting that his own government documents are false. They indicate that not only will large industrial emitters get up to a 90% exemption on the carbon tax, but even if they exceed that 90%, they can use something called surplus credits or eligible offset credits to avoid paying any tax whatsoever.

Therefore, yes, pollution will be free for the large polluters, but how much will the average Canadian family have to pay?

Mr. Sean Fraser (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member's repetition does not make the falsehood true. Nor does his use of air quotes in this circumstance.

Oral Questions

The fact is that we campaigned on a commitment to protect our environment and grow the economy at the same time. Part of our plan to protect the environment includes putting a price on pollution. This is going to leave middle-class families better off.

If members do not believe me, they can look to Stephen Harper's former director of policy. They can look to Doug Ford's chief budget adviser. They can look to the Noble prize winner in economics from this year. The fact is that we are moving forward with a plan that will protect our environment and leave families better off.

I am disappointed that the Conservatives want to take money from their constituents to make pollution—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot.

* * *

[*Translation*]

PHYSICIAN-ASSISTED DYING

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on the issue of medical assistance in dying, the government lacks sensitivity. It brought in a law that is too restrictive.

Denise Bégin, a constituent of mine who has a serious degenerative disease, is seeking medical assistance in dying. However, her request was denied because she is not on the point of death. The government should not make this choice for patients.

Will the Liberals respect patients' choices and the ruling handed down by the Supreme Court?

[*English*]

Hon. Jody Wilson-Raybould (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, medical assistance in dying is an incredibly complex, sensitive and deeply personal issue. Our government put forward legislation that we are proud forms the national framework around medical assistance in dying. It draws the correct balance between the autonomy of individuals and protecting vulnerable people.

We are continuing to have a discussion around medical assistance in dying. We have, according to the legislation, commissioned three reviews on highly complex issues that will be coming back in December. We look forward to having further conversations about it.

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in 2016, Bob Hergott had to sign his request for medical assistance in dying in a bus shelter. Then, in 2017, Doreen Nowicki was forced to receive her assessment for ending her life on the sidewalk. Edmonton's Covenant Health hospitals, where these patients were treated, have banned these activities on their properties.

Enough is enough. Will the Liberals actually defend their legislation, show some leadership and ensure that the constitutional rights of terminally ill patients are upheld across Canada?

Hon. Jody Wilson-Raybould (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again, medical assistance in dying is a deeply complex, sensitive and deeply personal matter for individuals who are seeking to access medical assistance in dying.

Our government introduced Bill C-14 in response to the Supreme Court of Canada's decision in Jordan. We are confident that our

legislation strikes the right balance between protecting vulnerable people and respecting the personal autonomy of individuals, as well as recognizing the conscience right of health care practitioners.

We will continue to have a conversation around medical assistance and dying. We have commissioned three reviews according to the legislation, which look at complex issues.

* * *

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Colin Fraser (West Nova, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a month ago, in Halifax, was the naming ceremony of Canada's first Arctic and offshore patrol ship. It was the first naval ship built in Canada in 20 years and our government delivered it.

As part of "Strong, Secure, Engaged: Canada's Defence Policy", we committed to building at least five Arctic and offshore patrol ships to bolster the Royal Canadian Navy's capabilities.

Shipbuilding is an important part of our local economy. Could the Minister of National Defence explain how our government is continuing to create significant opportunities for Nova Scotians while ensuring our navy has the tools it needs.

• (1445)

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for West Nova for his tremendous and tireless work. As promised, our government is strengthening the capabilities of the Royal Canadian Navy.

Last week, I was proud to announce that we would move ahead with the acquisition of a sixth Arctic and offshore patrol ship. This will create good middle-class jobs for workers in Halifax and across Nova Scotia. This is a great day for Halifax and a great day for the Royal Canadian Navy.

* * *

[*Translation*]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, instead of stopping drug trafficking in prisons, the Prime Minister decided to institute a needle exchange program for prisoners. This is another asinine initiative that puts the safety of inmates and guards at risk.

The union is appalled by this decision and demands that the government reverse it immediately. Once again, the Prime Minister is demonstrating his partiality for criminals and dismissing the concerns of law-abiding citizens.

Will the Prime Minister acknowledge that his plan is jeopardizing the health of our prison guards?

*Oral Questions**[English]*

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, no, in fact, for quite some time now in the correctional system, Correctional Service of Canada has properly managed the use of EpiPens, for example, and insulin syringes.

There is well-established procedure for dealing with these circumstances in a safe way to prevent the spread of disease and to save lives. Public safety is what this is all about.

* * *

*[Translation]***IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP**

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is totally unrelated. It makes no sense to give needles to everyone in penitentiaries.

The Immigration and Refugee Board is sounding the alarm. It is saying that new asylum seekers will have to wait almost two years before finding out whether they will be able to remain in Canada or not. There will be an estimated 60,000 new applications this year. The Liberals have set aside \$74 million for the backlog and the provinces are asking to be reimbursed more than \$400 million. All this waste is the fault of a short-sighted Prime Minister who is engaging in propaganda at the expense of taxpayers.

Does the Prime Minister recognize that he has made a real mess of our immigration system?

[English]

Hon. Bill Blair (Minister of Border Security and Organized Crime Reduction, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me be very clear that after years of chronic underfunding and understaffing, we have been restoring the capacity of the IRB to deal with those who have come to our country seeking asylum.

It is also a good opportunity to remind all Canadians who these people are. They are families with children. Almost half of them are children. They are thoroughly vetted by the RCMP to ensure that they represent no risk to public safety or national security. I want to assure the member opposite that he has nothing to be afraid of.

Hon. Michelle Rempel (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last week on CBC, the Minister of Immigration said that his Ontario counterpart's claims that 40% of Toronto's homeless shelter occupants were refugees and asylum seekers were "not based on facts". The CBC fact-checked the minister and found out that Minister MacLeod's claims are, in fact, valid.

Was the minister intentionally misleading Canadians, or does he not know the basic facts of his file? In either scenario, why should Canadians trust him to fix his illegal-border-crossing mess?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was on television to talk about our immigration levels, which Canadians have been asking us to increase in order to meet our employee shortages as well as skills shortages around the country. We have responded with an ambitious and well-measured immigration plan. We have done that after listening to Canadians. We have held hundreds of town halls across the country, something the party opposite has not done. In fact, the member

opposite has just come around to the understanding that it is important to talk to Canadians about immigration. For three years, after blocking people on Twitter, that is the only way Canadians can actually get hold of her.

Hon. Michelle Rempel (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the reality is that Canadians taxpayers are on the hook for hundreds of millions of dollars for the Prime Minister's #WelcometoCanada illegal-border-crossing program. Instead of trying to fix the problem, the Prime Minister is allowing his cabinet to attempt to bully anyone who questions whether we should pay for those thousands of people who are illegally entering Canada.

Will the minister apologize, for his bullying attempt, to Minister MacLeod?

Hon. Bill Blair (Minister of Border Security and Organized Crime Reduction, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to assure the member opposite that we have been working very carefully with the Province of Ontario, the Province of Quebec and the City of Toronto. I have met and had a number of conversations with the minister and mayors responsible. We are working hard to ensure that Canadian law is upheld and that we uphold our responsibility to anyone who seeks the protection of the country and treat them in an appropriate way, according to our laws.

We are achieving significant success in reducing the number of people who have presented themselves—

● (1450)

The Speaker: Order. The member for Abbotsford seems to think he does not need to have the floor to speak in the House. I would ask him to remember that he does. He would not want to not have it.

The hon. member for Berthier—Maskinongé.

* * *

*[Translation]***EMPLOYMENT**

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau (Berthier—Maskinongé, NDP): Mr. Speaker, almost three years ago, my colleague from Windsor West asked the minister to ensure that Canadian jobs would be protected when Lowe's bought Rona. You can imagine how shocked employees were when they were told that their stores will close in January, leaving them unemployed.

Nine stores in Quebec and 31 stores across the country are closing their doors. The company has said that U.S. employees will be offered jobs elsewhere, but no such assurance has been given to Canadian employees.

Now that these jobs are at risk, what will the minister do to protect these workers?

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for her question.

Our thoughts are with the workers, families and communities affected by these store closures. We are always concerned when we hear about job losses. This transaction was reviewed to ensure that it provides an overall economic benefit to Canada. We will continue to work with the employees.

[English]

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Lowe's has announced that it will be closing 31 stores across Canada, firing thousands of workers. The government was warned that this foreign takeover would reduce competition and close stores. The pattern was clear. Best Buy took over Future Shop. Workers were fired. Target took over Zellers. Workers were fired. Lowe's came after Rona. Workers were fired. Who green-lighted all this? It was the minister. Instead of plywood on shelves, now it is being used to be placed on the windows and doors of the stores.

Could the minister explain why in the U.S., no one will lose a job from Lowe's closures, whereas the deal he cut for Canada has thousands of workers fired? Why is he the only one left with a job?

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again, I understand the concern raised by the member opposite. Of course, our hearts go out to the workers, their families, and the communities impacted by these store closures. We are always concerned and always remain concerned when we hear about job losses.

The member is correct. Under the Investment Canada Act, we actually did a thorough investigation and looked into the matter. We consulted the Quebec government as well. We were able to secure the headquarters in Boucherville and all the associated senior management positions, and we will continue to monitor the situation on an ongoing basis.

* * *

[Translation]

JUSTICE

Mr. Richard Martel (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals always try to cover up embarrassing situations. Maybe that is why the government buried the judge in 135,000 documents. People concerned about Vice-Admiral Norman's defence are still skeptical about whether the government genuinely intends to co-operate.

My question is simple. Will the government commit to turning over all the necessary documents if the judge orders it to do so?

[English]

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is obviously an outstanding legal proceeding before the courts right now. The matter of the disclosure of documents is a matter the judge is seized of in that case. The various parties to the court proceeding will make their legal arguments, and the judge will decide with respect to issues such as privilege and confidence. It is in the hands of the courts, and that is where it should be determined.

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government, for over a month, was pleading with us to stop asking questions about the Mark Norman trial. Then suddenly, on Friday,

Oral Questions

something amazing happened. It finally turned the confidential documents over to the court. I guess better is possible.

Will the government confirm today that it will waive all cabinet confidences over documents the judge deems relevant so that Admiral Mark Norman can receive a fair trial?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have been saying for over a month that both sides in this legal proceeding, the prosecution and the defence, have competent, independent counsel. In the case of the prosecution, it is the Public Prosecution Service of Canada. The defence obviously has very capable counsel. They will take the proceedings that they believe are relevant. The matter is in the hands of the judge in the case, and the judge will decide. That is how our court system works.

• (1455)

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, now that the government has been forced to hand over the documents in the Admiral Norman legal matter, the questions on several conflicts of interest surrounding Liberal ministers and members of Parliament remain. To be transparent, will the government release all 73 names that its own investigation revealed were aware of cabinet secrets regarding the Davie shipbuilding decision?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as we have said from the very outset in this matter, this case is before the courts. We have an independent judicial system. It is up to representatives for the Crown and representatives for the defence to make their respective arguments in court, and the courts will determine the right way to proceed going forward. I would hazard a guess that the courts in this country do not need the assistance of the official opposition.

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CANADIAN HERITAGE

Mr. Randy Boissonnault (Edmonton Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, under the Conservative government, nothing was done to support our artists or modernize our laws on culture. After this decade of indifference for our artists and creators, our government is taking action. Last week, our government announced reforms aimed at modernizing the Copyright Act.

[Translation]

Thanks to changes to the Copyright Board of Canada, creators will now be paid for their work faster.

Would the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Multiculturalism explain what the modernized system means for our artists and creators?

Oral Questions

[English]

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Multiculturalism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Copyright Board plays an important role. It allows artists and creators to be fairly compensated for their work, but it took years to approve royalties and render decisions. Why? It was because the Conservatives did nothing to modernize the board. Therefore, we took action.

[Translation]

These proposals will simplify and modernize the process and shorten wait times.

We will keep working with our creators to ensure they get paid more fairly and quickly.

* * *

[English]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Asia Bibi spent eight years in solitary confinement in Pakistan in the world's most high-profile blasphemy case. We are excited about her acquittal, but she and her family remain in grave danger. Ministerial permits have been used in the past to help vulnerable victims of false blasphemy charges in Pakistan, such as in the case of Rimsha Masih, under the previous government.

Will the minister continue this proud Canadian tradition and offer asylum to Asia Bibi and her family?

Hon. Andrew Leslie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs (Canada-U.S. Relations), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the right of freedom of religion or belief must and shall be protected.

We are very relieved that the Supreme Court of Pakistan has cleared Asia Bibi of charges of blasphemy. We urge the Government of Pakistan to take all necessary steps to ensure the safety of Asia Bibi and her family. We continue to urge the government and the people of Pakistan to reform the application of the blasphemy laws to prevent the targeting of religious minorities.

* * *

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Tanzania has announced a government task force, which tomorrow will begin hunting down and arresting people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex, with penalties ranging from 30 years to life imprisonment. The public has been asked to report gay people using a government snitch line. Hundreds have already been forced into hiding.

Amnesty International and others have condemned this hate campaign, and even the United States has issued a travel warning for Americans in Tanzania. Canada has done nothing. Will the government speak out against this incitement to hatred, persecution and violence?

Ms. Kamal Khera (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government believes the human rights of all persons to be universal and indivisible, and these include the human rights of LGBTQ2 persons.

We will continue to champion respect for diversity and human rights, including the rights of LGBTQ2 persons, with fellow members of the international community, including Tanzania.

We will continue to work with countries to ensure that the rights of all individuals are respected and protected.

* * *

[Translation]

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Mr. Rémi Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government provides the navy and the Coast Guard with the ships they need to serve Canadians, while creating good jobs for the middle class and generating significant economic benefits for Quebec and the entire country.

As part of the national shipbuilding strategy, we have already allocated over \$1 billion in contracts to Quebec companies, supporting hundreds of workers and their local economies.

Could the Minister of Public Services and Procurement tell the House about the most recent results our government has achieved for Quebecers and Canadians under the national shipbuilding strategy?

● (1500)

Hon. Carla Qualtrough (Minister of Public Services and Procurement and Accessibility, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question.

We awarded 17% of the national shipbuilding strategy contracts to Quebec companies. Last summer, we awarded a \$610-million contract to Davie for three icebreakers. Last week, we awarded part of a \$7-billion contract to Davie to maintain 12 Halifax-class frigates. We continue to create good jobs for Quebec.

* * *

[English]

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would have a lot to say about the government's approach to religious freedom and human rights, but my question was about the issue of asylum for Asia Bibi and her family.

Time is of the essence. The family has specifically asked the Prime Minister of Canada to intervene. Shahbaz Bhatti and Salman Taseer were killed because of their advocacy on this case. Over 150 violent demonstrators have been arrested over the last few days, most of whom were specifically calling for Asia to be killed. So again, my question for the Minister of Immigration: Will the government offer asylum to Asia Bibi and her family?

Hon. Andrew Leslie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with like-minded friends and allies, there are discreet and delicate discussions under way, and I will not say anything further at this time.

Routine Proceedings

[Translation]

EMPLOYMENT

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Mr. Speaker, when Rona fell into the hands of the American giant Lowe's, the government had the power to put some conditions on the transaction, such as maintaining jobs and keeping stores open. We asked the government to do just that, but it did nothing. What happened? Today we learned that nine Rona stores in Quebec will be shutting down.

How will the 40 Liberal members, who did not lift a finger to protect workers, be able to look their constituents in the eye when they go back to their ridings?

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our thoughts are with the workers, their families and the communities impacted by these store closures. We are always concerned any time we hear about job losses.

That transaction was scrutinized to ensure that it would present an overall net economic benefit to Canada. Consultations were also held with the Province of Quebec. Lowe's has made some commitments that must be fulfilled, and we will ensure that it does.

* * *

CANADIAN HERITAGE

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Quebec TV series are adapted all around the world. Our filmmakers can be found on the Promenade de la Croisette, in Cannes, and on Hollywood Boulevard for the Oscars, but do not look for them on Netflix. After a \$500-million deal was reached more than a year ago, not a single penny has gone to original French-language productions. Netflix has contributed absolutely nothing to our culture.

When will the government compel these web giants to contribute by requiring them to collect sales tax that can then be invested in our culture?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Multiculturalism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is here for our artists and creators. We have invested \$3.2 billion in culture, some of which has gone to CBC/Radio-Canada and the Canada Media Fund. We are also working to modernize laws that predate the Internet. We want modern laws to address today's problems, and we have set up a committee to look into the matter.

We will be passing legislation based on a number of principles, including a very simple principle that I have repeated many times in this House. Those who participate in the system must contribute to it. There will be no free passes.

* * *

[English]

HOUSING

Hon. Hunter Tootoo (Nunavut, Ind.): Mr. Speaker,

[Member spoke in Inuktitut]

My question is for the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development. This is in follow-up to my question last week. I do not

believe that the minister grasped the severity of Nunavut's housing shortage.

Yes, \$240 million has been allocated. It sounds like a lot, but it is over 10 years. That is 48 new houses per year for the entire territory, which is less than two per community. This is a crisis. Overcrowding is contributing to high rates of youth suicide and tuberculosis. No Canadian should live like this.

I ask again, will the minister take immediate action to work with the Government of Nunavut to solve this crisis?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased but sad to address this question. Indeed, we are in a crisis in many parts of Canada. That is because the federal government failed for many years to acknowledge its responsibilities to look after the housing needs of many communities across Canada, failed to address the particular housing needs and conditions in northern Canada, and failed to work appropriately and respectfully with indigenous peoples, including the Inuit.

I am glad to say that this is changing and will keep changing over the next 10 years through the first ever national housing strategy.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

● (1505)

[English]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

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

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[Translation]

INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

Mr. Darrell Samson (Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1) I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, three reports from the delegation of the Canadian Branch of the Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie.

The first is respecting its participation in the Young Parliamentarians Program of the APF's mission in Africa, held in Dakar, Senegal, and Antananarivo, Madagascar, from March 5 to 10, 2018. This fact-finding mission was the last to be held before the official creation of the Young Parliamentarians Network of the APF, in Quebec City, in July 2018.

The second report is respecting the delegation's participation at the meeting of the Political Committee of the APF, held in Yerevan, Armenia, from March 19 to 21, 2018. This meeting was held in the very location of the recent Sommet de la Francophonie, where we proposed reporting on the protection and promotion of the rights of members of the LGBTI community.

Routine Proceedings

The third and final report is respecting the delegation's participation at the meeting of the Parliamentary Affairs Committee of the APF, held in Brussels, Belgium, from March 21 to 23, 2018. The committee, chaired by the Canadian Branch of the APF, discussed updating the Noria program as well as multilateral francophone parliamentary development programs.

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[English]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

LIAISON

Hon. Judy A. Sgro (Humber River—Black Creek, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 107(3), I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the ninth report of the Liaison Committee entitled, "Committee Activities and Expenditures—April 1, 2018-August 31, 2018." This report highlights the work and accomplishments of each committee, as well as detailing the budgets that fund the activities approved by committee members.

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● (1510)

[Translation]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions among the parties, and if you were to seek it, I think you would find that there is consent to adopt the following motion:

That, at the conclusion of today's debate on the opposition motion in the name of the Member for Courtenay—Alberni, all questions necessary to dispose of the motion be deemed put and a recorded division deemed requested and deferred to Tuesday, November 6, 2018, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

[English]

PETITIONS

VISION CARE

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskaing, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table one of many petitions regarding Canadians with vision loss. It is expected that this problem will double in the next 20 years. The petitioners indicate that the emerging crisis in eye health and vision care affects all segments of the Canadian population, especially the vulnerable population. Just one per cent of total expenditures on vision loss is invested in post-vision loss rehabilitation therapy.

Petitioners are asking the government to commit to acknowledging eye health and vision care as a growing public health issue

and respond to it, particularly for Canada's vulnerable population, through the development of a national framework for action to promote eye health and vision care.

These petitioners are from Ontario, B.C., Nova Scotia and Saskatchewan.

FIREARMS

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition signed by Canadians from several ridings, including Oakville, St. Catharines and Niagara Centre. They call on the House of Commons to respect the right of law-abiding firearms owners and reject the Prime Minister's plan to waste taxpayers' money studying a ban on guns that are already banned.

FISHERIES

Mr. Fin Donnelly (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise to table a petition in which the petitioners call on the Government of Canada to immediately transition the open net salmon farm industry to safe land-based closed containment technology. They say Canada needs to invest in a safe, sustainable industry that protects Pacific wild salmon, maintains employment, develops new technologies, jobs and export opportunities. The petitioners are from Sooke and Victoria.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Hon. MaryAnn Mihychuk (Kildonan—St. Paul, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition on behalf of residents from Kildonan—St. Paul and other ridings nearby in relation to infrastructure. Whereas the severe congestion on arterial roads in the riding of Kildonan—St. Paul is negatively impacting the quality of life of the residents and users, especially on the northern perimeter, the petitioners call on Canada to immediately make the extension linking Chief Peguis Trail west of Main Street to Brookside Boulevard an immediate priority.

PHARMACARE

Hon. MaryAnn Mihychuk (Kildonan—St. Paul, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my second petition is in relation to the Canada Health Act. The petitioners are from Kildonan—St. Paul and they ask the House of Commons to amend the Canada Health Act by adding prescription medicines prescribed by licensed practitioners to the definition of covered services and develop a universal, evidence-based, sustainable public drug plan that has the purchasing power to secure the best available pricing, and a list of the essential medicines addressing priority health, to promote the health and well-being of all Canadians.

Routine Proceedings

●(1515)

HUMAN ORGAN TRAFFICKING

Mr. Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise and present a petition with signatures from across the greater Toronto area in support of Bill C-350 in the House and urging Parliament to move quickly to amend the Criminal Code to prohibit Canadians from travelling abroad to acquire human organs removed without consent or as a result of a financial transaction, and to render inadmissible to Canada any and all permanent residents or foreign nationals who have participated in this abhorrent trade in human organs.

CROOKED LAKE LEASEHOLDERS

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have two different petitions. The first is a set of three with 809 signatures from individuals who are very concerned about and supportive of cottage owners and homeowners located at Crooked Lake, Saskatchewan, on land that is leased from the Government of Canada. They are concerned because these cottage and homeowners have been issued and had imposed on them a 650% to 700% lease increase for the years 2015 to 2019. They say this increase was imposed without jointly agreed negotiations between the Government of Canada and the leaseholders, and included a threat of lease cancellation being imposed. The petitioners call on the Government of Canada to negotiate a fair lease agreement with all Crooked Lake cottage owners and homeowners who lease land from the Government of Canada.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is from residents, business owners and cottage owners around Lake Saskatchewan and others concerned about the body of water known as Round Lake, Saskatchewan. They wish to draw attention to the extreme low water level of the lake due to the uncontrolled outflow of water. It is affecting businesses, the environment, families and the future of the lake.

Being that the uncontrolled outflow of water on Round Lake is the result of a disagreement between the Government of Canada and the first nations of Ochapowace and Piapot, and being that controlled structures and compensation agreements were reached a long time ago between first nations and the government on lakes upstream in the Qu'Appelle Valley, and being that the Round Lake issues have been unresolved since 2008, the petitioners call upon the minister responsible to re-establish communications with the Ochapowace and Piapot First Nations to work out a resolution of this matter.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise to table petitions from residents of Nanaimo—Ladysmith who are so concerned about the impact to the environment, the risk of oil spills and marine traffic to the Salish Sea, and the jobs reliant on them.

The petitioners oppose the establishment of anchorages in the waters off our shores. There are already a lot of anchorages in the Salish Sea. The petitioners point out that while export bulk commodities out of Port Metro Vancouver have increased 40% over the last decade, anchorage use over the same time is up a startling 400%. Sixty percent of bulk carriers stay 10 days or longer, while container ships spend virtually no time at all at anchor.

The petitioners urge the government to look at supply improvements and technical fixes that would prevent this overuse of anchorages in the Salish Sea. We commend the petitioners from Vancouver and Gabriola Island.

OCEAN WAR GRAVES

Mrs. Kelly Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to rise today to table two petitions. The first is a petition calling on the government to protect ocean war graves.

These petitioners add their names to the many citizens urging the Liberal government to recognize the brave Canadians who lost their lives defending our country at sea, yet have no gravestone on land where relatives or friends could visit and honour their memory.

It is a great privilege to present the signatories' request for the government to secure and protect the location of downed ships in our waters or in international waters, and that it designate land monuments to commemorate the sacrifices of our fellow Canadians who have been lost at sea.

Mrs. Kelly Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, CPC): Mr. Speaker, secondly, it is a great privilege to rise today to table this e-petition, urging the government to protect ocean war graves.

With this e-petition, hundreds of Canadians join their fellow citizens in calling on the Liberal government to recognize the brave Canadians who lost their lives defending our country at sea, yet whose remains currently have no protections under Canadian law.

I am honoured to present these petitioners' request that the government provide immediate protection for Canada's ocean war graves, and that it enact legislation to ensure that the punishment for desecration is in line with that for land-based war graves.

●(1520)

CANADA SUMMER JOBS INITIATIVE

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table three petitions today.

The first petition deals with the Liberals' Canada summer jobs values test attestation, and calls on the Prime Minister to defend the freedom of conscience, thought and belief, and withdraw the attestation for applications for the Canada summer jobs program in this coming year.

The petitioners also cite section 2 of the charter, and its guarantees around freedom of conscience.

Routine Proceedings

AFGHANISTAN MINORITY COMMUNITIES

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the second petition that I would like to table deals with the suffering of a minority community, the Sikhs and Hindus in Afghanistan.

The petitioners call on the Government of Canada to do what it can to support these vulnerable minorities, both in the area of advocacy, in terms of foreign affairs, and also the Minister of Immigration, using powers that are granted to him to ensure that people can make an application from Afghanistan to come here for asylum, if they face this kind of persecution.

HUMAN ORGAN TRAFFICKING

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the third petition I would like to table is in support of Bill S-240. This is a bill that I am sponsoring in this place that has come to us recently from the Senate. It seeks to make it a criminal offence for someone to go abroad to receive an organ for which there has not been consent. It also deals with inadmissibility to Canada for those who have been involved in the traffic of illicit organs.

The petitioners note that for trafficking in human organs without consent, there is currently no legal prohibition against that in Canada. It is a terrible practice that we must do what we can to put an end to.

Mr. John Nater (Perth—Wellington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table a petition signed by many residents of Ontario regarding the forced harvesting of organs internationally.

The petitioners call on Parliament to pass both Bill C-350 and Bill S-240.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a petition in this House that comes from residents, primarily of Pictou County, Nova Scotia.

The petitioners are hoping that this House can take action, because there is a plan to have a new pipe into the Gulf of St. Lawrence to discharge 70 million to 90 million litres of bleached kraft pulp effluent every single day into the Gulf of St. Lawrence. This, of course, would have profound impacts on the fishing industry, as well as tourism for Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Quebec.

The petitioners call on the House to call upon the government to conduct a full environmental assessment under the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency regarding this pipeline of pollution into the gulf.

HUMAN ORGAN TRAFFICKING

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise to table this petition from many residents in the province of Ontario, related to Bill S-240, which is in the Senate. The petition urges the Parliament of Canada to move quickly on the proposed legislation so to amend the Criminal Code and the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act to prohibit Canadians from travelling abroad to acquire human organs removed without consent or as a result of financial transactions, and to render inadmissible to

Canada any and all permanent residents or foreign nationals who have participated in this abhorrent trade in human organs.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the following questions will be answered today: Nos. 1881, 1885 to 1887, 1889, 1904, 1908, 1913, 1914, 1917, 1919, 1921 and 1925.

[Text]

Question No. 1881— **Mr. Ted Falk:**

With regard to the decision taken by the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour to apply an attestation requirement to the Canada Summer Jobs program: (a) on what date did the Minister authorize the use of the attestation for the 2018 Canada Summer Job program; (b) did the Minister seek legal advice for her decision from the Department of Justice or other sources prior to implementing the attestation; (c) if the answer to (b) is affirmative, when was the advice initially (i) sought, (ii) received; (d) did the Minister seek legal advice for her decision from the Department of Justice or other sources after the implementation of the attestation; and (e) if the answer to (d) is affirmative, when was the advice initially (i) sought, (ii) received?

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with regard to (a), the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour authorized the use of the attestation for Canada summer jobs for 2018 on December 6, 2017.

With regard to (b) to (e), the department is not in a position to provide a response those questions, as information related to legal advice is protected by solicitor-client privilege.

Question No. 1885— **Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:**

With regard to Canada's defence policy, "Strong, Secure, Engaged", which states that the government will "ensure that all pre-release and pension administration is completed, and benefits are in place, before the transition to post-military life": (a) how many Canadian Armed Forces members have been medically released since June 7, 2017; and (b) of the individuals referred to in (a), how many have transitioned to post-military life without all pre-release and pension administration completed and benefits in place?

Mr. Serge Cormier (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with regard to part (a), since 10 July 2017, 2,020 military personnel have been released for medical reasons. Of these, 1,742 were regular force, 272 were from the primary reserve, five were reservists responsible for cadet training, and one was on the supplementary reserve list. Starting on 10 July 2017, the Canadian Armed Forces, CAF, adopted a new database and a revised review process to track release files more efficiently and to accelerate the delivery of benefits to members. The information prior to this date is therefore not available.

Routine Proceedings

With regard to part (b), it is CAF practice not to release personnel until the documentation to receive benefits is completed. Once released the member will begin receiving benefits. Within 45 days of receiving all necessary documents, Public Services and Procurement Canada, PSPC, starts administering entitlements under the Canadian Forces Superannuation Act. Within four to six weeks, the CAF begins to pay Canadian Forces severance pay and leave cash-out for eligible personnel.

The same practice applies to CAF personnel releasing with medical issues. The CAF, however, will not hold an individual who wishes to release early to pursue employment opportunities.

Veterans Affairs Canada also provides benefits to CAF members who are released for medical reasons. As committed to in “Strong, Secure, Engaged”, the department is working with Veterans Affairs Canada to transition CAF members seamlessly to post-military life.

Question No. 1886—Mr. David Sweet:

With regard to the Persian Gulf War, which took place between 1990 and 1991, and as of June 1, 2018: (a) how much capital has been spent by the government to commemorate the participation of the Canadian Armed Forces in the conflict; (b) which government programs have (i) received funding requests or applications to commemorate Canadian participation in the conflict, (ii) granted funding to groups or organizations seeking to commemorate that participation, (iii) rejected funding requests by a group or organization seeking to commemorate that participation; and (c) what criteria did the government use to reject the funding requests mentioned in (b)(iii)?

Hon. Seamus O'Regan (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with regard to (a), Veterans Affairs Canada, through the commemorative partnership program, provides program funding, but does not have a capital vote. Veterans Affairs Canada has operating and management funding.

With regard to (b), the commemorative partnership program of Veterans Affairs Canada has not received any funding requests or applications from June 1, 2018 to September 13, 2018 to commemorate Canadian participation in the Persian Gulf War conflict that took place between 1990 and 1991. The commemorative partnership program, CPP, provides funding to organizations undertaking remembrance initiatives such as commemorative activities, the development of commemorative resources and the construction, restoration or expansion of community war memorials. In 2017-18, the commemorative partnership program approved approximately \$2.1 million in funding for close to 200 projects across Canada.

With regard to (c), it is not applicable.

Question No. 1887—Mr. David Sweet:

With regard to the Persian Gulf War, which took place between 1990 and 1991: (a) are Canadian veterans of the Persian Gulf War eligible for Veterans Affairs Canada benefits in the same manner as all Canadian Armed Forces veterans; and (b) if the answer to (a) is negative, what are the justifications for not providing equal benefits to these veterans?

Hon. Seamus O'Regan (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with regard to (a), yes, Canadian veterans of the Persian Gulf War are eligible for Veterans Affairs Canada benefits in the same manner as all Canadian Armed Forces veterans.

The Gulf and Kuwait War of 1990-91 officially began with the invasion of Kuwait by Iraq in August 1990. The Canadian military participated in the subsequent blockade and war until it ended in February 1991. This special duty area service would include the following geographic areas: the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the Yemen Arab Republic, the Sultanate of Oman, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, and their contiguous seas areas, between 32 and 75 degrees east longitude and 12 and 32 degrees north latitude. This special duty area came into effect on 11 August 1990 and remains in effect presently.

Under the Pension Act and the Veterans Well-being Act, a Canadian Armed Forces member or veteran is eligible for a disability pension or award for a disability or death resulting from injury or illness that was incurred during, attributable to, or aggravated during wartime service or special duty service. This eligibility is referred to as the insurance principle, as individuals are covered 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and only need to demonstrate that their disability had its onset during this qualifying period of service. They would receive similar benefits as other eligible Canadian Armed Force members or veterans who have served under special duty service. Unlike the compensation principle, no causal link needs to be established between the disability and military service. While serving in a special duty area, Canadian Armed Forces members are eligible under the insurance principle for service in the special duty area; travel to and from the special duty area; leave taken during service in the SDA, no matter where that leave is taken; and time spent in the third location decompression program.

While serving in a special duty area, Canadian Armed Forces members are eligible under the insurance principle for service in the special duty area; travel to and from the special duty area; leave taken during service in the SDA, no matter where that leave is taken; and time spent in the third location decompression program.

Information regarding special duty service can be found in the policy entitled “Disability Benefits in Respect of Wartime and Special Duty Service—The Insurance Principle” found at: <http://www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/about-us/policy/document/1447>

With regard to (b), it is not applicable because Canadian veterans of the Persian Gulf War are eligible for Veterans Affairs Canada benefits in the same manner as all Canadian Armed Forces veterans.

Question No. 1889—Mr. Larry Maguire:

With regard to the number of citizenship certificates issued to Canadians born abroad between February 15, 1977, and April 17, 1981: (a) what was the number of retention applications received from Canadians born abroad between February 15, 1977, and April 17, 1981; and (b) what was the number of applications for passports that were denied to persons born abroad between February 15, 1977, and April 17, 1981, because they would have already lost Canadian citizenship?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with regard to (a), 2,397 retention applications were received from Canadians born abroad between February 15, 1977 and April 17, 1981.

Routine Proceedings

With regard to (b), IRCC does not track the number of applications for passports that were denied to persons born abroad.

Question No. 1904—**Mr. Arnold Viersen:**

With regard to meetings between Ministers or Parliamentary Secretaries and Omar Khadr in June 2018: (a) which Ministers or Parliamentary Secretaries met with Omar Khadr; and (b) what are the details of all such meetings, including date and location?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):

Mr. Speaker, no ministers or parliamentary secretaries met with Omar Khadr in June 2018.

Question No. 1908—**Mrs. Cathay Wagantall:**

With regard to the government's announced intent to create a new holiday: what is the complete list of First Nations and other organizations consulted by the government, as of September 17, 2018, in relation to the creation of a new holiday?

Mr. Andy Fillmore (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Multiculturalism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Multiculturalism as well as his staff are involved in ongoing discussions with national indigenous organizations in their efforts to fulfill call to action 80 of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.

Question No. 1913—**Mr. Blaine Calkins:**

With regard to convicted terrorists having internet and social media access in Canadian correctional institutions: (a) how many individuals are currently serving sentences in correctional facilities as a result of convictions for terrorism related offences; and (b) of the individuals in (a), how many have internet or social media access while incarcerated?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with regard to (a), on September 23, 2018, there were 17 offenders under the responsibility of CSC who were convicted of at least one terrorism-related offence. Fourteen of these offenders were in custody, and three were in the community under supervision.

"In custody" includes all active offenders incarcerated in a CSC facility, offenders on temporary absence from a CSC facility, offenders who are temporarily detained in a CSC facility and offenders on remand in a CSC facility.

"In the community under supervision" includes all active offenders on day parole, full parole, or statutory release in the community supervised on a long-term supervision order, offenders who are temporarily detained in a non-CSC facility, offenders who are unlawfully at large for less than 90 days, offenders on remand in a non-CSC facility, and offenders supervised and subject to an immigration hold by Canada Border Services Agency.

With regard to (b), for security reasons, any computers that can be accessed by inmates are not linked to CSC's security systems, external networks, or the Internet. Inmates incarcerated in federal correctional facilities have no access to the Internet or social media. As a result, should there be any online activity by an inmate, it is not occurring via a CSC computer.

CSC continues to manage the risks that computer access can pose on an ongoing basis, and current policy provides measures to detect any misuse of computers by inmates.

Question No. 1914—**Mr. Tom Lukiwski:**

With regard to reports that the government is paying \$3,800,000 in retention bonuses for three top Kinder Morgan Canada executives: are the retention bonuses part of the \$4,500,000,000 purchase price the government is paying Kinder Morgan, or are the bonus payments a separate expenditure?

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on August 31, 2018, the Government of Canada purchased the entities that control the Trans Mountain pipeline and related assets.

The government acquired these entities when the political risks made it too difficult for the private sector to move forward. The facts and evidence demonstrated that the Trans Mountain expansion is in the national interest, and represents a sound investment for Canadians.

Prior to acquiring the project, Kinder Morgan was solely responsible for compensation decisions regarding members of the project team. The purchase agreement provided that Canada would honour the existing contracts in order to maintain continuity in Trans Mountain's operations.

Compensation was set in employment contracts signed between key management personnel and Kinder Morgan prior to the government acquiring Trans Mountain. Employee salaries, including retention payments, should they be made in the future, are a business operating expense that is paid from business operating revenues.

Question No. 1917—**Ms. Marilyn Gladu:**

With regard to the letters sent by the Minister of Health to opioid manufacturers and distributors requesting that they immediately stop promoting the drugs to health care providers: (a) on what date were the letters sent out; (b) how many letters were sent out; (c) how many responses did the Minister receive as of September 18, 2018; (d) of the responses in (c), how many indicated that they would fully comply with the request; (e) how many companies failed to respond; and (f) what specific measures has the government taken to encourage compliance with the request?

Mr. John Oliver (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with regard to part (a), on June 19, the Minister of Health sent a letter to manufacturers and distributors of opioids requesting that they respond to the opioid crisis by immediately suspending any and all marketing and advertising of opioids to health care professionals on a voluntary basis. Furthermore, on August 17, Health Canada sent additional call to action letters to the pharmaceutical industry and organizations in Canada.

With regard to part (b), 88 letters were sent out on June 19, and 14 letters were sent out on August 17, totalling 102 letters sent to pharmaceutical companies and industry organizations in Canada. A list of these companies and organizations and the letters were made public on September 5, and are available at www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/substance-use/problematic-prescription-drug-use/opioids/responding-canada-opioid-crisis/industry-response.html.

Routine Proceedings

With regard to parts (c) and (e), as of September 27, 31 responses from pharmaceutical companies and two responses from industry groups were received. The Response to the Call on the Pharmaceutical Industry to Voluntarily Suspend Marketing and Advertising of Opioids web page will continue to be updated as more responses are received.

A summary of companies that received a letter and the correspondence received by Health Canada is available at www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/substance-use/problematic-prescription-drug-use/opioids/responding-canada-opioid-crisis/industry-response.html.

With regard to (d), copies of the correspondence may be requested at www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/substance-use/problematic-prescription-drug-use/opioids/responding-canada-opioid-crisis/industry-response.html.

Six respondents committed to suspending promotional and advertising activities; 24 respondents reported they do not distribute opioids, or do not market or promote opioids in Canada; one respondent stated it only markets opioid products to treat opioid use disorder; and two responses from industry groups indicated support for the government's efforts to address the opioid crisis and expressed an interest in collaborating going forward.

With regard to (f), further to the voluntary call to action letters, Health Canada has created a dedicated compliance and enforcement team to proactively monitor opioid marketing in order to identify and take action against inappropriate marketing.

Question No. 1919—Ms. H  l  ne Laverdi  re:

With regard to the methods used within the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces including Army Command (combined, "the Canadian military") to secure accurate knowledge about whether there was reason to be concerned about incidents of, or the practice of, torture in Afghanistan during Canada's military presence there: (a) was any research conducted within the Canadian military in 2006, 2007 and 2008, that focused, in whole or in part, on determining whether soldiers serving in Afghanistan had, during their deployment, witnessed anyone within their units committing torture and, if so, what were the parameters or, if they were formalized, terms of reference of the research; (b) if such research was conducted, what was the name and institutional position of the person who ordered or commissioned such research and which units and persons (names and institutional positions) were involved in the research, in whatever capacity, including conducting, supervising and evaluating the research; (c) if conducted, did the research eventuate in a written document (however termed, whether report, memo, or other) and, if so, what was the title and other identifying reference of the report and what were its essential conclusions; (d) if a research report, memo or like document ("report") eventuated, to whom in the Canadian chain of command did the report or any mention of the report circulate and, specifically, were the Commander of the Army, the Commander of Canadian Expeditionary Force Command, the Chief of Defence Staff, the Minister of National Defence and the Prime Minister made aware of the results of such research and, if any of persons in those five positions at the material time were not made aware, why were they not and who made the decisions not to make them aware; (e) if a report eventuated, were its findings accepted and, if so, did it impact policy or practice in any respect and, if questioned in whole or in part, what questions were raised about the research and were efforts made to do follow-up research to address some or all of those questions and, if so, what was the nature of such follow-up research; (f) if there was follow-up research (of any kind, including checking of research methodology or of the phrasing of any interview or survey questions), did it include asking whether any other state's military had conducted similar or analogous research or whether the Canadian research instrument may have drawn on research conducted by another military and, if so, was it considered whether the US Army Research Institute had ever conducted similar or analogous research and, if so, was the US Army Research Institute consulted about the questions being raised about the Canadian research results; (g) if follow-up research was conducted, did that follow-up research eventuate in a written document

(however termed, whether report, memo, or other) and, if so, what was the title and other identifying reference of the report and what were its essential conclusions; and (h) whether or not follow-up research was conducted, was the initial research and any report eventuating from it suppressed (by whatever term may have been used formally or informally, such as "shelved") and, if so, why and who made this decision?

Mr. Serge Cormier (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, respect for the rule of law is an essential aspect of all Canadian Armed Forces, CAF, operations. Throughout Canada's military operations in Afghanistan, members of the CAF consistently demonstrated tremendous professionalism in their respective roles. Promoting human rights was a core element of Canada's engagement in Afghanistan and Canada made significant investments to help build capacity in rule of law functions, including police, judicial and correctional services. Canada funded and worked closely with independent organizations, including the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission.

Allegations of misconduct during military operations in Afghanistan have been investigated numerous times. These include boards of inquiry in 2009 and 2010, a public interest hearing by the Military Police Complaints Commission in 2012, a litigation in the Federal Court of Canada brought by Amnesty International and a public interest investigation launched by the Military Police Complaints Commission in 2015. Investigations resulted in no evidence of criminal wrongdoing by CAF members. In 2010, a rigorous board of inquiry process provided an opportunity for the CAF to improve its governance and accountability structures, especially for the Canadian Special Operations Forces Command, which is now better integrated into the CAF structure. Training regarding rules of engagement, codes of conduct and reporting obligations as they relate to violations of the law of armed conflict have also been strengthened.

In addition to publishing reports on investigations, the Department of National Defence, DND, and the CAF have made public numerous memos, reports and other documents on the treatment of Afghan detainees over the past decade through various access to information requests. In addition, a number of documents on the treatment of detainees have also been released during various parliamentary sessions through parliamentary returns. These are available from the Library of Parliament.

DND/CAF conducted a search of its electronic document tracking system, as well as available electronic and physical records of relevant groups, which confirmed that, while this issue was monitored as part of routine examination, no research was formally commissioned nor were formal reports produced on the issue of alleged incidents or the practice of torture.

Question No. 1921—Mr. Don Albas:

With regard to the loan given to Bombardier in 2016: how much of the loan has been repaid to the government, since the company returned to profitability?

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Government of Canada did not give a loan to Bombardier in 2016.

Routine Proceedings

Question No. 1925—**Mr. Arnold Viersen:**

With regard to the working relationship between the CSA Group (formerly the Canadian Standards Association) and the government: (a) is the CSA group an entity of the Canadian Government in any way and, if so, what are the details; (b) since November 4, 2015, has the government or Industry Canada ever authorized the CSA Group to speak on behalf of the government and, if so, who provided the authorization, and what were the parameters of the authorization; and (c) what specific role or authority has the government provided to the CSA Group in the development of (i) laws, (ii) regulations?

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with regard to part (a), the CSA Group is a private business. The CSA Group is not a regulatory entity and does not report to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development either directly or indirectly through the Standards Council of Canada, SCC. The SCC is a federal Crown corporation whose role includes the coordination of Canada's voluntary standardization network. The SCC does not have any regulatory authority in its mandate.

The CSA Group is one of 10 standards development organizations, SDOs, accredited by the SCC, which can be found at www.scc.ca/en/accreditation/standards/directory-of-accredited-standards-development-organizations.

The SCC takes its mandate from the Standards Council of Canada Act, its governing legislation, to promote efficient and effective voluntary standardization in Canada, which can be found at <http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/S-16/index.html>. The SCC promotes the participation of Canadians in voluntary standards activities and coordinates and oversees the efforts of the persons and organizations involved in Canada's standardization network.

With regard to part (b), neither the SCC nor the CSA Group is a regulatory entity. The SCC is not aware of any authorization given to the CSA Group to speak on behalf of the government.

With regard to part (c), neither the SCC nor the CSA Group is a regulatory entity. The SCC is not aware of any role or authority given to the CSA Group in the development of (i) laws or (ii) regulations.

* * *

• (1525)

[English]

QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, if revised responses to Question No. 1532, originally tabled on April 16, 2018, and Question No. 1680, originally tabled on June 8, 2018, and the government's responses to Questions Nos. 1882 to 1884, 1888, 1890 to 1903, 1905 to 1907, 1909 to 1912, 1915, 1916, 1918, 1920, 1922 to 1924, 1926 and 1927 could be made orders for return, these returns would be tabled immediately.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Text]

Question No. 1532—**Mr. Tom Kmiec:**

With regard to immigration to Canada, between December 7, 2016, and December 6, 2017: (a) how many economic class immigrants have been admitted to Canada; (b) how many family class immigrants have been admitted to Canada; (c) how many refugees have been admitted to Canada; (d) how many temporary student visas were issued and how many individuals were admitted to Canada on a temporary student visa; (e) how many temporary worker permits were issued and how many individuals were admitted to Canada on a temporary worker permit; (f) how many temporary visitor records were issued and how many individuals were admitted to Canada on a temporary visitor record; (g) how many temporary resident permits were issued; (h) how many temporary resident permits were approved by the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship; (i) for (a) to (h), what is the breakdown by source country by each class of migrant; and (j) for applications for the categories enumerated in (a) to (h), how many individuals were found inadmissible under the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act in (i) section 34, (ii) section 35, (iii) section 36, (iv) section 37, (v) section 40?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1680—**Mr. Mark Warawa:**

With regard to immigration to Canada between December 7, 2016, to December 6, 2017: (a) how many economic class immigrants have been admitted to Canada; (b) how many family class immigrants have been admitted to Canada; (c) how many refugees have been admitted to Canada; (d) how many temporary student visas were issued and how many individuals were admitted to Canada on a temporary student visa; (e) how many temporary worker permits were issued and how many individuals were admitted to Canada on a temporary worker permit; (f) how many temporary visitor records were issued and how many individuals were admitted to Canada on a temporary visitor record; (g) how many temporary resident permits were issued; (h) how many temporary resident permits were approved by the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship; (i) for (a) to (h), what is the breakdown by source country by each class of migrant; (j) for applications for the categories enumerated in (a) to (h), how many individuals were found inadmissible, divided by each subsection of section 34 of the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act; (k) for applications for the categories enumerated in (a) to (h), how many individuals were found inadmissible, divided by each subsection of section 35 of the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act; (l) for applications for the categories enumerated in (a) to (h), how many individuals were found inadmissible, divided by each subsection of section 36 of the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act; (m) for applications for the categories enumerated in (a) to (h), how many individuals were found inadmissible, divided by each subsection of section 37 of the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act; and (n) for application for the categories enumerated in (a) to (h), how many individuals were found inadmissible, divided by each subsection of section 40 of the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act?

(Return tabled)

*Routine Proceedings***Question No. 1882—Mr. Gord Johns:**

With regard to the New Veterans Charter and the Pension for Life, what is: (a) the number of veterans who applied for and were granted the incapacity allowance under the New Veterans Charter and Pension for Life, from 2008 to 2018, broken down by (i) amount, (ii) year, (iii) gender; (b) the number of veterans who applied for the incapacity allowance but were denied under the New Veterans Charter and Pension for Life, from 2008 to 2018, broken down by (i) amount, (ii) year, (iii) gender; (c) the number of veterans who applied for and were granted the additional monthly supplement of the incapacity allowance under the New Veterans Charter and Pension for Life, from 2008 to 2018, broken down by (i) amount, (ii) year, (iii) gender; (d) the number of veterans who applied for the additional monthly supplement of the incapacity allowance but were denied under the New Veterans Charter and Pension for Life, from 2008 to 2018, broken down by (i) amount, (ii) year, (iii) gender; (e) the number of veterans who applied for and were granted the disability award lump sum under the New Veterans Charter and Pension for Life, from 2008 to 2018, broken down by (i) amount, (ii) year, (iii) gender; (f) the number of veterans who applied for the disability award lump sum but were denied under the New Veterans Charter and Pension for Life, from 2008 to 2018, broken down by (i) amount, (ii) year, (iii) gender; (g) the number of veterans who applied for and were granted the disability award monthly pay-out option under the New Veterans Charter and Pension for Life, from 2008 to 2018, broken down by (i) amount, (ii) year, (iii) gender; and (h) the number of veterans who applied for the disability award monthly pay-out option but were denied under the New Veterans Charter and Pension for Life, from 2008 to 2018, broken down by (i) amount, (ii) year, (iii) gender?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1883—Mr. Alexander Nuttall:

With regard to contracts and expenditures with Green Leaf Distribution, since January 1, 2016, and broken down by department, agency, Crown corporation or other government entity: what are the details of each contracts and expenditures, including (i) date, (ii) amount, (iii) description of goods or services provided, (iv) file numbers, (v) original contract value, (vi) final contract value, if different than the original value?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1884—Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:

With regard to Operation HONOUR, since July 23, 2015: what is the number of sexual assaults involving rape reported and, of those cases, what is (i) the number of times the suspect was removed from the unit while the complaint was under investigation, (ii) the number of times the suspect was removed from the unit once charged, (iii) the number of times the complainants were removed from the unit, (iv) the number of times the complainants were reassigned duties, (v) in cases where charges were filed, the length of time per case from reporting the incident to the time the accused was charged, for each case, (vi) the number of times padres, officiate or chaplain reported cases of rapes confided in them by complainants to the chain of command, (vii) the number of times rape complainants, who called the Op HONOUR line, were asked for their names, (viii) the number of times complainants were told once they sign on to the military the member has 'unlimited liability' to the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF), (ix) the number of people charged, (x) the number of people who admitted guilt to the sexual assault involving raping another member of the CAF, (xi) the number of charges that have been prosecuted, (xii) the length of time between the date of charge and the date of the hearing, trial or court martial, for each case, (xiii) the number of convictions rendered, (xiv) the total length of time between a report of incident to sentencing, for each case, (xv) the number of times convicted members were discharged from the military?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1888—Mr. Don Davies:

With regard to the Advisory Council on the Implementation of National Pharmacare (Advisory Council): (a) who will be the members of the Advisory Council, broken down by (i) nomination date, (ii) complete name, (iii) total remuneration, (iv) length of mandate; (b) on what date exactly does the government anticipate appointing the last of the initial members of the Advisory Council; (c) what are the timelines and important dates for the Advisory Council's consultations; (d) will the Advisory Council's consultations be held in public; (e) who will be consulted by the Advisory Council, broken down by (i) organizations or individuals already consulted, (ii) organizations or individuals to be consulted, (iii) dates of all previous and planned consultations, (iv) length of consultation period; (f) on what date exactly

is the Advisory Council planning to table its interim and final reports; and (g) how will financial and human resources be allocated with respect to the Advisory Council, broken down by (i) types of expenses, (ii) allocated sums?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1890—Mr. Nathan Cullen:

With regard to the impending purchase of the Trans Mountain pipeline by the government, can the Minister of Natural Resources confirm in relation to the Pipeline Safety Act and National Energy Board Act: (a) whether the government considers itself a company as authorized under these acts to operate a pipeline; and (b) if the answer to (a) is affirmative, how this pertains to the National Energy Board's mandate under these acts to order a company to reimburse the costs incurred by any government institution due to the unintended or uncontrolled release of oil, gas or any other commodity from a pipeline?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1891—Mr. Nathan Cullen:

With regard to consultations undertaken by Kinder Morgan with Indigenous groups impacted by the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion and given the impending purchase of the pipeline by the government, will the Minister of Natural Resources: (a) table all mutual benefit agreements previously reached between Kinder Morgan and First Nation band councils given that they will soon constitute agreements reached with the Crown; and (b) guarantee that all such agreements established the free, prior and informed consent to the pipeline from each band?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1892—Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau:

With regard to federal spending in the riding of Berthier—Maskinongé, for each fiscal year since 2014, inclusively: what are the details of all grants and contributions and all loans to every organization, group, business or municipality, broken down by the (i) name of the recipient, (ii) municipality of the recipient, (iii) date on which the funding was received, (iv) amount received, (v) department or agency that provided the funding, (vi) program under which the grant, contribution or loan was made, (vii) nature or purpose?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1893—Ms. Linda Duncan:

With regard to Health Canada's notice of a recall for a list of Valsartan products supplied by Chinese corporation Zhejiang Huahai Pharmaceuticals: (a) on what date did Health Canada become aware of the contamination of these drugs with N-nitrosodimethylamine (NDMA); (b) was the recall issued at the request of Canadian authorities; (c) what is deemed a long-term exposure to this carcinogen; (d) if there was a delay in issuing the recall after Health Canada was informed of the contamination, what were the reasons for the delay in the public notice; (e) how was Health Canada made aware of the contamination of the valsartan medicines; (f) did Health Canada directly conduct any laboratory tests on these drugs to determine their safety before approving their use in Canada; (g) has Health Canada or any federal authority undertaken any investigations of the laboratory and manufacturing facilities of Zhejiang Huahai Pharmaceuticals; (h) why did Health Canada advise patients to continue taking the Valsartan products despite the knowledge it was contaminated with a carcinogen and who made that decision; (i) are any other products manufactured by Zhejiang Huahai Pharmaceuticals currently being distributed, sold or prescribed in Canada; (j) what actions has Health Canada taken to test alternative blood pressure medicines being prescribed in Canada to determine their safety; and (k) what information has been provided to Health Canada on adverse effects reported by Canadians taking Valsartan?

(Return tabled)

Routine Proceedings

Question No. 1894—Mr. Tom Kmiec:

With regard to the National Joint Council's Relocation Directive, which reimburses federal employees when relocating for work, for the calendar years 2016, 2017 and 2018: (a) how many employees, agents, or contractors of the federal government made claims for relocation funding each year, broken down by government department or agency; (b) how many employees, agents, or contractors of the federal government were provided with reimbursement for relocation each year, broken down by government department or agency; (c) in the instances where relocation funding was provided, how many instances arose from employer-requested relocation in each year; (d) in the instances where relocation funding was provided, how many instances arose from employee-requested relocation in each year; (e) what was the annual aggregate amount in Canadian dollars spent by each government agency or department in remitting relocation funding, broken down by the benefit categories outlined in appendix B of the National Joint Council's Relocation Directive; (f) which employees, agents, or contractors of the federal government received relocation funding in each year, itemized to include their agency or department, their job title, the amount of relocation funding remitted, broken down by the benefit categories outlined in appendix B of the National Joint Council's Relocation Directive, and where the individual was relocated from and to; (g) what is the aggregate amount of funding, across all government departments and agencies, remitted in each year under the Relocation Directive's benefit categories that pertain to real estate commission and realtor fees; (h) what is the aggregate amount of funding, across all government departments and agencies, remitted in each year under the Relocation Directive's benefit categories that pertain to home equity loss; and (i) what is the aggregate amount of funding, across all government departments and agencies, remitted in each year under the Relocation Directive's benefit categories that pertain to mortgages, mortgage default insurance, and mortgage paydown penalties?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1895— Mr. Earl Dreeshen:

With regard to "repayable contributions" given out by the government between January 1, 2016, and January 1, 2018: (a) what are the details of each contribution, including (i) recipient, (ii) date, (iii) amount, (iv) purpose of contribution; and (b) for each "repayable contribution" in (a), how much has been repaid?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1896— Mr. Earl Dreeshen:

With regard to the Court Challenges Program: (a) what is the total amount provided under the program since its announced reinstatement on February 7, 2017; and (b) what are the details of each funding recipient since February 7, 2017, including (i) name, (ii) amount pledged by government, (iii) amount received by recipient, (iv) relevant court case, (v) date funding decision was made?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1897— Mr. Earl Dreeshen:

With regard to the criteria listed on pm.gc.ca that states that the government may remove any social media comments that "do not respect the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms": (a) broken down by month, and by platform, since December 2015, how many comments have been removed for not meeting that specific criteria; and (b) does the government consider disagreeing with the values test added by the current government in order to access Canada Summer Jobs funding to be a justification for such comments to be removed from government social media accounts?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1898—Mr. Mark Warawa:

With regard to federal regulations, broken down by year since November 4, 2015: (a) what is the total cost, broken down by the private sector and the federal government; (b) what is the cost per capita, broken down by province; (c) how many regulations have been repealed; (d) of the regulations in (c), how many repealed regulations were significant; (e) what is the total cost savings to the private sector as a result of the repealed regulations; and (f) how many regulations have been repealed, broken down by department or agency?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1899—Mr. Mark Warawa:

With regard to Governor in Council regulations, and broken down by year and by department, agency, Crown corporation, or other government entity: (a) how many regulations were finalized since November 4, 2015; (b) how many regulations were deemed significant; (c) of the regulations in (b), how many were deemed (i) low impact, (ii) medium impact, (iii) high impact; (d) of the regulations in (b), how many were (i) quantified only, (ii) monetized only, (iii) quantified and monetized; (e) which regulations had a cost-benefit analysis which found that costs exceeded benefits; and (f) of the regulations in (e), which five regulations were the costliest, and for each of the five, what was the finding of the cost-benefit analysis?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1900—Mr. Mark Warawa:

With regard to Governor in Council regulations, and broken down by year and by department, agency, Crown corporation, or other government entity: (a) how many regulations were finalized since November 4, 2015; (b) how many regulations were deemed significant; (c) of the regulations in (b), how many were deemed (i) low impact, (ii) medium impact, (iii) high impact; (d) of the regulations in (b), how many were (i) quantified only, (ii) monetized only, (iii) quantified and monetized; (e) which regulations had a cost-benefit analysis which found that costs exceeded benefits; and (f) of the regulations in (e), which five regulations were the costliest, and for each of the five, what was the finding of the cost-benefit analysis?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1901— Mr. Dave MacKenzie:

With regard to the August 27, 2018 story in The Hill Times which stated that the Minister of Employment would be reaching out to faith leaders across the country in the coming weeks in relation to the Canada Summer Jobs program: (a) what is the complete list of faith leaders to which the Minister reached out, between August 27, 2018 and September 17, 2018; (b) what are the details of each such communication from the Minister, including (i) date, (ii) recipient, (iii) type of communication (email, in person meeting, phone call, etc); and (c) what criteria did the Minister use to decide to which faith leaders to reach out?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1902— Mr. Dave MacKenzie:

With regard to expenditures related to "culinary ambassadors" whose expenses were paid for by the government in connection with trips taken by the Prime Minister or other Ministers, since November 4, 2015: (a) what are the details of all such expenditures, including (i) dates of trip, (ii) origin and destination of trip, (iii) name of "culinary ambassador", (iv) dates of meals prepared on trip; (b) what are the details of all expenses paid for by the government, broken down by "culinary ambassador" and by trip, including amount spent on (i) airfare, (ii) accommodation, (iii) per diems, (iv) other expenses, (v) total amount; and (c) for each meal prepared by a "culinary ambassador" on a trip, what are the details, including (i) number of guests, (ii) location of meal, (iii) date, (iv) purpose or description of event or meal, (v) total expenditures on meal, including breakdown by type of expense?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1903— Mr. Dave MacKenzie:

With regard to the "social media team" from Environment and Climate Change Canada which travelled to COP 23 in November 2017: (a) how many members of the "social media team" travelled to COP23; (b) what was the total amount spent on travel to COP23 for the "social media team"; (c) what is the breakdown of the costs in (b) by (i) airfare, (ii) accommodation, (iii) meals and per diems, (iv) other transportation, (v) other expenses; (d) what is the total value of all items stolen from the "social media team" during the trip; (e) what is the breakdown of the stolen items, including value of each item; (f) have any of the stolen items been recovered and, if so, which ones; and (g) did any of the stolen items contain any classified information and, if so, which items, and what was the highest level of classification of such information?

(Return tabled)

*Routine Proceedings***Question No. 1905—Mr. Arnold Viersen:**

With regard to the tweet by the Minister of Veterans Affairs on July 30, 2018, where he stated that “Immigrants are better at creating new businesses and new jobs than Canadian-born people”: (a) does the Prime Minister agree with the statement by the Minister of Veterans Affairs; and (b) has the Prime Minister taken any disciplinary action against the Minister for the statement, and, if so, what are the details of any such action?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1906—Mr. Colin Carrie:

With regard to the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) officers’ ability to carry firearms at airports: (a) does Transport Canada recognize the right of CBSA officers to carry firearms at airports; (b) what is the government’s official position; and (c) has the official position been communicated to Transport Canada and, if so, what are the details of such communication, including (i) date, (ii) method of communication, (iii) sender, (iv) recipient?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1907—Mrs. Cathay Wagantall:

With regard to expenditures on electric vehicle charging stations, since January 1, 2018: (a) what are the total expenditures this year, to date, broken down by location; (b) what are the specific locations of all such stations; and (c) how many stations have been constructed since January 1, 2018?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1909—Ms. Marilyn Gladu:

With regard to the purchase or rental of telepresence robots or other similar robotic type devices which connect to tablets by Policy Horizons Canada, since November 4, 2015: (a) what are the details of all such expenditures, including (i) amount, (ii) date, (iii) vendor, (iv) description of goods or services, (v) whether it was rental or purchase, (vi) purpose of purchase, (vii) contract file number; and (b) has any other department, agency, or government entity purchased or rented such a device and, if so, what are the details of each purchase?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1910—Mr. Jamie Schmale:

With regard to expenditures on royalties since January 1, 2016, and broken down by department, agency, Crown corporation or other government entity: (a) what is the total amount spent; and (b) what are the details of each expenditure, including (i) amount, (ii) date, (iii) name or description of material for which royalties were paid, (iv) summary of advertising campaign or other use for which materials were used, (v) vendor?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1911—Mr. Jamie Schmale:

With regard to expenditures related to the Global Case Management System (GCMS) interfaces at Citizenship and Immigration Canada, since January 1, 2016: (a) what are the total expenditures on maintenance for the GCMS; (b) what are the total expenditures on consultants related to the GCMS; and (c) what are the details of all contracts related to (a) and (b), including (i) vendor, (ii) amount, (iii) date of contract, (iv) duration, (v) description of goods or services provided, (vi) file number?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1912—Mr. Fin Donnelly:

With regard to the Oceans Protection Plan (OPP) announced by the government in 2016: (a) how much money has been allocated to Transport Canada under the OPP, since 2016, broken down by year; (b) how much money has been spent under the OPP by Transport Canada, since 2016, broken down by year and by program; (c) how much money has been allocated to the Department of Fisheries and Oceans under the OPP, since 2016, broken down by year; (d) how much money has been spent under the OPP by the Department and Fisheries and Oceans, since 2016, broken down by year and by program; (e) how much money has been allocated to Environment and Climate Change Canada under the OPP, since 2016, broken down

by year; (f) how much money has been spent under the OPP by Environment and Climate Change Canada, since 2016, broken down by year and by program; (g) how much money has been spent under the OPP on efforts to mitigate the potential impacts of oil spills, since 2016, broken down by year and by program; (h) how much money from the OPP has been allocated to the Whales Initiative, since 2016, broken down by year; (i) how much money has been spent under the OPP on the Whales Initiative since 2016; and (j) what policies does the government have in place to ensure that the funding allocated under the OPP is spent on its stated goals in a timely manner?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1915—Mr. Rob Nicholson:

With regard to military procurement: (a) does the Prime Minister agree with the position put forward by officials at Public Service and Procurement Canada that “Canada may, but will have no obligation, to require that the top-ranked bidder demonstrate any features, functionality and capabilities described in this bid solicitation or in its bid”; (b) of bidders who were awarded contracts since November 4, 2015, how many were unable to demonstrate or fulfill any features, functionality or capabilities described in their bid; and (c) what are the details of all incidents referred to in (b), including (i) bidder, (ii) contract amount, (iii) description of goods or services rendered, (iv) list of specific bid claims which bidder was unable to fulfill, (v) date bid was awarded, (vi) amount recovered by government, as a result of failure to fulfill, (vii) has the bidder been banned from future bidding as a result of making false claims on future bids?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1916—Mr. Rob Nicholson:

With regard to reports of a data breach at Public Services and Procurement Canada in August 2018, after a device containing personal information was stolen: (a) on what date did the theft occur; (b) on what date was the theft reported to the law enforcement agencies, and to which agencies was the theft reported; (c) on what date was the Office of the Privacy Commissioner notified; (d) how many employees were affected by the data breach, broken down by department or agency; (e) on what date were the affected employees notified; (f) why was there a delay between the breach and the notification date for employees; (g) how are affected employees being compensated for the breach; (h) what type of information was contained on the stolen device; (i) has the government recovered the device; (j) how many data breaches have occurred since January 1, 2016, broken down by department, agency, Crown corporation or other government entity; and (k) for each data breach in (j), what are the details, including (i) how many people were affected, (ii) date of breach, (iii) date those affected were notified, (iv) summary of incident?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1918—Ms. Marilyn Gladu:

With regard to usage of artificial intelligence (AI) by the government: (a) which departments, agencies, Crown corporations, or other government entities currently use AI; (b) what specific tasks is AI used for; (c) what are the details of all expenditures on commercial AI technology and related products since November 4, 2015, including (i) vendor, (ii) amount, (iii) description of products or services, including quantity, if applicable, (iv) date of purchase, (v) file number; and (d) what is the government’s policy regarding the use of AI?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1920—Mr. John Nater:

With regard to government expenditures related to guarding and relocating the killdeer nest which was found near the Canadian War Museum in June 2018 : (a) what was the total cost; (b) what are the details of each expenditure, including (i) vendor, (ii) amount, (iii) description of goods or services provided; (c) how many government employees contributed to the relocation; and (d) what is the total number of hours dedicated by government employees to the relocation?

(Return tabled)

*Points of Order***Question No. 1922—Mr. Steven Blaney:**

With regard to expenditures by the government on subscriptions and data access services by the government in the 2017-18 fiscal year, broken down by department, agency, Crown corporation or other government entity: (a) what is the total amount spent; and (b) what are the details of each expenditure, including (i) vendor, (ii) amount, (iii) date, (iv) description of goods or services, (v) titles of publications or data for each subscription, (vi) file number?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1923—Mr. Steven Blaney:

With regard to payments made by the government to news media organizations in the 2017-18 fiscal year, broken down by department, agency, Crown corporation or other government entity, and excluding expenditures on advertising services: (a) what are the details of each expenditure, including (i) vendor, (ii) amount, (iii) date, (iv) description of goods or services, (v) rationale for expenditure, (vi) file number; and (b) what are the details of each grant and contribution including, (i) vendor, (ii) amount, (iii) date, (iv) description of goods or services, (v) rationale for expenditure, (vi) file number?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1924—Mrs. Marilène Gill:

With regard to consultations undertaken by the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development and the Minister of Seniors with a view to providing greater security for workplace pension plans: (a) did the government establish a committee on the issue; and (b) if the answer to (a) is affirmative, (i) how long has the committee been in place, (ii) how often has it met, (iii) how many government officials have worked on the project, (iv) which stakeholders have been consulted, (v) what means (including legislation) have been considered to provide greater security for workplace pension plans, including in the event of bankruptcy?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1926—Mr. Steven Blaney:

With regard to communications between Google, Netflix or Facebook and the government, since November 4, 2015: what are the details of all emails, letters or other communication, including (i) date, (ii) sender, (iii) recipient, (iv) title or subject matter, (v) summary of contents, (vi) file number, (vii) form (email, letter, telephone call, etc.)?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1927—Mrs. Sylvie Boucher:

With regard to contracts under \$10,000 granted by the Privy Council Office, since December 1, 2017: what are the (i) vendors' names, (ii) contracts' reference and file numbers, (iii) dates of the contracts, (iv) descriptions of the products or services provided, (v) delivery dates, (vi) original contracts' values, (vii) final contracts' values if different from the original contracts' values?

(Return tabled)

[English]

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

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

PRIVILEGE

TIME ALLOTTED FOR CONSIDERATION OF BUDGET IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 2018, NO. 2

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, I would like to respond to the

question of privilege by the hon. member for New Westminster—Burnaby on October 31, 2018 with respect to his concerns that there would not be enough time to scrutinize Bill C-86, a second act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on February 27, 2018 and other measures.

The bill was introduced on October 29, 2018, and debated in the House on Thursday and Friday last week. It was scheduled for debate last Wednesday as well, but the opposition preferred to debate points of order and questions of privilege.

We expect more debate at second reading, and I understand that the finance committee has a plan for considering the bill. As members well know, once the committee has completed its work, there will be a further opportunity to consider the bill at the report and third reading stages. The member should not prejudice the legislative process.

I would also note that my hon. colleague was able to speak to the bill at second reading, and I am sorry to note that the majority of his intervention centred on his belief that there would not be enough time to scrutinize the bill. If the member had these concerns, he should have used his speaking slot more judiciously and could have highlighted his policy concerns with the bill rather than prejudice the process for considering the bill.

My hon. colleague in his statement alleges that his ability to perform his duties as a member of Parliament are inhibited by the size of Bill C-86. I would argue that the matter before us today is not a question of privilege but rather a matter of debate.

First of all, I would like to remind the member that he stated that “The government's intention to not even take the time to respect parliamentary procedure and work through the committee structure to allow for appropriate debate so that we get more than a few seconds of scrutiny of each clause and subclause, to my mind, indicates a breach of privilege.” However, the Standing Committee on Finance adopted a motion framing the study of Bill C-86 in committee and as such made sure that the proper parliamentary procedure is followed on this subject matter.

Second, my hon. colleague blamed the lack of time between introduction of the legislation and the scheduled debate for second reading of the bill for his lack of preparation. To that, I would remind the House that a technical briefing with officials was offered to members to help them understand the bill and get prepared in provision of the debates. Consequently, I respectfully submit that this is a debate as to the facts and as such does not constitute a prima facie question of privilege.

* * *

POINTS OF ORDER

BILL C-86—PROPOSAL TO APPLY STANDING ORDER 69.1

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have yet another response that I would like to go over at this point.

I rise today to respond to a point of order raised by the hon. member for New Westminster—Burnaby on October 31, 2018 with respect to the second budget implementation act, 2018 and the application of the Standing Order 69.1(2), which reads:

The present Standing Order shall not apply if the bill has as its main purpose the implementation of a budget and contains only provisions that were announced in the budget presentation or in the documents tabled during the budget presentation.

My hon. colleague alleges that clauses 461, 462 and 535 to 625 of Bill C-86, which deal with the modernization of the Canada Labour Code are not mentioned in the budget and as such they would not be covered by the provisions of the Standing Order 69.1(2). In fact, the clauses identified by my colleague are referenced in the budget documents tabled on February 27, 2018. I would draw to the attention of members page 46 of budget 2018, which reads as follows:

To implement this change to the EI program, the Government proposes to amend the Employment Insurance Act. In addition, the Government proposes to amend the Canada Labour Code to ensure that workers in federally regulated industries have the job protection they need while they are receiving EI parental benefits.

Furthermore, if we look at pages 51, 63 and 64 of budget 2017, we find multiple references to the government's announced intention to amend and modernize the Canada Labour Code. As such, I respectfully submit that the dispositions mentioned by the hon. member are all covered under the purview of Standing Order 69.1(2) and consequently should be subject to separate votes at second and third reading.

* * *

PRIVILEGE

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have another response to a question of privilege. I am pleased to rise again today to address the question of privilege raised on October 30, 2018 by the hon. member for Milton regarding information granted through order paper question no. 1316.

● (1530)

In her intervention, the member listed the following grievances: That the response she received was a non-answer; that the said response breached Standing Order 39(1); and that these alleged breaches somehow impeded her ability to carry out her duties as a member of Parliament.

On the first point, let us be very clear. In her Order Paper question dated November 8, 2017, the member across the way asked for “the titles of all individuals who approved the tweet”. While the member may not like the answer she received, it does not change the fact that the response was duly tabled within the prescribed timelines and according to the rules of the House of Commons. The concept that the Speaker does not judge the quality of answers is well established.

Page 529 of the 3rd edition of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* indicates the following:

There are no provisions in the rules for the Speaker to review government responses to questions. Nonetheless, on several occasions, Members have raised questions of privilege in the House regarding the accuracy of information contained in responses to written questions; in none of these cases was the matter found to be a prima facie breach of privilege. The Speaker has ruled that it is not the role of the

Privilege

Chair to determine whether or not the contents of documents tabled in the House are accurate, nor to “assess the likelihood of an Hon. Member knowing whether the facts contained in a document are correct”.

Moreover, on page 527 of the 3rd edition, it states that given that the purpose of a written question is to seek and receive a precise, detailed answer, it is incumbent on a member submitting a written question “to ensure that it is formulated carefully enough to elicit the precise information sought.” Therefore, a differently worded question could have yielded a different and perhaps more satisfactory response.

Let me turn to the discrepancy between the questions posed by the member and that posed by the journalist through the access for information requests. If we compare the wording of both the OPQ and ATIP question, the ATIP requesters and the MP asked two different questions. The ATIP requesters asked for “all emails and any other communications”, while the MP asked for “the titles of all individuals who approved the tweet”, for which the minister listed her own title as the one responsible.

As well, it should be pointed out that the minister never assigned blame in her communications in the House, in the OPQ response, in question period or in her online comments. She took full responsibility. It was a statement of fact that the tweet occurred on her departmental account and not her personal account. It was not an assignment of blame. The minister took the blame.

While the Conservatives may be interested in pointing fingers at public servants and political exempt staff, it is the minister who is accountable and she did what a minister is supposed to do and took responsibility, as the principle of ministerial responsibility dictates she must do.

Now, let us turn to the alleged breach to the Standing Orders of the House of Commons. While the member alluded to this in her remarks, I fail to see how the answer contravenes Standing Order 39.1.

● (1535)

In her remarks, my hon. colleague across the way noted that the news articles pointed out that the government “also violated the timelines set out in the Access to Information Act. Now, that is not your problem, Mr. Speaker.” I agree with her, Madam Speaker. This is not your problem.

Notwithstanding the fact that in this case different questions were asked, the process for handling Order Paper questions and access to information requests are different. Order Paper questions are a request for information by members to the government, while ATIP questions are subject to statutory requirements and may be asked by any members of the public, members of Parliament, journalists or others. When questions are identical, the government ensures that there is as little discrepancy between the answers provided to the House for Order Paper questions and the answers to ATIP questions.

However, in this case, while the queries touched on the same subject matter, they asked different questions. That is why the answers were different. Therefore, I do not see how this constitutes a prima facie question of privilege.

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The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): We note the information provided by the parliamentary secretary. I would indicate that in the first question of privilege, some of the information the member provided bordered on debate, and I would caution the member on that.

We will certainly take the information under advisement and we will get back to the House on it if need be.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—SERVICE STANDARDS FOR VETERANS

The House resumed consideration of the motion

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Madam Speaker, we have been eagerly awaiting our opportunity to tell stories of local veterans in the House and to try to get them the services they need. I will be splitting my time with the member for Victoria.

Just days away is Remembrance Day. We will be celebrating and honouring the contribution of veterans. I will be standing with the Nanaimo—Ladysmith's Legions No. 256, Mt. Benson; No. 10 Harewood, in Nanaimo; No. 257 in Lantzville; No. 171 in Ladysmith; the Gabriola Islands veterans association; and Cedar Valley Memorial Gardens, all honouring and remembering the contribution of veterans. They all host us and facilitate the connection from young to old. I am looking very much forward to standing with them.

Veterans need parliamentarians to do our part to recognize and support those who have sacrificed for our country. There is clearly a debt owed, there is money in the till and sincere and vital promises have been made. Every year 3,000 veterans pass away, so let us get on with it and show that we truly support veterans everyday, not just on Remembrance Day.

On Friday, I was honoured to be in the Senate, along with my parents, for the armistice ceremony to recognize 100 years since the end of the great war, the war to end all wars. One of the quotes that moved us particularly was veterans noting that their fallen comrades said, “for their tomorrow we gave our today”. Just this year in a town hall the Prime Minister said, in response to a very angry question from the audience, that the reason the government was fighting veterans in court was veterans were “asking more than we can give”. That is a shocking thing to say, especially for those of us on the coast who do not support the Prime Minister's choice to buy a leaky old pipeline for \$4.5 billion. Clearly, there is enough money to go around. What we hear everyday in our ridings is that veterans are not getting the support that they are owed.

We held a town hall along with Nanaimo Legion No. 10, during which veterans said that both Conservative and Liberal governments were “poisoning patriotism and the desire to serve our country.” They said, “Dealing with Veterans Affairs with PTSD is like being given a jigsaw puzzle and turning out the lights.”

These young veterans told me that they wanted a navigator to help with the tangled bureaucracy of PTSD treatment and to ensure that no veteran was discharged without pension and medical benefits already lined up. The Canadian Forces ombudsman echoed this in withering testimony to the Senate on March 8, saying that Canada was “not living up to our end of the bargain.” Our veterans deserve so much better.

Ken Young, a veteran in my riding. He is a brilliant and compassionate veterans advocate. He told me that someone he was working with who had ALS waited 16 weeks and still had no response to his phone call.

As NDP government leader Jagmeet Singh said:

Veterans shouldn't be put on hold for hours or redirected half a dozen times before they speak to the right person. And they shouldn't have to wait 6 months before receiving the benefits they rightly deserve. It's wrong to make our veterans wait for these services and it's even worse that they're being short-changed by hundreds of millions of dollars.

Today the New Democrats are taking over the agenda of the House with a fix as set out in the motion by my colleague, the member for Courtenay—Alberni, which is just north of me on Vancouver Island. He represents Parksville along with north and west Tofino. His motion, if passed by Parliament and implemented by the government, will dramatically improve the lives of Canada's veterans, at no additional costs to taxpayers. It seeks to solve two issues that have plagued the Department of Veterans Affairs under both Conservative and Liberal governments. It would end lapsed spending in the department by allowing this unspent money to be carried over to the next year and that would be for the sole purpose of improving services across the board for Canada's veterans and their families.

Here are some statistics since the Liberal government took power three years ago. The Liberals have only rehired 475 front-line staff at Veteran Affairs and just 260 case managers. They remain well short of the 25:1 ratio for which the Liberals themselves called.

● (1540)

The \$372 million that has been allowed to lapse by the Liberals in their first three years could have been used to hire 5,716 full-time staff, enough to triple the number of staff working at the department. Honestly, this is what we need: to have a human voice to treat people with respect, the elders of our communities and the brave men and women coming home from the current modern wars, to take them by the hand and explain to them what they are entitled to so that nobody has to work out this maze of paperwork on their own.

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I am hearing this a lot from my riding, that people are working hard. Mark Smith wrote me this year. He said, "Imagine being a 24 year old who has lost the use of both legs and suffer from the mental anguish that goes with the realization of being a 24 year old with no legs. Now receive a one time payout and a plane ticket home, imagine how fast that money disappears and imagine where that money went to." He said about the Prime Minister, "He has stated that he has brought back life long pensions however only the most injured 75% plus will received approximately \$2200 per month. This is outrageous."

Another brave member of my community has fought Veterans Affairs for support after she, as a service person, was sexually assaulted by another service person. She has been trying to get help for a decade. It is a terrible problem.

A few wins have happened. The Canadian Medical Cannabis Council was very concerned about veterans who had been prescribed medical marijuana. In my riding of Nanaimo, Tilray is a licensed medical marijuana grower, a huge employer, a business that is deeply committed to research on the mental health side. I was sent a petition by constituents asking that Veterans Affairs cover the cost of medical marijuana extracts, because that is a more healthy way to take it. As a testament to the power of petitions and the work of the Canadian Medical Cannabis Council, the government changed that policy, so that was a win for us.

A great example of a service group is Vancouver Island Compassion Dogs. It straddles my riding and the riding of the member for Courtenay—Alberni. Together we visited this charity, which has paired 29 service men and women of the Canadian Forces, RCMP and veterans of foreign war with service dogs. It was inspiring to meet with these young men and women and see the effect that these service dogs have on them. There is a tremendous waiting list and it needs more funding and support, but we are very grateful to Vancouver Island Compassion Dogs and Barb and her whole team for the work that they do.

Another person in my riding of Nanaimo—Ladysmith, Ken Osborn, has a six-foot bronzed wreath with contributions of Remembrance Day poppies from all over the country. He offered that to the government. He was not able to qualify for funding to have this beautiful and moving war memorial travel across the country. That was a great disappointment to him, but I understand a veterans office is going to house it so maybe we will be able to see it next year.

I also want to applaud the work of the Veterans Transition Network at the University of British Columbia that is doing a series of vignettes, a play called *Contact! Unload* that breaks open the taboo of talking about mental health and support for veterans.

We certainly have so much work to do here in Parliament. We should put our money where our mouth is and stop spending hundreds of thousands of dollars fighting veterans in court. We should tackle homelessness. To our shame, homelessness rates in Canada say there might be as many as 1,300 veterans living on the streets. That is certainly happening in Nanaimo. To our great shame, there are veterans living on Mount Benson. I thank the people who go out to support them. We should act on detox agents for veterans exposed to chemical defoliant. We should relax the regulations on

access for veterans who served in the Korean War to long-term retirement and service beds. The work for us goes on and on.

Let us please vote in favour of my comrade's motion. It would fund, with no additional cost to taxpayers, the treatment and care that veterans so clearly need.

• (1545)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for highlighting some of the significant cases she has in her community and the veterans who come from her community.

In relation to this particular motion, I have one question. Given the member's passion for ensuring veterans get what they deserve given what they have given to our country to get that, why in June 2018 did she and the entire NDP bench vote against the budget implementation act that included in it the pension—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, they are laughing now. They are laughing at something which should not be a laughing matter.

Why did the NDP vote against the pension for life that was included in the budget implementation act in June 2018?

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: Madam Speaker, as the member well knows, when the government bundles so many policy pieces all into one bill, it is hard to find something that allows us to vote together. The present budget implementation bill is 800 pages. There has never been a bigger omnibus bill. It is almost double what the Harper Conservatives tabled, and we all decried it then. There are bound to be pieces that we want to pull out and debate separately. However, as I mentioned in my speech, some of the veterans in my community do not agree that the government's repair of the pension bill is correct.

Regardless, what we are debating today is something that would have no cost to taxpayers. It would move any money that the government is unable to spend that it had assigned in its budget in any given year forward to the next year so that veterans can get the full benefit of what was budgeted. I would like to know whether my colleague across the way on the Liberal side is going to vote yes.

Mr. Darrell Samson (Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I really appreciated when our colleague shared her personal stories about the individuals and veterans in her riding. There is no question that our debt to them is very important and we need to do more. Since the Liberal government has come to power, we have reopened nine veterans offices, which is extremely important. There is the education program benefit for six years of service at \$40,000 or 12 years of service at \$80,000 is major. The pension for life is what they were asking for when I was going about in my riding and there is the disability award of \$50,000. Those are big benefits.

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I do not doubt that the New Democrats would like to give all those benefits that we have given. The problem I have is this: They guaranteed a balanced budget. They are against trade. They are against pipelines. Where are the revenues going to come from to actually pay for those services? That is the question.

• (1550)

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: Madam Speaker, the Liberal government has shortchanged veterans to the tune of \$372 million of unspent program funding. This is such a win-win motion to vote in favour of. It would get the money that has been allocated. The Liberal government has only rehired a fraction of the people, the public servants, who are needed to navigate and support veterans. The government has not met even half of its own service standards. There is such a lot of damage to repair from the decade that the Conservatives were in power, so I do not understand why the government would not want to vote in favour of this motion. The government budgeted the money. It has been unable to spend it. It has not rehired the front-line folks.

We need to vote yes to this motion.

[Translation]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Salaberry—Suroît, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to ask my colleague, the critic for the status of women and gender equality, whether she is concerned about the fact that the ombudsman's most recent report clearly shows that response times are much too long for francophone female veterans.

Does she not believe that the government should invest more in services for women and francophones?

[English]

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: Madam Speaker, the least we can do for veterans is to spend the money that has been allocated in the budget. If we were able to put more resources into the front line, we would not have the wait times that my colleague describes, both for francophones and for women in particular.

I also want to flag that when the government does not fulfill its obligations, the burden falls to the families, which is often the girlfriends, the wives and the extended family. If we can do our part, then we will be supporting families as well.

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is a delight to follow my impassioned colleague, the member for Nanaimo—Ladysmith. She is a hard act to follow, a very passionate act to follow.

This is a very serious motion which I thank the member for Courtenay—Alberni for bringing to the House of Commons today. It would require that the government that is carrying forward annual lapsed spending actually use the money now for the purpose for which it was earmarked by this Parliament.

I can do no better than quote the current Prime Minister who, during the 2015 campaign at a stop in Trenton, Ontario, said the following:

They left unspent more than \$1 billion that Parliament allocated for veteran support. Canadians know that this is wrong.

Of course, he was referring to the former Conservative government. The Liberal government has not left \$1 billion unspent, but over the last three years it apparently has left \$372 million unspent.

The government would want us to think this was just some sort of administrative issue, nothing to look at, and we should just move on. However, that is just not the case. To its credit, the government has put on its website something called “standards of service”, standards that a department should be held accountable to meet. I salute the government for doing that.

There are 24 of them, and they talk about what the reasonable expectations of a veteran should be in terms of accessing disability benefits, pensions, how long it should take for this and that. The problem is that with fully half of those standards of service, the government, by its own admission, is not meeting. Good for the Liberals for putting a greater degree of accountability for the veterans across this land, but now it says, “Oh well, it is just an administrative problem so move on.” There is \$372 million Parliament said should be spent to address these problems, and the government has chosen not to spend that money.

To show how quickly the government can move, here we are a few days before Remembrance Day, and the CBC has pointed out that more than 270,000 veterans were shortchanged by the same Veterans Affairs department over eight years because of an accounting error, meaning it lost \$165 million that should have been given to them for benefits, pensions, disability and the like. Thanks go to our veterans ombudsman, Mr. Parent, for observing that. The government saw this story in the newspaper today, or at least it was brought to the Canadian public's attention, and then instantly the government found that \$165 million and said it was going to do the right thing.

My point is obvious. Why does the government not do the right thing for those veterans who are suffering under what the government acknowledges are deficiencies in the service that they are entitled to?

Today one of my colleagues pointed out how we stand on Remembrance Day and salute the brave women and men who served this country so valiantly, but this is not a one-day affair. This is requiring services over the entire calendar year. One of the great things that becoming an MP has given me is a greater understanding of the world of our veterans. I confess it is a world that I did not know much about when I became an MP six years ago, but I have come to know their struggles, their bravery. I have become a member of Legion Public Service Branch 127, and I will stand with veterans this Sunday, Remembrance Day. Last year, I had the opportunity to go with the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs, veterans, and young people to Passchendaele and to see the horrors of World War I displayed there. This year I will be back in Victoria with the veterans in our community, and the Legion that supports them so well.

This department needs to give its head a shake and do something. It found that money quickly when it was brought to its attention. Why does it not stand with us? The Conservatives let \$1 billion lapse. The Liberal government has let \$372 million lapse over three years. Let us just get the money and hire the people who can help the veterans to get on with their lives.

It is just not acceptable that the number of people who are available from Veterans Affairs to assist our veterans are just not available. The government talked about a standard of one in 25, that is to say one care worker for 25 veterans. In some places, it is much worse than that. It is one in 42 in Kingston, Thunder Bay and Calgary. My colleague has pointed out that north of 60, there is no one, despite there being 85 cases. There is not a single care worker from Veterans Affairs to assist those people.

• (1555)

Do not tell me that there are no real needs that could be met if this money were actually spent as Parliament voted it.

I did congratulate the government a while back for the fact that it put accountability on its website for the service standards. Something else I appreciate is the fact that it has given its ministers what are called mandate letters. These are the expectations the Prime Minister says Canadians might legitimately have of ministers for fulfilling the commitments that have been made to Canadians within the various departments of government.

I would like to talk about one that has caused me enormous angst, and that is a commitment in the mandate letter of the Minister of Veterans Affairs. It reads:

eliminate the “marriage after 60” claw-back clause, so that surviving spouses of Veterans receive appropriate pension and health benefits.

That is what it says. Let me tell members how it works in the real world.

Patricia Kidd is a constituent of mine who married a naval surgeon. He died in 2016. He was the chief medical officer for the Pacific command. They fell in love. They lived together for 33 years and were married for 31 years. Why did she not get a veterans survivor benefit, a pension, like other widows? It was because Dr. Kidd married her after he turned 60. If he had married her at 59, we would not be having this debate. Like many people across this land, there is no way she can get one penny of survivor benefits under the pension scheme.

This goes back to 1901. I think the fear was that young women would marry aging veterans just for their pensions. A horrible name was given to this particular clause. Those who marry after 60 years of age in 2018 are in exactly the same boat as people in 1901, if members can believe that. It is shocking.

I went to the former minister, the member for Calgary Centre, and he said that he was working on it. I then went to see the current minister, not once but twice. I wrote him in September 2017, and I wrote him again in 2018. I spoke with him just a couple of weeks ago. Guess what. He is working on it. It is a high priority. It is in his mandate letter.

What has happened is absolutely atrocious. It was 28 months ago that I had the first conversation, and absolutely nothing has been

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done for Patricia Kidd or for other women who are in the same situation, and yes, they are mostly women. I find it offensive.

I give the government full marks for having accountability by putting its expectations in mandate letters so people can hold the government to account, but when it does that and does nothing for 28 months, except tell me and Patricia it is working on it, that is just not acceptable. Leaving aside the incredible injustice and sexism that lies just a bit behind this deficiency, if we had \$372 million, maybe we could start addressing some of these deficiencies, some of the gaps in service standards the department, by its own admission, has acknowledged.

This is not going to cost taxpayers a penny. This is about doing the right thing. This is about spending the money Parliament earmarked. I just hope we can count on the government's support so we can address this injustice and injustices like it head on.

• (1600)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Fayçal El-Khoury (Laval—Les Îles, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

Last year, \$4.4 billion was spent on veterans and their families, which is \$1 billion more than the Conservative government's peak spending.

Our plan for veterans goes much further than that of the NDP.

How can my colleague explain the NDP's change in vision?

[*English*]

Mr. Murray Rankin: Madam Speaker, I am at a loss to really understand what the question means, so I will do my best.

The fact that the former Conservative government lapsed \$1 billion and the current government only lapsed one-third of that is not grounds for congratulation. The fact that the government has spent more money to address the deficiencies of the last government by opening offices that were closed, by hiring a few of the people back who were put on the street rather than serving veterans, is a good thing. However, the question before us today is not how much better the government is than the last government. The question is why we cannot spend the money that was earmarked for veterans in the first place to do some of the things I have addressed, such as the absolute travesty facing women who marry veterans who are over the age of 60, and things of that sort.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for sharing his point of view on this today, but the problem with the motion is that it is addressing an accounting principle. The principle is that one budgets money and then spends money based on how it was budgeted but also based on what the demand is. It really does not matter whether there are 10 veterans who are claiming benefits or 10,000, we always have to make sure that there is enough money available so that everyone can get the benefits they require.

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For example, last year, 93% of the budget was spent. Next year, we might go over 100% of the budget and have to spend more money, but this is what budgeting is all about.

Let us talk about some of the things we have done. There are pensions for life, and we opened nine offices that were closed. He said that we have hired a few staff. We have hired 470 new staff positions and put forward a joint suicide prevention program, creating opportunities for new employment for vets. It is clear that we are doing exactly what we committed to do, and I really wish the NDP would start to see that.

Mr. Murray Rankin: Madam Speaker, I thank my friend from Kingston and the Islands, where, despite a commitment of one in 25 caseworkers for veterans, he is in a community where one in 42 is the number.

The member likes to pretend that this is simply an accounting exercise. I invite the member to read the report by the Parliamentary Budget Officer entitled “Why Does the Government Lapse Money and Why Does it Matter?”, and he would understand that it is not a sufficient answer. He would also not be terribly proud to know that 470 staff were hired of the over 1,000 that were fired by the last government.

Frankly, I would ask him to address what it is the Prime Minister was talking about when he said, on August 24, 2015, “[The Conservatives] left unspent more than \$1 billion that Parliament allocated for veteran support. Canadians know that this is wrong.”

I agree with the Prime Minister.

• (1605)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Salaberry—Suroît, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to know what my colleague thinks about the fact that, with \$372 million, we could review the federal government's decision to transfer the Sainte-Anne-de-Bellevue Hospital for veterans to the provincial government.

We were told that this transfer would have no effect on the number of doctors or the nursing care offered to patients, but that is not true. Some articles have shown that veterans feel that services have been lacking since the hospital was transferred to the provincial government.

Does my colleague believe that the \$372 million could have been used to provide services in regions like mine where there are five branches of the Royal Canadian Legion and veterans who need services?

[*English*]

Mr. Murray Rankin: Madam Speaker, I appreciate my colleague putting her finger on one of the other great difficulties and the lack of collaboration between governments in addressing not only health issues but mental health issues and the need to do a better job of coordinating services. If the money were available and actually spent, and not lapsed, perhaps we could do a better job for our veterans in the member's riding and across the country.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance (Youth Economic Opportunity), Lib.):

Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time today with the member for Fundy Royal.

There is something very important about veterans that needs to be stressed in this debate, and that is the character of each person who serves in the Canadian Armed Forces. While we find ourselves, over the next week, commemorating and remembering those who fought and sacrificed 100 years ago, in what was supposed to be the war to end all wars, we also keep in mind those men and women of the Canadian Armed Forces who have served since and given of themselves that we might have a more peaceful and prosperous existence here.

The men and women who serve in uniform in the 21st century are not the same as those of earlier times. Today they are more diverse than ever before. One thing they have in common is their selfless dedication to serve Canada. They put their safety and their lives on the line to defend us, our security and our freedom. Every one of the brave men and women who serves in the Canadian Armed Forces has a unique experience. Each has his or her own abilities, skills, and ambitions. Each has a story to tell.

When CAF members release from service, they deserve support to make the transition and successfully re-establish in post-service life. After release from the military, veterans and their families face their own unique circumstances and have unique individual needs. We understand those needs and the importance of supporting our veterans and their families in their post-service lives. That is why we have taken action by investing in and improving these services and benefits, unlike the previous Conservative government, which closed offices, cut staff and balanced budgets on the backs of veterans and their families.

Here is what we have done so far.

Last April 1, a suite of new and enhanced benefits and programs became available to CAF members and veterans who completed basic training and were released from the forces on or after April 1, 2006. There are also programs for spouses, common-law partners and survivors of veterans.

Next April 1, the government will fulfill its promise to provide a pension for life as an option for veterans who release from the Canadian Armed Forces, delivering on what many veterans have been asking for. While these benefits and programs come into force at different times, they represent two parts of a single integrated suite of benefits that is flexible enough to meet the needs of each individual veteran.

The pension for life option will comprise two main parts. First is tax-free compensation in recognition of a veteran's pain and suffering from a service-related illness or injury. Additional compensation will be provided to those veterans who experience barriers to establishing life after service because of a service-related permanent and severe impairment. Some veterans who have already received a disability award for their service-related impairment will be eligible for an additional monthly amount through the pension for life. Their eligibility for both benefits will be assessed on an individual basis.

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The second main part is income replacement for those whose service-related impairment prevents them from finding meaningful employment. Veterans who receive physical, vocational or psycho-social rehabilitation services will receive a monthly benefit equal to 90% of their military salary at time of release. It will be indexed annually for inflation, with a guaranteed minimum of \$48,600 per year. They will receive this for as long as they need it, for life. It is available to spouses in some circumstances. Alternatively, a veteran can choose a single lump-sum payment, should a veteran decide that this is the best option to meet his or her needs. Again, it depends on the individual's situation and needs.

These changes will improve veterans' lives post-service but will also improve the new veterans charter, a document the previous government failed to improve during its 10 years in office. As with the well-being supports already in place, the number of Canadian Armed Forces members and veterans who apply for these benefits for service-related impairments is difficult to predict. We keep in mind that while Veterans Affairs Canada serves more than 200,000 veterans and their families and their survivors, the total number of veterans is more than 600,000 across the country, and that number does not include the number of actively serving members of the Canadian Armed Forces who will someday be veterans, regardless of whether they need the assistance of Veterans Affairs Canada.

• (1610)

Every year, the Department of Veterans Affairs estimates the amount of funding needed to meet the demand for each program. Veterans Affairs Canada must ensure that it can provide for all the veterans and families who may be entitled to benefits, whether it be the disability award, the pain and suffering compensation that will come with the pension for life this April, or the education and training benefit for veterans with more than six years of service.

However, the amount of funding required depends on the number of veterans who come forward to claim benefits and services. Veterans Affairs Canada must ensure that funding is available for them, no matter the number who come forward. Every veteran who applies for well-being support is assessed individually, according to their unique needs and situation. Similarly, every Canadian Armed Forces member or veteran who applies for the pension for life will be evaluated individually.

Veterans Affairs Canada works with veterans and their families to develop individualized plans that will meet their unique needs. In addition to the pain and suffering compensation and income replacement, the plan could include a caregiver benefit, career transition counselling, funding for education, training and professional development, vocational rehabilitation, assistance with establishment in post-service communities, and funding for emergency situations and more.

This new veteran-centric approach provides an integrated suite of benefits, programs and services that complement and reinforce each other. This flexibility will help lead to the best outcome and continued well-being for veterans and their families. Every member, veteran and family who is eligible will receive all the benefits and services they are entitled to. No eligible veteran or family member will go without.

It is for that reason that we are already accomplishing what this motion sets out to do. Every year, funds not used in one of the quasi-statutory programs run through Veterans Affairs are left in the central fund to be used again the next year to ensure access to these programs.

We know there is more to do when it comes to reducing wait times for decisions, but we also know that changing how we account for that money will not solve everything. Instead, we have invested \$42 million to enhance our capacity to make these decisions and are working on innovative solutions like automating certain processes to simplify decision-making.

After 10 years of inaction, this is the work veterans are asking us to do, and we are delivering. It is a long and not always easy road, but we are committed to the hard work necessary to guarantee the emotional, physical and financial well-being of our ill and injured veterans and their families.

• (1615)

Ms. Cheryl Hardcastle (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague from across the way for sharing with us how she perceives that the government being committed to the well-being of veterans.

As the proud member of Parliament for the riding of Windsor—Tecumseh, I want to point out that my riding has Branch 12 of the Royal Canadian Legion, Branch 143, Branch 255, Branch 261 and Branch 594, as well as the North Wall Riders, who are all committed to the well-being of veterans. They know full well what happens when spending is lapsed. They understand that when a department does not spend all of its budget on veterans, they are the ones losing out and their families are carrying the burden.

We know there should never be \$372 million in unspent money. Lapsed spending is hard for hard-working Canadians to understand, who have heard the government pledge in campaign season that it was going to address—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I have to allow time for another question and for the person to answer. When we are making interventions, they should be done within a minute.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the hon. member highlighting the work in her riding that many legions and volunteers are doing to support veterans

As I stated in my speech, the issue remains that when it comes to making the funds available for veterans, that is done based on estimates. The government and Veterans Affairs are not able to predetermine which eligible members are going to seek assistance from Veterans Affairs year over year. Essentially, Veterans Affairs already has a system in place to ensure that unspent funds are rolled into programs for veterans so they can access them when needed.

Business of Supply

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Madam Speaker, I listened to my friend's comments with interest, but I think she might be missing the point, because this is not a new phenomenon. This happened under the Harper government, and when in opposition, the Liberals pointed out how wrong it was.

This has continued under the Liberal government, year after to year. For Liberals to say they do not know how much they are going to spend and this is why the lapses happen is to ignore the fact that this has become a pattern of behaviour under Veterans Affairs.

This would be bad enough on its own, but it comes in addition to the Prime Minister saying that veterans are asking for too much and for more than government can afford. Clearly the government can afford it, because it ends up with extra money at the end of every single year to the tune of \$372 million.

If my friend thinks this is a problem, which I hope she does, will the Liberals support this motion that would make the lives of veterans better?

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Madam Speaker, I am glad my hon. colleague was listening, because we have said we are doing exactly what this motion intends to do, which is to ensure that funds are there and that if they are not used in one year, we move them forward into future years so that the funds are available should veterans come forward and need the support then.

Moreover, that, our government has invested \$10 billion in addition to that. It is nice that the NDP members like to talk about supporting veterans, but they were the ones with the same failed economic plan as the Conservatives, which would have continued cuts on the backs of veterans for the sake of balancing the budget at all costs. They cannot speak out of both sides of their mouth. Either they are going to support veterans or they were going to balance the budget at all costs.

• (1620)

Mrs. Alaina Lockhart (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Tourism, Official Languages and La Francophonie, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague for his efforts to raise awareness of the Government of Canada's commitment to providing the services our veterans need to transition successfully from active duty to civilian life.

The time that I spent serving with the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs was among the most meaningful time I have spent working since coming to Parliament. I acknowledge that there is still much work to be done to make sure that we reach the most vulnerable among our veterans. However, I must say that it has been amazing to watch our government respond to the testimony that I heard directly from veterans, and to witness the value of consulting, listening and taking action.

While I appreciate the motion brought forward today by my hon. colleague, I think it is important to note that the Government of Canada already ensures that money for veterans programming is always available for veterans. The reality is that what are technically termed as "lapsed funds" are funds that are returned to the consolidated revenue fund, the fund that is used to fund veterans programming year over year. This is truly an accounting term and does not reflect or have an impact on the level of service or benefits

available for our veterans, which is what our government is focused on, namely, on providing those services and supports that our veterans need. In my opinion, this is where we need to remain focused, making sure that veterans have the services they need to access them in a timely manner. That is what I heard in committee, and it is what I hear in my constituency office.

The good news is that even more veterans and their families are reaching out to access services and benefits. In fact, the number of veterans coming forward has increased by 31% since we formed government. Veterans and their families are taking advantage of programs, such as disability benefits, and education and training programs, as well as financial benefits. Last year alone that amounted to \$4.4 billion spent directly on veterans and their families, \$1 billion more than at the peak of the funding by Conservative governments.

I want to assure this House and all Canadians that whether 10 veterans or 10,000 veterans come forward, they will receive the benefits they need. The money will be available.

I also want to acknowledge that there is still more to do when it comes to reducing wait times. That should be our focus, and it is. Our government is investing \$42 million to tackle exactly that. We are preparing to deliver service as the new programs announced over the last three years roll out and more veterans step forward to receive them. This investment is targeted at eliminating the backlog of applications over 16 weeks.

Despite the misinformation that I often hear in social media and coffee shops around the country, since 2016 our government has investment \$10 billion in new resources to improve benefits for veterans and their families. We have introduced and supported new programs to help the men and women of the Canadian Armed Forces return to the life they want to live after their military careers are over. If we invested nothing in veterans, like the previous government did, I could understand the additional concerns around funds appearing to leave veterans programming. However, that is just not the case.

While the debate continues about the accounting term referred to as "lapsed funding" and the many different services and benefits of Veterans Affairs Canada, I would like to take the conversation back to those who are at the heart of this discussion, our men and women in uniform, those who put their own lives and liberty on the line for us every single day. I would like to take a moment to recognize them, especially today, the first day of Veterans Week.

I am sure that all members of the House would agree that the service and the achievements of our veterans, their fallen comrades, and those who currently serve with the Canadian Armed Forces have been the foundation of our country. Those achievements, that service and the sacrifices they have made, have made Canada the land of peace, freedom and equality it is today. All of us owe a tremendous debt to those who have served in times of conflict and peace. It is why we place such an emphasis on remembrance, not only now during Veterans Week and on Remembrance Day, but throughout the year.

Business of Supply

Our government is committed to commemorating our men and women in uniform, the service of those who have made the ultimate sacrifice for our country, and honouring those who continue to serve today. That is the core of Veterans Affairs Canada's mandate. Through the Canada remembers program, we pay tribute to our veterans through memorials and events, providing educational resources and public information.

My colleague spoke to the many aspects of the well-being of veterans and their successful transition. One of those aspects is pride in their legacy. We are committed to ensuring that the stories of our veterans and their families live on.

• (1625)

This year, 2018, is a special year as we mark many important anniversaries: the 100th anniversary of the signing of the armistice that ended the First World War; the 65th anniversary of the Korean War armistice; the 75th anniversary of the invasion of Sicily and the beginning of the Italian campaign during the Second World War, in which my grandfather served; and the 10th anniversary of National Peacekeepers' Day.

The First World War was a defining moment in our country's history as a nation. We came together for a common cause and stood up to defend freedom, but it was at a great cost. Over 650,000 of our men and women served in uniform, with more than 66,000 giving their lives and another 172,000 being wounded.

This year, Veterans Affairs Canada will help Canadians honour this very important anniversary, both here and abroad. Canadians and Newfoundlanders played a critical role during that time, so much so that the time between the Battle of Amiens in August 1918 and the end of the war became known as Canada's Hundred Days.

Veterans Affairs works hard to encourage public recognition and awareness of the service and sacrifices of Canadian veterans and the fallen. Remembering all that they have done during war, military conflict and peace helps us to better understand our nation's history and, in fact, its future.

Fortunately, most of our youth have not known war or had to experience it first-hand. Our younger generations are able to grow up in peace and security, thanks to the contributions and sacrifices of our veterans and their fallen comrades. This is why it is so moving to see our youth taking an active role in remembrance and doing their part to ensure the legacy lives on.

Throughout the year, organizations and people across Canada and abroad honour veterans and current members of the Canadian Armed Forces. They do this through ceremonies, assemblies, plaque unveilings, vigils and many other tributes and commemorative activities. In my home town of Sussex in New Brunswick, a small committee ensures that banners honouring local veterans span from one end of Main Street to the other throughout the month of November.

It is through those actions that we, as Canadians, say to current and former members of the armed forces, "Thank you for your service, thank you for your dedication and thank you for your sacrifice." However, we need to say more than "thank you". When the men and women who defend our country transition into life after

service, they value a continued link to their comrades and to the veteran community.

Those are just two of the reasons behind the decision to restore a card recognizing veterans service. However, the main reason is that CAF members and veterans have been asking for it. I heard directly from many veterans while serving on committee and they were not happy that those cards were discontinued. Our government responded.

Veterans Affairs and the Department of National Defence recently announced their joint initiative to reintroduce a veteran's service card. The card will be available to any former member of the Canadian Armed Forces who completed basic training and has been honourably released. The veteran's service card is more than just a piece of plastic in a veteran's wallet. It is a tangible symbol of service to our country. Because it does not expire, the card encourages a lasting affiliation with the armed forces.

As the Minister of National Defence noted at the launch, current CAF members can feel confident knowing that although their military service might come to an end, their identity as a member will always endure and Canadians will always remember their service.

This government has made a commitment to improve the lives of members and veterans of the Canadian Armed Forces, not just after release but throughout their entire military career, from recruitment to retirement and beyond. Over the past three years, we have taken a number of measures to do that. We have invested nearly \$10 billion dollars since 2016 in increased benefits and enhanced services for veterans and their families, and yes, part way through each year the department goes back to Treasury Board to request supplementary funds to ensure that no veteran goes without any of the critical programs on which he or she relies. Because these are generous forecasts, they often result in funds returning to the consolidated fund at the end of the fiscal year, the very fund that will ensure that no matter how many veterans and family members apply for benefits and services, those eligible will receive them. Let us not get caught up in the technicalities of accounting.

Let us continue to honour and commemorate our veterans' achievements, courage and sacrifice and let us remain focused and committed to the well-being of veterans and their families.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, the parliamentary secretary said "let us not get caught up in the technicalities", and I do not want to get weighed down there either. The government is patting itself on the back, saying how great it is serving our veterans. The reality is that veterans waiting for their disability benefits applications to be decided on is getting longer and longer. The Liberals can say as much as they want about how much they are spending. It sounds great, but if veterans cannot access services or get the benefits, it does not matter.

Business of Supply

The government needs to hire the case workers and staff that were fired under the Conservatives. It has hired a few of them, but not the full amount. The Prime Minister promised that there would be no more lapsed spending. Maybe the member could reply to that.

•(1630)

Mrs. Alaina Lockhart: First, Madam Speaker, I would like to remind my colleague, as I mentioned in my speech, that the Government of Canada is already putting those funds into a consolidated fund that can be used year after year. Second, we will be supporting the motion.

I want to also recognize that there is more work to do, but our government has shown that commitment with the commitment of \$42 million toward service delivery. We have reopened nine veterans offices closed by the Conservatives. We have hired 470 front-line workers back, including 260 caseworkers. Our outreach to veterans in the new programs that have been introduced have contributed to 31% more veterans coming forward for services.

It is a new day for veterans. We are committed to working with them to ensure they do have what they need to successfully transition to civilian life.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Madam Speaker, in a recent Order Paper question, it was shown that since 2016, the government spent almost \$40 million fighting veterans in court. This in spite of the fact that the Prime Minister made a promise, as he stood in Belleville with his hand over his heart, with veterans and many members of his caucus as a backdrop, that veterans should never have to fight their government in court.

The Order Paper question is clear. During the time the Liberal government has been in power, for a two year period from 2016 to 2018, it spent close to \$40 million fighting veterans in court.

Does the hon. member think this is a good issue to be spending money on when a promise was made by the Prime Minister that no veterans should have to fight their government in court?

Mrs. Alaina Lockhart: Madam Speaker, I want to reiterate that our government is committed to providing veterans and their families with the care and support they need, and we have proven that.

We have delivered a pension for life. We have reopened nine offices. We have hired 270 new staff. We have put forward a joint suicide prevention strategy, created a veterans emergency fund, invested in new career transition services, created education and training benefits, expanded the medical tax credit for psychiatric service dogs and established a centre of excellence for PTSD research.

The needs of our veterans are changing and our government is responding. We are listening to veterans and providing the services they require.

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Madam Speaker, I think I heard the parliamentary secretary say her government would be supporting today's motion, which is good.

I have a very specific question. The government has not yet met 12 of the 24 service standards it set for itself. If it is in fact following the spirit and the letter of this motion to allocate those funds, when

does the government expect to meet the 24 standards it set for itself with respect to meeting the needs of veterans?

Mrs. Alaina Lockhart: Madam Speaker, I also cite for the other member on the other side who mentioned that in the spirit of transparency, we have set those service standards. As I mentioned, we have made an investment of \$42 million toward service delivery. We will continue working to ensure that we meet those service delivery standards.

[Translation]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): It is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the questions to be raised at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Courtenay—Alberni, The Environment; the hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, International Trade; and the hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, Employment.

[English]

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with my good friend from Elmwood—Transcona this afternoon.

I would like to give proper credit and due to my friend from Courtenay—Alberni who followed John Rafferty, the first one to pursue this question. John was an NDP MP for Thunder Bay—Rainy River. He was able to ask this specific question, an important technique we have here as parliamentarians, to essentially to follow the money. We see the promises.

Governments are self-congratulatory and self-promoting. When they make an announcement of a certain amount of money going toward a certain cause, they like to talk about it. Many Canadians are left with a feeling that the money will actually be spent. Not always. When it comes to veterans, not ever. It is what we have now discovered is lapsed spending. Sometimes lapsed spending can be just almost a rounding error. A large department spending a lot of money can be off by less than half a per cent and money one way or the other needs to be lapsed back into the government.

When we look at Veterans Affairs in particular, we start to see a pattern where year after year it has a large amount of lapsed spending. I will quote the Prime Minister, which is always helpful to do in debates like this. When he was campaigning for the job of Prime Minister in 2015 in August, he said, "They" meaning the Conservatives, "left unspent more than \$1 billion that Parliament allocated for veteran support. Canadians know that this is wrong." Canadians knew this is wrong and they kicked the Conservatives out of office.

It almost becomes cynical when the government year after year allocates a certain amount of money without any intention of spending it. Then at the end of the year, it says that lo and behold, it has some extra money which it can shuffle out the door to something else and announce money once, or twice or three times and leave Canadians with the impression that the job is being done.

Business of Supply

However, veterans are coming forward year after year, saying they phoned the hotline to look for those services they were promised to deal with incredibly serious things. People coming back from theatre of war face physical challenges. There are enormous mental and spiritual costs to our veterans. They phone the hotline and when they eventually get through, after the labyrinth of things that can sometimes take weeks, they are told to wait weeks or months more. We have to understand that when the funding is not there, when there are not the workers available to help that veteran out and delays are caused, that whatever difficulty the veteran is dealing with gets worse, be it physical, be it mental, be it spiritual, and the costs can be extreme.

In my riding in northwestern B.C., I will be attending Remembrance Day ceremonies this year in Kitimat with Branch 250 in Terrace with my friends of Branch 13. The stories we get from our veterans, particularly from the more recently returning veterans from the Afghan mission and from some other deployments, are more than heartbreaking. It is right to be broken and to feel the pain of what these veterans have gone through. It is infuriating when we find out, because of that lack of funding or those delays, that pain, which is devastating in its initial form, becomes so much worse. Veterans end up not fighting one war but two. The first one is the engagement that we asked them to undertake on our behalf. I do not think there is anything more sacred or more serious than the vote we take in Parliament for the deployment of our troops overseas and put them in harm's way. The second battle they go into is often with their government, not for anything extra, not for anything special but simply what they were promised.

My friend from Courtenay—Alberni has revealed to us the lapsed spending just since the Liberals came to office, money that was promised to be spent but was not spent. It now totals \$372 million. That is pretty terrible. However, we also heard the Prime Minister say this last year to a wounded vet who lost a leg in Afghanistan. He was asking for the services he and his comrades were promised. The Prime Minister of Canada, talking about court cases the government was continuing to fight, said, “Why are we still fighting certain veterans groups in court? Because they're asking for more than we are able to give right now.” The argument of why the government was taking veterans groups to court, fighting them there and spending money there, was because there was insufficient money to provide for those veterans and their comrades the services they were promised. That is brutal in and of itself. It means the government was not allocating enough money to meet the service commitment it has made to our veterans.

•(1635)

However, then we found out that the statement was not even true. There was money that was allocated that was not being spent, year after year, in a cynical pattern. They wonder why a prime minister would say this to a wounded vet who is standing in front of him at a town hall. Town halls are good and it is good for the Prime Minister to be out, but then to turn to a wounded vet who is missing a leg and say that those people are asking for too much, that they were asking for “more than we can afford”, was his specific comment.

Meanwhile, we knew in that year when he was talking, money was being returned back to Ottawa that had been promised to veterans. Clearly, that was not true. That the Prime Minister was

accusing the Conservatives of using that same tactic, and saying how wrong that was and how Canadians disagreed with them, and campaigning that he would be different and change it, was infuriating. The Conservatives came in saying they were going to do better for our vets, and they did not. The Liberals came in saying they were going to do better for our vets, and are not.

We see now today, finally just in the last five minutes after four hours of debate, the Liberals got the note that the pressure had been sufficiently building. We have been hearing about it in my offices in Skeena in the northwest of B.C. and I am sure Liberals have as well. People are asking how can they not support this motion. It simply says to spend the money they promised for veterans services, and if they do not, then to not send the money back to the treasury but to hold the money and start to change the way they are delivering programs.

As I just pointed out for my Liberal colleague, the government set 24 standards and it is meeting 12 of them. One would suspect that maybe a lack of resources is the problem, the reason for not meeting the other 12. These are the standards that the government set for itself and it is meeting half of them. We think that if it is resources, is there something we can do about that? We can then actually put some true meaning to the words we say at the beginning of Remembrance Week that we seek to honour our veterans, we seek to serve them, we seek to give them a bit back after they have given so much to this country.

The words are important. I do not know about my colleagues, but I find the Remembrance Day speeches that I do to be some of the most difficult because they are often in front of schools. We are often talking to young people who, for the vast majority, thank God, have no experience with war whatsoever. Now there is a growing group of young Canadians who are coming from conflict zones. We speak to them on Remembrance Day and it has a significant meaning. However, to many Canadian children, thankfully they have no experience, nor do their parents or in many cases their grandparents have any experience at war.

Business of Supply

To try to talk about Remembrance Day, 100 years after the ending of the First World War for example, is to try to bridge a gap, so we use big words: we honour; we remember; lest we forget. We make a commitment, year after year on the 11th month, the 11th day at the 11th hour, to each other as Canadians, recognizing not just the sacrifices of the past but the sacrifices of today. There is no real compensation we can give these veterans. There is no amount of money for the damage and the hurt they have gone through because perpetrating a war is unbelievably difficult, painful and excruciating in many cases, so we do not celebrate that. We do not celebrate war; we commemorate, we honour the sacrifices made.

One of the small things we here in Parliament can do is try to keep our promises. We in opposition are not here just to oppose a government that is failing on whatever services we deem to be necessary, but to also propose, as my friend from Courtenay—Alberni did, a solution to a problem that has been systemic year after year, that Veterans Affairs is unable, or worse unwilling, to get the money out the door.

If all veterans were receiving the services they were promised and there was just too much money being allocated, that would be one problem. That is a good problem to have, but that is not the problem we have in this country. All of us in our offices have had veterans come in and say to us that this is what was promised, that these are the services they were expecting and that with the delays, the services are not coming to meet that promise.

Therefore, on this Remembrance Day and in this Remembrance Week, let us know that we are doing something right together. Let us know that we are going to make things better together, because that is what they did for us. They did something together that was so important that we respect and we honour. Let us back up those words with actions. Let us support this motion and make veterans as proud of us, a little bit, as we are of them.

• (1645)

Mr. Darrell Samson (Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech. Even though he had a second shot at it, he did very well. There is no question about that. I am glad he touched on a number of issues that are extremely important to veterans.

We reopened nine offices and made commitments to veterans with the education benefit and the pension for life. We have really invested where we need to, and we are going to continue to do so. That is why we are going to vote in favour of this motion, because it is a very important motion and we know it is the right thing to do.

The only question I have is this. During the last election in 2015, the leader of the NDP said he was going to have a balanced budget. What is their leader saying now for the election next year? Is it going to be balanced budget? If it is, then there will be major cuts, and if there are, I would like my colleague to share those with us now.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Madam Speaker, as tempted as I am to reveal the New Democrat's platform for the 2019 election to everyone here today, that would require us to have that platform right now. Similarly, no other party now knows what they will be offering Canadians come the next election.

It is always tempting to take shots. I have taken my fair share. If we can agree to the principle that we have here today, that the money that Veterans Affairs is unable, unwilling, or whatever the case may be, to get out the door to our veterans can no longer serve as an excuse for the department somehow clawing back that money, we can change the behaviour. We can only change the behaviour if we change the rules. One of the rules that we aim to change here today is to allow no more lapsed spending and no more lack of service provision to create extra money at the end of the year. That is the way it is done. If we change that rule, we can change the lives of veterans. That is what we all want to do. We want a veteran to pick up the phone or to go into one of those offices and receive the services we promised them. That seems like a worthwhile cause. We can all go to our veterans ceremonies, not just on November 11, but every day of the year and say that we did something together. I think that is all that vets and their families are looking for.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I listened to what my colleague had to say, particularly in response to the last question. I agree with him that if there is one area we can commit ourselves to acting on, it is making sure that we properly fund and take care of our veterans.

However, let us not forget the fact that when we talk about a budget, we do budgeting in a fiscally responsible way. When we spend 93% of that budget, we can say that we have done a pretty good job on the budget. However, if we go over that and end up spending 105% of the amount budgeted, it is arguable that we failed at creating a good, fiscally responsible budget.

In the same vein as the previous question asked about the NDP's commitment to balancing the budget in 2015, would the hon. member agree or disagree that it would have been absolutely necessary to spend every single pot of money that had been allocated in the budgeting process? Is that how they were going to balance the budget with the platform they had presented in 2015?

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Madam Speaker, that is interesting coming from the party that said it would have small deficits for a short period of time. It is interesting because it is also coming from a party that just spent \$4.5 billion on a 65-year-old pipeline, albeit I forget where that promise was in their platform. I will look for the documentation. Maybe it was there, but I suspect it was not. If my friend would like to go through the 2015 election cycle again and check promises again, fine.

All we are looking to do here today is something positive. I would remind my Liberal friends that we are doing something together. Is that not nice? Does that not feel good? Would it not feel good if we could go and look veterans in the eyes and say we are not going to have this lapsed spending circus anymore? We are not going to do this offensive practice of budgeting this much—wink, wink, nod, nod, and “Don't worry, we're going to claw a whole bunch of it back”. That is what Veterans Affairs has been doing for over a decade. We are going to stop it, together.

Business of Supply

As for cheap shots trying to re-run the last election, I will let them do that. What I want to do is to focus on moving this thing forward, as my friend from Courtenay—Alberni has done today. Is that not a nice thing? Let us all celebrate that.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise on this first day of Veterans Week to speak to a motion that is exactly about trying to do more for Canada's veterans and trying to ensure that they get the services they need when they need them.

That is something we want to see done all year long, not just around Remembrance Day. One of the important elements of Remembrance Day is that it is an occasion for us to reflect on the horrors and sacrifices of war; to try, as best we can, especially those of us who have not participated, to understand what goes into that; and to renew our commitment to making peace in the world and building peace in the world. We should also renew our commitment to helping those who have been in conflict zones and have come back, whose lives and family members' lives are affected by that experience and the fallout from it.

That is why this is a very timely motion. It is not because it has to do with the services and that this is important to talk about around this time of year. It is important all year long. This is the time of year when we reflect and renew our commitment to doing better.

I am very proud to come from northeast Winnipeg, where there is a strong tradition of remembrance at our three legions: the Transcona Legion Branch 7, which is my home legion; the Elmwood Legion Branch 9; and the Prince Edward Legion 81. Beyond the traditional remembrance that has gone on in northeast Winnipeg, lately we have also been participating very heavily in organizing “No Stone Left Alone” ceremonies, thanks to the leadership of some members in our community, such as George McCall, with the Elmwood Legion, and Peter Martin, from the Transcona Legion. These are ceremonies that bring school-aged children to cemeteries where veterans are buried to lay poppies at gravesites. It is done to try to establish a connection between our youth and that memory, because as generations pass from the great wars, that connection gets harder and harder to maintain.

That is why we need to double down on our efforts and remember how horrible it is for young people, to be sure, and for all of us, when we get involved in very large conflicts, such as the First and Second World Wars. There is some great work going on in northeast Winnipeg to that effect.

It helps to set some of the context for today's motion. If we recall, in the last Parliament, the government's relationship with veterans was seriously strained. We all remember when the then Minister of Veterans Affairs insulted a group of veterans who had come to meet with him and essentially kicked them out of his office.

That was just the tip of the iceberg. That was a sign of disrespect, but when it came to policy, the former government was closing offices and letting staff go. It also decided to take on veterans in court. The Equitas Society said that there was a special covenant between the government and its veterans. The government of the day decided to take the position that this was not, in fact, the case and spent a lot of money fighting veterans in court. We also heard about the \$1.1 billion in lapsed funding over the tenure of that government.

It was a campaign issue. It was a campaign issue in a way that, it is fair to say, veterans issues had not been before, not because it had not been discussed but because veterans groups were politically mobilized in a way the veterans community traditionally had not been, in part because they felt so mistreated by that particular government.

We saw the Liberals take up the issue on the campaign trail. With respect to the lapsed funding of the previous government, we heard the Prime Minister say on the campaign trail, “They left unspent more than \$1 billion that Parliament allocated for veteran support. Canadians know that this is wrong.” That was something the Prime Minister said at the time he was running for the job.

He also said in the Liberal platform document that the Liberal plan would “ensure that no veteran has to fight the government for the support and compensation they have earned”, referring to the Equitas lawsuit. That is on page 49 of the Liberal platform, a memory perhaps some Liberals in the House have suppressed, because it is accompanied by a photo of the member for Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill.

● (1650)

The Liberals in government have been quite different from the Liberals on the campaign trail. Despite the Prime Minister saying that lapsed funding was something that was wrong, that needed to be addressed and that the department needed to work to ensure the money was spent properly, the Liberals have already lapsed \$372 million in just three years.

Liberals are failing to meet 12 out of 24 self-identified service targets. For instance, only 43% of veterans who apply for disability benefits are hearing back within 16 weeks. Only 56% of veterans who apply for the earnings loss benefit hear back within the four weeks that has been set as a reasonable target. Forty-five per cent of veterans applying for the long-term care program are hearing back within 10 weeks and the rest hear back within a longer time period. Of course, we also know that the government, far from terminating the court battle against veterans, decided to keep it up after what was a very explicit promise to drop it. That is what the quote in the platform was about: that veterans should not have to fight the government to receive their benefits, but alas, here we are and that lawsuit continues and veterans are having to continue to fight the government in court.

Business of Supply

What we are making today is quite a modest proposal to say that we know veterans are not being served in a way everybody in this House and in Canada would like them to be served, so we are trying to be constructive. We are trying to find a solution to enhance that service. Because of the \$1.1 billion that lapsed under the Conservatives and the \$327 million that has lapsed so far under the Liberals, we know there is reliably more money to spend within the existing Veterans Affairs envelope. We should be doing a better job of making sure that the money gets spent for the purposes intended, which is to serve veterans better.

When veterans are calling to receive information about how to apply for their benefits and are having to wait hours on the phone, we know it is because there are not enough people to answer the phone. The answer to that is to hire and train more people to do that work. That is not a great mystery, or I certainly hope it is not a great mystery to anybody in the House. If the question is where the money would come from or how we would find the money to do this, we know that in the last two years over \$140 million has lapsed. A lot of people can be hired for that amount to answer a phone, listen compassionately and provide good advice on what those veterans need to do and where they need to go to access those services.

When we see tens of millions of dollars unspent year after year, it is not a quibble about accounting practices, which is what we have heard from the government today. I thank the government for its respect of our knowledge of good accounting, but I want it to know that this is not just our excellent accounting skills. It is not just a little quibble about how we label things. This is about the fact that there are not enough people to answer the phone to give the right advice to veterans who need to access services when we have the money to be able to hire and train those people, because we know each year tens of millions of dollars are going unspent.

My colleague from Courtenay—Alberni has quite rightly said that if we know the money is not going to be accessed and we know the services are not going to be accessed, and we have a long track record now of knowing that the money is not spent, then we should use it to hire staff to enable veterans to better access those services. That just makes sense.

It has been interesting to hear the debate today. It seems we are coming to a consensus that this is something everybody is going to support. I am very glad to hear it because it makes a lot of sense. Let us do this. Let us move forward. Let us try to minimize some of the cheap shots that have been going on today. This is a common sense idea. We know we can do better for Canada's veterans, and it is time we started doing it.

• (1655)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, earlier on I asked a question of a different NDP colleague. I do not for a second question that the NDP is extremely worried and feeling compassionate about the role that we play as parliamentarians in delivering for our veterans. However, I did ask a question earlier about why it was that the NDP voted against the budget implementation act, which had the lifetime pension for veterans in it. The response I got was that there was a whole bunch of stuff in the budget and New Democrats had to vote against it because of all the other stuff.

I have the same question for the hon. member. Why was it that the NDP voted against that budget implementation act? If his answer is the same as his colleague's, could he at least reference a time when he stood up in the House or otherwise made it publicly known that he was going to vote against it but was displeased with the fact that he could not vote against this particular item in the budget separately?

• (1700)

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Madam Speaker, I would encourage the member to pay more attention to the proceedings of the House. If he did, what he would realize is that the NDP has been up on its feet raising points of order trying to divide sections of these large omnibus budget bills into separate votes for exactly that purpose.

It is why New Democrats do not believe in omnibus legislation in the first place. It is why we were disappointed when the Liberals, who in the last Parliament said they did not believe in omnibus legislation, decided to use it as a tool in this Parliament. It is why we are going to continue getting up on our feet demanding separate votes. Beyond separate votes on different provisions within budget implementation legislation, we want them divided so that we can actually have the appropriate amount of time to study those initiatives, study them in detail in the appropriate place, at committee, and then have a separate vote on them.

I am on my feet now. I have been on my feet before. New Democrats have been on their feet many times and will continue to call for those separate votes. I encourage the member to support us in that endeavour.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Salaberry—Suroît, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech. I am pleased to participate in today's debate on the sums allocated.

Hundreds of millions of dollars are sitting in Veterans Affairs Canada's coffers, yet branches like Branch 146 in Beauharnois say that, when they call Veterans Affairs Canada, they have to wait a long time for someone to take their call and answer their questions.

As everyone knows, \$372 million has been languishing in those coffers for the past three years. Hundreds of people could be hired to answer veterans' questions. Veterans deserve those services.

I think it is time for the government to invest and spend that money. The Conservatives cut 1,000 jobs, and the Liberals say they rehired 475 employees. That means more than half have yet to be rehired to ensure that the people who risked their lives in battle get the services and respect they deserve.

Business of Supply

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Madam Speaker, every now and then, my constituents tell me that, when we are debating issues in the House, it can be hard for them because we are talking about such huge sums of money. We talk about hundreds of millions of dollars, we talk about \$4 billion.

I think the purpose of today's motion is really simple. We know that when veterans call to get the services they are entitled to, nobody picks up the phone.

We also know that, from one year to the next, a lot of money just sits in government coffers. We simply want that money to be spent in such a way that, when veterans call, someone is there to listen to them and give them important advice.

[*English*]

Hon. Seamus O'Regan (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will start this evening by sincerely thanking the member for Courtenay—Alberni. The motion we are discussing today, cloaked in the guise of financial reporting standards, cuts to the core of this government's commitment to the men and women who have bravely served this country.

As we draw closer to the centennial anniversary of the armistice that was supposed to end all wars, it is important that we consider the commitment we owe to those men who fought a century ago and to the men and women who have fought and protected us since.

Veterans Affairs' entire foundation is set around its responsibility to ensure that veterans and their families receive the respect, support, care and economic opportunities necessary as they transition to a post-military life.

• (1705)

[*Translation*]

Let us be clear. The support that our government gives members of the Canadian Armed Forces, veterans and their families begins the moment they are recruited and continues throughout their careers and their lives. We are ensuring that each of them has access to any program they need for as long as they need it.

[*English*]

The motion today is based on the premise that lapsed funding in Veterans Affairs Canada is in and of itself a problem. The motion seeks to address a concern that lapsed funding creates a use-it-or-lose-it scenario for the department. The assumption seems to be that when there are lapsed funds, there must be programs or services that have been underfunded or not delivered. This could not be further from the truth, which is why there is no need to change the accounting for a process that works for veterans. However, there is an opportunity today to explain and perhaps educate members on the root cause of lapsed funds.

Whether 10 veterans come forward or 10,000, no veteran who is eligible for a benefit will be turned away because we do not have the funds. To ensure that is the case, we go through the annual estimates process and forecast how many veterans will avail themselves of our benefits.

Given that demand can change throughout the year, our programs are quasi-statutory, so that the government does not need to come

back to Parliament if we exceed our forecast of the demand from veterans. If a veteran is eligible for a benefit, that veteran will get it. When that pendulum swings the other way and there are fewer veterans seeking a particular benefit, the money stays in consolidated revenue ready to be used the next year.

Lapsed funding is not a new phenomenon, but it is critically important to distinguish the causes of those lapsed funds. This government has generated lapsed funding because, simply put, our estimates of the level of demand for services have been high. That is distinguishable from the previous government, which lapsed over \$1 billion while cutting front-line staff, closing offices and letting the new veterans charter wither unchanged on the vine.

Simply put, one can generate lapsed funds and attendant cuts by placing barriers between veterans and the programs or services to which they are entitled.

The previous government demonstrated from the outset that it wanted to balance the budget and that veterans and their families were not immune from its red pen. We thought those cuts were unconscionable.

That is why our first acts in our first budget were to increase the disability award to a maximum of \$360,000, where it should have been for years, and increase income replacement for ill and injured veterans to 90% of their pre-release salary. We reopened all of the offices the Conservatives closed. We started to staff up Veterans Affairs again after nearly a quarter of the workforce was wiped out by the Conservatives. We expanded eligibility to programs veterans were asking for. We made it easier to access dignified funeral and burial services. And we did not stop there.

In the budget of the following year, we introduced our new education and training benefit, which applies not only to ill and injured veterans but also to those leaving the Canadian Armed Forces for any reason after six years of service.

We reformed the broken career transition services that the Conservatives had ample opportunity to fix by changing it from cutting a cheque for \$1,000 and saying "good luck on the job hunt" to a comprehensive program veterans and their families could access for job training and job-finding assistance.

Last December I was thrilled to finally unveil the new pension for life, which delivers on our campaign promise to provide a monthly tax-free payment for life in recognition of pain and suffering. This pension for life also simplifies many of the other benefits we offer, making it easier to apply for and access the resources veterans and their families need and deserve. It is no surprise, then, that since coming into office, we have marked a 37% increase in applications for programs and benefits. Veterans are coming forward again to get the help and the support they need in their post-military lives and careers.

Business of Supply

We are getting better at forecasting the budget, but due to the nature of the demand-driven programs and services at Veterans Affairs Canada, we will never be able to estimate with 100% accuracy the exact funds required for every program. Looking at the types of services and benefits we provide and the continually evolving demographics that we serve, this approach cannot change.

There are approximately 649,300 veterans in Canada and 95,000 serving members of the Canadian Armed Forces. Veterans Affairs provides services to nearly 200,000 veterans, family members, RCMP members and others who require support.

Ranging in age from 18 to 100, we serve traditional veterans who served in the Korean War or earlier and modern-day veterans who served after the Korean War. To say we serve a changing and diverse population is an understatement, and each one of them has different needs.

This is why we have seen a significant increase in demand for programs and services, and that is a good thing. It means veterans are coming forward and getting the help they need.

In order to respond to this increased demand, the department has to request additional funds in the middle of the year. As many of my colleagues in the House are aware, these are the supplementary estimates. The department asks Treasury Board for more money, because we have more veterans who want more of the programs and services they are entitled to and, indeed, they deserve.

This is why our services are demand-driven, so whether it is 10 or 10,000 veterans coming forward, they will receive those services. Instead of going back every day when we see another veteran come forward, the department estimates how many people will access benefits and how much money is needed. It is not an exact science. This process guarantees that whether veterans come forward this year or next year or the year after that, we will always have the resources available for them and their families to access programs and services.

If we overestimate in our zeal to ensure that everyone who comes forward requiring that service or benefit receives it, then so be it. Our primary concern is to ensure that the funds are available if they are required, period. Government policy dictates that any money that is not used for its identified purpose by year end must be returned. It is as simple as that. Lapsed funds do not indicate lost money. They do not indicate penny-pinching at the expense of veterans.

Perhaps I have to remind my hon. colleague who put forward this motion that penny-pinching at the expense of veterans would look like a promise to balance the budget no matter what, to balance the budget come hell or high water, a promise he and his colleagues ran on in the last election.

Almost 20% of new funds in the last three budgets have been for veterans and their families, funds they would not have received if the New Democrats were running the show. We know this is a source of confusion amongst veterans and their families, amongst stakeholders, and amongst the general public. This is why we have been addressing it at town halls and stakeholder meetings right across this country.

Just last week we held our national stakeholder summit here in Ottawa. We covered this exact subject in depth to ensure that participants understood the process. We know they have questions. We wanted to explain exactly how an idea goes from a concept to implementation, from gaps or issues being identified to research and analysis to the memorandum to cabinet that paves the way to implement a new program or benefit.

The department's programs are ongoing, and each year adjustments are made to ensure that we can provide for all veterans and their families who may be entitled to benefits. My department will continue to provide programs and services that adapt to the changing needs of veterans and their families. We will continue to review these programs and services to see where things can be improved.

● (1710)

When we came to office, we knew we needed change. Veterans made it clear that there were problems, and they wanted them fixed. They deserved to have them fixed. The Prime Minister tasked us with an aggressive mandate to address these problems, from improving veterans financial support and reopening offices to streamlining the transition from military to civilian life and overhauling how the department's services are delivered. Three years later, we are on track or have delivered on all of them. However, make no mistake, wholesale change was needed to accomplish this, and that could not happen overnight, not if we wanted to do it right.

We also knew that a full conversation was needed. We could not start making decisions on an individual basis. We had to open a dialogue with those who were affected, and that is what we have been doing.

We have heard that service delivery is an issue, and we have been diligently taking steps to resolve this. As a starting point, we opened 10 offices to provide better in-person services to veterans and their families, in addition to hiring over 470 new staff, which has included close to 200 case managers.

Service delivery is now focused on individual veterans: their circumstances, needs and strengths and those of their families. The department is streamlining the processes for applying for and delivering benefits. It is also ensuring that veterans and their families get information they need about the programs, services and benefits they are entitled to, which has been an issue in the past. Some veterans simply do not know what is available to them.

Business of Supply

We also increased service in the north, and in 2017, our staff made 12 trips to Iqaluit, Yellowknife and Whitehorse to meet with veterans and their families. Our staff is committed to ensuring that veterans and their families are better informed, better served and better supported. The approach is working. Applications are on the rise. This is a good thing. It means that more veterans are applying for the benefits they have earned through their service to Canada. It is also why the department is focusing on improving service delivery and streamlining the application process.

This government made a commitment to make it easier for the men and women who have served in uniform to access the benefits they deserve, and we have spent \$10 billion in three years to do just that. Starting with increasing the disability award and the earnings loss benefit and expanding the career impact allowance, we are putting more money in the pockets of veterans and caregivers. We also supported a continuum of mental health services, introduced new education and training benefits and expanded a range of services available to the families of medically released veterans.

While there has been a lot of change at Veterans Affairs, the steadfast commitment to veterans and their well-being has remained the same. It is that commitment to wanting to ensure overall well-being that drove the need to take a step back to look at how they could get to where they wanted and needed to be. They knew that well-being was defined as a veteran with purpose who is financially secure, safely housed, in good physical and mental health, highly resilient in the face of change, well integrated in the community and proud of his or her legacy. That fuelled the new vision of a comprehensive approach to veteran well-being to address all aspects of wellness.

In looking at the many factors, we can all agree, without a doubt, that without financial security, it is hard to focus on anything at all. That is why we pushed to reintroduce lifelong pensions. Last December, this government announced plans to restore the pension for life for ill and injured veterans. With the return of a monthly pension option, the pension for life recognizes and compensates veterans for disabilities resulting from a service-related illness or injury with a combination of benefits that provide recognition, income support and stability.

One of the key new benefits is pain and suffering compensation. This is a monthly, tax-free, lifelong payment recognizing a member's or veteran's pain and suffering caused by a disability resulting from a service-related illness or injury. The monthly amount can be cashed out for a lump sum, giving members and veterans the flexibility to choose what works best for them and their families.

● (1715)

Additional support for those with service-related severe and permanent impairments causing a barrier to re-establishment into post-service life is available through the additional pain and suffering compensation, provided as a monthly tax-free benefit.

The income replacement benefit is a monthly program that will replace six current benefits and will provide income support for those facing barriers to re-establishment caused by health problems resulting primarily from service. Additionally, veterans who are able to join the workforce may earn up to \$20,000 per year before any reduction to their IRB payment.

Set to come into force on April 1 of next year, the pension for life combines what veterans have been asking for with the most up-to-date research and understanding of the well-being of veterans. More important, it will become an integral part of that comprehensive approach to the well-being of veterans, reinforcing all the programs and services available at Veterans Affairs, of which mental health is a priority.

Pension for life was announced with budget 2018, which reflected other commitments of our government when it came to better supporting veterans and their families. In addition to the \$24.4 million over five years for cemetery and grave maintenance to eliminate the current backlog of grave repairs, budget 2018 also committed \$42.8 million over two years to increase service delivery capacity, building off the \$78.1 million already invested over the last two years.

Make no mistake, Veterans Affairs continues to strive to provide faster, more efficient and higher quality service for our veterans. However, in our efforts to accomplish this, we must rely on our expenditures forecasting to ensure no veteran or family member goes without. That will always result in some degree of lapsed funding. That is simply the nature of the government's accounting process.

I think all of us here can agree that Canada's veterans deserve respect, financial security and fair treatment. I assure members that this government is committed to treating our veterans with the care, compassion and respect they have earned. This government will never cease in our efforts to improve the lives of our veterans and their families.

● (1720)

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, if the veterans sitting at home heard that speech, they would think it was a victory, that it was all good, that everything was sorted out and they could all go home as there was no problem at Veterans Affairs. We could be a little more humble and transparent.

When we think about what is going on at Veterans Affairs, there is a growing backlog for veterans who need their disability benefit application opened up. The government's set standard of 16 weeks is only being met 43% of the time. The Liberals have talked about hiring back staff. They have not even hired back half the staff that were let go by the Conservatives, which is helping to contribute to this backlog.

The minister is also dismissing the importance of lapsed spending and using it to carry forward for veterans who need it.

Business of Supply

In the 2015 election campaign, the Prime Minister said, “They left unspent more than \$1 billion that Parliament allocated for veteran support. Canadians know that this is wrong”. The Minister of Public Safety had similar comments.

We are looking for the minister to commit to the content of the motion, that all lapsed spending will be used toward those 12 standards that are not being met by the government.

Hon. Seamus O'Regan: Madam Speaker, as I said in my statement, lapsed funding is necessary. Lapsed funding is a way for us to ensure we always have the money available for veterans when and where they need it. It is money that we have consistently reinvested back into veterans and their families since we have taken office. We have seen an influx of new funding for veterans and their families not seen in decades. Our record on this is good. I would say, with all humility, as the member recognizes and I agree with him, are we there yet? Far from it. We have a long way to go.

People should be held accountable for their actions. The actions of the previous government with respect to what it did to this department and the benefits and services for veterans is frankly unconscionable, and it will take us more time to get through it.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Madam Speaker, I appreciated hearing from the minister and his perspective on how well the government is doing with our veterans. However, there is a significant disconnect here, because when I speak with veterans, and a number of them to whom the government turns for advice, I do not hear that same level of satisfaction with where things are at, especially in regards to the promises that the government made when it was in the process of campaigning and reaching out across the country to indicate what the Liberals were willing to do for whomever to get their vote.

Of course, we know that those involved in Equitas spent a great deal of time communicating directly with key people who were running on that side of the floor in regards to their portfolio on Veterans Affairs to the point where they were getting calls at Christmastime to make sure they were doing well. They had actual written copy of what was going to be in that platform that they signed off on, and now are very hurt, upset, disgusted and disappointed with what the government promised them in lifelong pensions and what they have actually seen to be received in the upcoming year.

My question to the minister is: Where is the disconnect? Why is there so much unhappiness with what he is saying will be coming forward versus what the veterans themselves, who they actually communicated with, actually feel has come forward on that—

• (1725)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I have to allow for other questions.

The hon. minister.

Hon. Seamus O'Regan: Madam Speaker, I can only say that if the hon. member is troubled by statements that veterans are making now, I can only imagine how troubled she must have been when she was in government.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: I was not.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): First of all, I would ask the member to refrain from speaking back and forth. She has had the opportunity to have the floor. It is now the minister's turn, and I would ask him to address his questions and comments to the chair.

Hon. Seamus O'Regan: Madam Chair, I would invite the hon. member to speak to her colleagues who sit on that side and ask what they were doing as men and women were returning from Afghanistan. It was considered to be a way of thanking our veterans by gutting the department, by cutting benefits and services by billions of dollars. I can produce the numbers, I can produce the record or we can actually listen to veterans.

I can tell the member that while ministers of the previous government may have walked away from veterans when they were asked questions, we have gone out to 45 town halls so far this year, and counting. We listen.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to thank the minister for his comments today and ask him about how the staffing up is coming after having gone through the cutbacks of the previous Conservative government. Could he just give us an indication?

The member for Yorkton—Melville had mentioned the unhappiness of veterans. I walked down George Street in Sydney with 3,500 Cape Bretoners, veterans, their families, their friends and the community as a whole to protest the cutbacks that the previous Conservative government made, in closing the Veterans Affairs office in Sydney. One of the greatest days we had the year after we had power was when we went down and reopened the office in Sydney.

However, could the minister comment on where we are now with the ramping up of staff?

Hon. Seamus O'Regan: Madam Speaker, I would say it is still very much a challenge. The way the previous government treated veterans and their families was nothing short of deplorable, and it will take some time to get over this damage.

Of the 1,000 people who the Conservatives let go from that department, I guess in the interests of providing better services and benefits to veterans, it has been tough trying to hire them back. These are talented people, often bilingual, and we have a lot of work to do, as the service delivery measurements show, particularly on bilingual servicing.

It will take time to get over the 10 years of damage that was done to Veterans Affairs Canada by the previous government, but we are getting there as quickly as we possibly can.

Mr. Gord Johns: Madam Speaker, here it is Remembrance Week. It is an opportunity to remind ourselves of the duty we have to honour our veterans and to make sure they are getting the services they so deserve.

Business of Supply

This motion today is in the spirit of goodwill and of all of Parliament working together, while acknowledging our failures to deliver services to veterans in a timely fashion. What we are calling for is that when Parliament allocates money and votes to support a budget, the government must make sure that veterans are getting the services they so deserve, that veterans will actually get that money allocated to them.

We are asking that when there is lapsed funding, the government will carry that money forward to attack those service targets and get rid of the backlog that is happening right now and do the right thing, to serve our veterans. That is what we are asking today.

Will the minister support our motion and ensure that all lapsed funding will go toward doing the right thing, serving the very people whom we are here to honour, who have put everything on the line for all of us?

• (1730)

Hon. Seamus O'Regan: Madam Speaker, I would say that I perhaps would contest the spirit this is said to have been brought forward with. While I welcome the opportunity to talk about how lapsed funding works, I think hon. members here know that. What I dispute is the inference that somehow we are taking that money and putting it somewhere else. We are not. That money will always go toward benefits and services afforded to and deserved by our veterans.

I do not like muddying the waters, because veterans and their families have enough change going on. We have added to that change with improvements to the programs. I am not terribly happy about the fact there has been an attempt to muddy or politicize this, but I do understand that this is a good opportunity to talk about how lapsed funding works and for veterans and their families to understand that that money for benefits and services will always be there for them.

Ms. Tracey Ramsey (Essex, NDP): Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Trois-Rivières.

I am pleased to rise in strong support of our NDP motion brought forward by the member for Courtenay—Alberni. It is based on a question on the Order Paper in which he asked a question and it was revealed that \$372 million has gone unspent by the Liberal government in the Veterans Affairs file.

I also want to acknowledge the hard work of our previous NDP member of Parliament, John Rafferty, who first highlighted the lapsed spending issue of the Conservatives when he discovered there was \$1.1 billion that was not spent on Veterans Affairs. I am pleased to hear that the Conservatives will be supporting our motion today to correct the past and ensure that this practice of leaving money on the table that could help veterans will be reversed.

All of us in the House today and throughout Remembrance Day will be wearing the poppy over our hearts to remind us of the brave men and women who have paid the ultimate sacrifice for our freedoms. We will be attending moving ceremonies in all of our ridings in the coming week. In our communities we will march, lay wreaths and speak of the ultimate price that has been paid by our veterans and their families. Even throughout social media, there are numerous ways for people to participate. People are sharing stories

of their relatives and their service, the symbols of our strong pride in Canadians, like the poppies we can now create and personalize with a family member's name or the names of others who have served our country. All of these ways of remembering are very important to keep the understanding of our freedom and how fragile it is, and to keep all of their memories alive.

However, we can and should do so much more. Most Canadians expect us in this chamber to respect the covenant that we have for men and women who have served our country. Today is an opportunity to do more than talk about our commitment to veterans. It is an opportunity to actually do something to improve the services veterans receive.

Every member in the House who is wearing a poppy today should be voting to carry forward this money. It is funding that would dramatically improve the lives of veterans and their families in my riding of Essex and throughout Canada from coast to coast to coast.

In the three years since the Liberals promised to restore the cuts that were made by the Conservatives, our veterans have been shortchanged to the tune of \$372 million which has gone unspent. The Conservatives closed nine regional Veterans Affairs offices, like the one in Windsor that served our communities in Essex. These offices were used by our veterans for services. They also cut 1,000 Veterans Affairs employees. The Liberals have managed to hire back less than half of those front-line workers to this point. The money we are talking about today could have hired back the full 1,000 and increased the services that veterans are receiving at these offices. Instead, we learned that the money has been left on the table.

Closing offices was a tragedy, and we are happy that the office is back open in Windsor. I joined the member for Windsor—Tecumseh and the member for Windsor West in celebration when it was reopened in our community. However, if it was fully funded, the level of service would dramatically improve. If the \$372 million that has been left on the table was spent, we would not have the backlog of services that we still see today.

What does it look like when \$372 million is not spent? We know that veterans are being put on hold on the phone for hours and are being redirected half a dozen times just to get to speak to the right person. There should not be wait times of six months before receiving an answer. That is what is happening. That is the reality for our veterans in Canada today. This backlog is growing. It is in the tens of thousands, and it grew another 10% in June. These are veterans who are waiting to get their disability benefits.

In fact, the government has set its own 24 service standards and shamefully is only on track to correct half of them, only 12 of its 24 service standards. The Prime Minister promised the government would provide one case worker for every 25 veterans, but the ratio remains as high as 1:39 in some regions of the country and 1:42 in cities such as Kingston, Thunder Bay and Calgary. Clearly, this money could go toward improving the standards the government has set for itself.

• (1735)

I just want to read a couple of the targets, and how far off they are from where we need to be.

Business of Supply

When people call our national contact centre network, they can expect to be connected with the next available analyst within two minutes. The target is that 80% of people who call would reach that within two minutes. The result is 66%. There is room for growth, for us to improve. Therefore, if people were hired out of the money that has lapsed, we would be able to improve the services on those calls.

One that is probably most egregious is that when people apply for VAC disability benefits, their decision will be made within 16 weeks. The target is again 80%. The 2016-17 result is 43%. Clearly, this money could be used to improve one of the government's own service standards that is woefully inadequate at this point. When only 43% of people are getting a decision made within 16 weeks, clearly there is room for improvement. What my colleague has found is some funds to be used in order to do that.

I have one more that I will read out, and I heard the minister speak about this. For the VAC career transition programs, the decision is to be made within four weeks. Again, the target is set at 80% and the 2016-17 result is 31%. Clearly, there is room for dramatic improvement.

This funding that has been lapsed and left on the table could be used to get to these targets faster to improve the service level for everyone in our country. We could clear all this backlog in a timely manner. We could answer calls. We could approve claims and improve the lives of our veterans. Veterans deserve our respect and the dignity of getting the services and the benefits they need quickly and efficiently. If members support this NDP motion, we can use this money being rolled over. It could be allocated to help Canadians, who expect that we use every dollar here in this House in the best possible way for our veterans.

The question that Canadians are asking today is, why is the government authorizing spending and then failing to spend it? This week, we will stand shoulder to shoulder with our communities to mark November 11 as Remembrance Day. However, we must do more and supporting this motion today is a step. I am disappointed to hear that the Liberals will not be supporting this motion, choosing instead to leave this money on the table unspent, and our thousands of veterans lingering in this backlog without services.

What Liberals are asking us to believe in this House today is that they have done enough. Until every veteran who serves our country is able to receive his or her benefits in a timely, meaningful way, then I would offer to the Liberals that they should find some humility today and understand the message they are sending to veterans. It is the same one that the Prime Minister gave when he stood in Edmonton at a town hall, where he told an Afghanistan vet who had lost his leg to an explosive device that they are asking for more than we are able to give right now. That is not the message to send to Canadians as we stand proudly in this House and honour veterans throughout this week, wearing the poppies to honour the men and women who deserve the \$372 million to be spent on improved services.

Today, this is an opportunity to help veterans and their families in a meaningful way. I implore Liberals to consider this wrong-headed, hurtful and insulting position to our veterans, and that they stand with the NDP, and all members of this House as we have heard

today, to put this unspent money back into the services that are desperately needed for our veterans.

Liberals have gone back on many election promises in these last three years. This cannot be one of those promises that are broken. It is beyond time to end the undesirable practice of lapsed funding. The Prime Minister himself promised this during the 2015 campaign, saying, "Canadians know that this is wrong." This is the time for us to make this right, and I hope that Liberals will vote with the NDP on this motion today to support our veterans.

● (1740)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, perhaps this is one of the downfalls of the format in which we debate in this chamber, but if the member had been paying attention to the debate she would know that we are actually in favour of the motion and have said that we are going to be voting in favour of it, despite the fact that in her speech she said that we apparently were not going to.

When it comes to prudent fiscal responsibility in the budget, we spent 93% of the allocated money for veterans in the last fiscal year. Does the member believe that spending 93% is a massive failure of the budgeting process, as the NDP is suggesting through this motion?

Ms. Tracey Ramsey: Mr. Speaker, pardon my confusion. I have been in the House all day, but I have heard Liberals flip-flopping all day long. If they have landed on a position to support this motion, I am very pleased to hear that. I say so because have certainly heard all different types of arguments and bafflegab today that has been difficult to interpret.

I am pleased that the Liberals will support the motion. Even though the member is saying that 93% of the allocated money has been spent, until we are spending 100% of the money allocated to our veterans, we cannot stand in the chamber and pat ourselves on the back. We have work to do.

That 7% is impactful. We are talking about \$372 million. I am pleased to hear that the Liberals will now, after many hours of debate, support this wonderful motion that we brought forward today.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend from Essex for her important work and for standing up for veterans in her riding. She often comes to me and talks about some of the challenges that veterans are facing in her riding, especially due to the backlog of disability benefits.

Business of Supply

Today we are trying to bring forward a solution that will change the lives of veterans and ensure that all money that has lapsed will go specifically towards attacking the 12 failures of the Liberal government to reach their service standards. We know that the Parliamentary Budget Officer says it can be done. It has not been done before. It is a really great opportunity for us to start with the Department of Veterans Affairs, for the very people who put everything on the line for all of us.

Could the member tell us what that could do for the backlog? We know that \$372 million could hire not just 475 staff at Veterans Affairs, but over 5,000 employees. I am not saying that that is where all of the money should go. We know we need to do everything we can to get rid of the backlog for disability benefits and address all 12 service standards that we have heard from the veterans ombudsman the department is failing to address.

Could the member speak about how this will make a difference for veterans in her riding, in the lives of the very people who serve our country and whom we owe all of our respect to?

Ms. Tracey Ramsey: Mr. Speaker, as I said during my speech, Windsor, which is the office that serves my riding of Essex, was closed for years under the Conservative government. We welcome the fact it has now been reopened.

However, we still have a long way to go. There is still this major backlog. There are people across our country who are being denied services.

I had someone from my riding write to me recently. They were talking about Donald Osborne, who is 95 and lives in Atlantic Canada. There was a news story on CTV about him. He is a World War II veteran who had been denied care by Veterans Affairs. My constituent wrote to me to say that regardless of policy, facts and rules, a World War II veteran had been denied services, the very services he fought for. He has fought for our freedoms, way of life and our heritage. He has seen and fought evil himself, and the constituent said he did not understand what was happening to our beloved country.

Until emails like this stop and we do not hear these stories of veterans being denied service, we have work to do in the House. I was very pleased to see this motion and I thank the member for Courtenay—Alberni for bringing this important issue forward. I do hope this principle will be applied across many different portfolios and departments. This issue of lapsed spending should not continue, because it is really confusing for Canadians. As we found out in this particular case with Veterans Affairs, a lot of money is being left on the table that Canadians are looking to have spent in their communities.

• (1745)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am grateful for the chance to speak on veterans issues in the House. Every time I rise on this issue, I do so not only with immense respect, but with great honour.

The motion we are debating today would be relevant at any time, but it takes on a special significance this week, given that next

Thursday, the 338 members of the House will leave for their ridings so they can attend remembrance ceremonies on November 11.

Why do we make it our duty to attend these remembrance ceremonies? My riding alone has three scheduled. Sadly, I have not yet figured out how to be in two or three places at once on the stroke of 11 on November 11, but one thing I can say for sure is that I am going to visit every legion branch. Each and every one of us has a duty of remembrance.

The ceremony on November 11 includes some deeply emotional moments. One especially moving moment that I would never miss, come hell or high water, is when they read out the names of all those who made the ultimate sacrifice. That can take a few short minutes or stretch over a longer time, depending on how many from the riding gave their lives. These people died so that we could have freedom of speech and the chance to live in a democracy. We owe them a great deal.

I am lucky enough to know some Second World War veterans in Trois-Rivières who have shared their stories with me and take it upon themselves to tell younger generations about the true reality of war. It is not at all like in the movies or video games, which are basically the only contact that our young people have with war, thank God. Since humankind has trouble learning from its own history, the fact that we have veterans who share their experiences with us is a priceless blessing.

When I hear the names of all the fallen read out loud, I always wonder what message they would have for us today. It is wonderful that so many of us, tens, hundreds, even thousands of Canadians take the time to remember them. What is their message? Perhaps this is a natural family instinct everyone has, but I always feel that those who made the ultimate sacrifice would ask us, in recognition of that sacrifice, to ensure that their loved ones have everything they need. They would ask us to take care of those they left behind because they fell on the battlefield.

We therefore have more than just a duty to remember. We owe them much more in return. We must pay it forward to those who have given so much and who, by chance, may still be with us today, or to their spouses and families who are still with us and who for years endured the absence of a loved one.

What is the best way to answer that call from the heart? It is by providing adequate services to our veterans and their families.

When I see the simplicity of the motion before us today, I have to wonder why this is not already a fait accompli. It is worth noting that this situation precedes the current Liberal administration. I sat in Parliament in 2011, and these very same issues were being discussed back then. For the benefit of those following our debate, I would like to reread the motion as it is written. Everything is there; it speaks for itself.

Business of Supply

That, in the opinion of the House, the government should automatically carry forward all annual lapsed spending at the Department of Veterans Affairs to the next fiscal year, for the sole purpose of improving services for Canadian veterans, until the Department meets or exceeds its 24 self-identified service standards.

“Automatically” means stop debating this, stop asking questions, and just make this a priority.

● (1750)

Unfortunately, as we saw under the Conservative administration and are still seeing with the Liberals, there is a significant difference between the amounts announced and those paid out.

This begs a fundamental question: announcing extraordinary amounts even though they do not have the money, thinking that it will make them look good by showing good intention, and then in the end spending less than what was announced since they know they do not have that money—is it all a political show? It would be even worse if they announced amounts that they do have and then chose not to spend the money, returning it to the consolidated revenue fund so it can be allocated to other things or used to pay down part of the deficit.

In the past, the Conservatives often used this strategy when they made their grand announcements. The Conservatives had the largest infrastructure program ever. However, the real amounts invested were nowhere near those announced. The Liberals are using the exact same strategy, which is outrageous, to say the least.

I will cite a few examples of how the transfer of these lapsed funds could achieve a certain number of objectives. I will name a few so that people have an idea of what we are referring to.

Most of the time when a veteran calls the National Contact Centre Network, they hear, “your call is important to us, please stay on the line for...” three hours, four hours, three days, two weeks, a month? It takes a lot of patience to get a response. According to the service standard, you can expect to be connected with the next available analyst within two minutes. The target is 80%. The result is 66%.

I have a problem with 80% as a target. That is like saying if analysts respond within two minutes 80% of the time, then that is not so bad. However, the point of having a service standard is to serve all veterans. The target cannot be anything less than 100%. The result might be 80%, and then we would say that is not so bad, almost everyone was served within the service standard—but no, we are setting 80% as a target.

That would be like me taking an exam or asking my daughter who is studying for an exam not to aim for 100% but rather for 80%, and if she gets 70% then that would be good, or if she gets 66% then that would be fine. Give me a break. We have to always aim for the best outcome. How can we set 80% as a target for a standard, an approach or a federal government and think that that is okay?

I am running out of time and cannot give more examples, but perhaps I will be able to share some during questions and comments. This makes absolutely no sense. This approach at Veterans Affairs Canada is nothing new. You can find it with many government services, including immigration and EI. Anytime a Canadian needs to call the government, the target is never 100%.

I would have liked more time to talk about the ombudsman's report, in which he made some very important recommendations that have not yet been implemented. I may be able to revisit this, but in the few seconds I have left, I would like to say that I truly hope this motion will get the unanimous support of the House. That seems to be the likely outcome, which would be a good thing.

I also hope that once this motion is adopted, the government quickly implements it. Too often, motions are adopted unanimously or by a majority in the House, but nothing comes out of it. With all the respect we owe our veterans, I cannot even imagine that happening.

● (1755)

[*English*]

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I think we are getting our wires crossed a bit. I might not be correct in this, but my understanding is that actual funding for veterans programs and services is separate from VAC's operating budget that covers the brick and mortar and the public servants hired as case managers. Program funding to veterans directly, such as earning loss benefits and pensions, fall within that big lapsed funding bundle we are talking about today. The operating budget, the hiring of case managers and whatnot, is fully costed with a 5% possible increase. It is a totally separate amount of money.

All these case managers who the minister is talking about us needing do not even fall within this funding, if I am correct. As well, of the 470 who were previously hired, 400 of them were hired through Conservative funding added to the operating funds for Veterans Affairs. This is where it gets very confusing to our veterans.

The member has talked a lot about how we are not getting good outcomes from the spending they say they are doing. Part of that is because we need to do way more to hire people to enable that money to get out the door. Therefore, we are kind of talking about apples and oranges. Does he see there is a need to possibly go back and look at this? We need to be providing the people and the resources to help train and prepare case managers to release that money to our veterans.

[*Translation*]

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

Obviously, if we start getting into all the minute details, we could quickly lose those who are watching since they are not experts in the matter. I am not an expert either, but I try to stay informed.

We are basically saying exactly the same thing. It is unthinkable that available funding is not being used. Unless the government made announcements with money it did not have, it is unthinkable that funding that is just sitting around would not be used to train staff, for example.

The Liberals are saying that they hired 400 people. I commend them for that, but it does not meet the needs. If we consider that the Conservatives cut 1,000 jobs when they were in office, then it seems to me that we are still short 600 positions compared to the level of service provided in 2011-12 before the cuts were made. We are far from meeting the objective and so it is unacceptable to me that there is money just lying around unused.

The motion seeks to ensure that any money for veterans that is not used for its identified purpose by year end be carried over for use by veterans the following year.

• (1800)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to emphasize what the minister emphasized in his remarks, which is how much we value the contributions of our current serving members and veterans.

The opposition can say whatever it wants to say. It was interesting that the previous speaker tried to give the impression that the government was not supporting the motion. No time today did I hear any member of the Liberal caucus say that he or she would not be supporting the motion. I have heard the reverse. We are supporting the motion.

However, for those following the debate, the minister made it very clear that a veteran who met the criteria and qualified for the benefits would receive them. This is not going to be a government that is going to sit back and not help the veterans who have served our country so nobly and so well. Why does the NDP continue to push something that is such a stretch, implying veterans are not getting the services they are qualified to receive?

[Translation]

Mr. Robert Aubin: Mr. Speaker, I will quickly address two things.

First of all, the member obviously did not listen to my speech, since I ended by saying that it seems likely that this motion will receive unanimous support. I do not know where he got the idea from my speech that the Liberals were going to vote against it.

Regarding his mention of the minister's statement that every eligible veteran will receive the services they are entitled to, I say that is all well and good, but the purpose of the motion is not to figure out whether they will get these services, but when.

Funding is the problem. I think we are justified in thinking that the process could be sped up when money is sitting in the treasury and services are not being provided.

* * *

[English]

POINTS OF ORDER

MEETING OF THE CANADIAN NATO PARLIAMENTARY ASSOCIATION

Mr. Colin Fraser (West Nova, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I appreciate the important debate that is happening today and I know members on the opposition side of the House are all speaking in support of the opposition motion; however, I want to

Points of Order

rise briefly in response to the point of order which was raised by my friend the member for Perth—Wellington on October 31, and to provide additional information and argument as the Speaker deliberates on the numerous submissions that have already been presented on this issue.

First of all, the original point of order was brought up in response to Standing Order 151, relating to the safekeeping of records and control of House officers and staff. The argument that was raised in the original point of order was made that the Canadian NATO Parliamentary Association website had been updated to reflect the new chair and this was in violation of Standing Order 151, as the clerk or his delegate had not accurately recorded the results of the meeting.

However, I submit that this assertion is false and incorrect. The meeting was duly constituted, duly held and the results of the meeting were accurately recorded. In fact, the agenda was voted on by the membership under the then chair, creating an order of business that needed to be dealt with before an adjournment could be conducted. I was at the meeting along with many of my colleagues.

The member for Perth—Wellington continued that the Canadian NATO Parliamentary Association meeting that took place on October 30 was “unlawful and illegitimate”. An unlawful and illegitimate meeting could not have been held as the clerks work for the constitution of the association and the Standing Orders of the House before they work for the chair, and the necessary arrangements for an illegal meeting would not have taken place. This can be demonstrated by the fact that the meeting itself was called when the chair was herself the subject of a non-confidence motion. Had the chair had the power to overrule the clerk's following of the written rules, the meeting could easily have been delayed out of existence.

The member then went on to say that the meeting was intended to orchestrate a coup. In fact, it was a motion of non-confidence brought on by members who had, as the name of the motion suggests, lost confidence in the chair. Were members who object to the meeting confident that the chair had the confidence of the membership, they would have worked to achieve a speedy vote and demonstrate that confidence.

As work needed to be done and action needed to be taken in order to welcome and accommodate representatives from our allies in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in the next weeks and within very narrow timelines, the option of waiting for the next regular annual general meeting to express non-confidence was not a possibility. The chair needs to have the confidence of the membership to carry out their duties.

The Conservative whip and numerous other Conservative members of Parliament have also risen on this point of order, though no one has cited any standing order other than Standing Order 151 on record keeping by the clerk.

Points of Order

According to *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, chapter 20, on committee proceedings, which applies to standing joint committees, and which I would suggest is the most similar structure in the rules that we have for parliamentary association meetings, there is only one situation in which a chair can unilaterally adjourn the meeting and that is if there is disorder.

The important point here is that the chair can only adjourn the meeting to address disorder. At this meeting, however, which I attended, disorder only happened after the meeting was attempted to be improperly adjourned and the chair left the meeting. Also, there was disorder, but it was after the attempted improper adjournment.

Conservative parliamentary staffers were drinking alcohol and singing from previously prepared songbooks, which demonstrated an obvious planning of these obstructive tactics. It is, I believe, without precedent for a member or members to encourage boozed-up staffers and provide them with prepared songbooks in an attempt to undermine the decorum of a meeting and it demonstrates a particular lack of judgment and lack of respect for this place.

The acting chair had to call the Parliamentary Protective Service through the Sergeant-at-Arms into the meeting room in order to remove the disrupters, the disrupters who, as I note, planned this disruption in advance and planned their obstruction of our duties here as parliamentarians. Members of the Parliamentary Protective Service do an amazing job keeping this place safe, allowing us to be able to fulfill our duties as parliamentarians. I think it is unacceptable for members in this place to encourage to create disorder and require the need for the Parliamentary Protective Service to intervene.

• (1805)

Now, about the rules and about the attempted adjournment specifically, the members, all of them Conservative, all referenced the adjournment of the meeting, and the member for Mégantic—L'Érable elaborated on what he deemed the inappropriateness of a vice-chair assuming the seat upon the premature departure of the chair.

House of Commons Procedure and Practice is clear about the adjournment of meetings. The relevant section is in chapter 20, on committees, entitled “Adjournment”, where it states:

A committee meeting may be adjourned by the adoption of a motion to that effect. However, most meetings are adjourned more informally, when the Chair receives the implied consent of members to adjourn.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Is the hon. member for Elmwood—Transcona rising on a point of order?

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

We heard from the chair earlier today that the point of having more interventions on this was to have new information. I just have not heard anything that has not already been said in this place. I would much rather hear a Liberal member get up and speak to the substantive motion on veterans that is before the House today than listen to a reshaped version of things we have heard already today on this same point of order.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): I want to remind the hon. member for West Nova that we are looking for new information. I will let him proceed, and I will listen carefully.

Mr. Colin Fraser: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the point being raised. It is important, of course, that it be put in context. I appreciate the fact that many members have risen and restated similar sorts of things, but it is important to always put them in the context of the argument.

As previously referenced, disorder did not come to the committee until the chair announced the attempted adjournment. However, the then chair did not have the implied nor the expressed consent of members present to do so, nor was a motion to adjourn presented and voted upon. There was, therefore, no legal basis on which to adjourn the meeting.

As it actually happened, the chair announced her decision on a point of order to adjourn the meeting, and it was obvious that she was going to be confronted with a challenge to her ruling. People wanted to speak. She gavelled down and darted out of the room. She left the room, leaving the association staff, including the secretary, who we always call the clerk, and the analyst alone at the table, and conforming to the rules, not moving, as the meeting had not been properly adjourned.

House of Commons Procedure and Practice, however, is silent, and this is an extremely important point and a novel one, as far as I have understood the points on the point of order that have been raised, on when a vice-chair can assume the chair. In practice, the chair of a committee will often get up for personal reasons. It is such a common practice that in three editions of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, no clerk or author has felt it necessary to elaborate on this. However, the chair of the House may sometimes tend to personal matters and have some other member take his or her place.

In the case of the NATO Parliamentary Association meeting, as the meeting had not, in fact, adjourned, and there was no legal basis to do so, it was not only permissible but an obligation of the vice-chair to step in and resume the meeting, given that quorum remained, quorum being 20 members, according to chapter 11 of the NATO Parliamentary Association constitution.

Any claim that Conservative members are making with regard to the fact that this was a takeover of the meeting by a vice-chair is completely incorrect. Moreover, the member for Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, the other vice-chair, also stepped up to the head table and made no effort to intervene when the member for Etobicoke Centre carried on the meeting, and thereby, I would submit, acquiesced until the motion of non-confidence was approved on the floor.

A senator overtook the chair to oversee the election. Nominations were called from the floor, and only one name having been offered, the member for Etobicoke Centre was acclaimed.

Further, had the meeting been legitimately adjourned, the clerk of the committee, bound by the rules of this institution, would also have risen and left, but he remained at the table for the duration.

Adjournment Proceedings

While the minutes of the proceedings will not be published until the next annual general meeting, the clerk would not have been able to update the NATO Parliamentary membership page to reflect the new chair had the rules been followed.

I would like to raise one other point that was mentioned that I have not heard rebuttal on, and that is the point regarding the nomination process. The procedure in the constitution is with respect to the entire executive committee. This is a novel and unique situation, I would submit, based on the vote of non-confidence. The vote of non-confidence had yet to be voted upon, and it would have been premature for the clerk to seek nominations, because that was not decided until the meeting itself

Those are my respectful submissions.

* * *

●(1810)

[*Translation*]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—SERVICE STANDARDS FOR VETERANS

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

Mr. Darrell Samson (Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, service members and veterans make up 23% of the population of my riding of Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook.

[*English*]

The province of Nova Scotia has the highest population of veterans and military per capita in the country, which is extremely important.

I had the opportunity throughout the year to do some town halls with veterans so I could get a better understanding of some of the challenges, a better understanding of some of the solutions and therefore be in a better position to articulate on behalf of my constituents. I had those meetings in five legions in parts of my riding: the legion in Eastern Passage; the legion in Gaetz Brook; and the legion in Centennial, which is the Westphal region. I also had meeting in the Sackville and Fall River regions.

I have to stop a second and thank the legion and legion members for the work they do and the support they give to veterans and veterans' families, which is important.

I want to talk about the service card and ask if anyone in the House can help me understand how the Conservatives could cut out the service card. Why would they cut the service card that identifies that the individual was in the service and it gives his or her name, ranking and includes a picture. It is just beyond me. It also took 10 years of service before receiving that card. Some ministers made a presentation a couple of weeks ago to have a new service card that would meet the needs of our men and women in service.

I appreciate the short amount of time I was given. It was very important to speak about veterans, especially this week when we are celebrating them. On the weekend, we will have Remembrance Day. I am so proud to say, as an educator, that the school systems are talking, sharing and respecting service men and women throughout the week.

●(1815)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): It being 6:15 p.m., pursuant to order made earlier today all questions necessary to dispose of the opposition motion are deemed put and a recorded division deemed requested and deferred until Tuesday, November 6, at the expiry of the time provided for oral questions.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

[*English*]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise tonight to reflect on a question of mine for the Prime Minister about World Oceans Day, namely, the use of single-use plastics and the lack of regulations to protect Canadians and our oceans, and to combat plastic pollution.

We know that over a garbage truck of plastic is entering our waterways every minute. Just two years ago, the people of Courtenay—Alberni really stepped up on this very important issue as a result of a November 2016 spill from the *Hanjin Seattle* off the Pacific Rim National Park, on the west coast of Vancouver Island. Over 35 shipping containers spilled, littering our coast with metal and thick styrofoam, which spread up and down our coast.

People like Captain Josh Temple, Misty Lawson, and the people of Clayoquot Action mobilized, got on the ground and started to clean up this huge marine debris spill, one of the largest on the west coast of Vancouver Island. Michelle Hall at Surfrider and hundreds of volunteers hit the beaches with staff from Pacific Rim National Park and Barb Schramm of the Wild Pacific Trail from Ucluelet. These people from Tofino, Ucluelet, Ahousat, Clayoquot, and Tla-o-qui-aht all came out in the spirit of making sure that we protect our beaches and mitigate the impact of what is happening to our environment when it comes to marine debris. We had a very difficult time.

We were asking questions of the government in the House as to who was responsible for marine debris, and we could not get a straight answer. We were asking the question of the transport minister. He said this would be the full responsibility of the shipping company under the Canada Shipping Act. However, what we found out was that Pacific Rim National Park had petitioned the bankruptcy court dealing with the shipping company, which of course had gone bankrupt after the spill, to get funds to help remediate the problem on the coast. The court awarded \$72,000 to Pacific Rim National Park. That money came to Ottawa. However, only \$15,000 of that money came to the coast in May 2017. We are still unsure what happened to the rest of the money.

Adjournment Proceedings

What we do know is that local people pulled money out of their own pockets and contributed to cleaning up this mess. Small business people donated money. We had to hire specialized contractors to go out and clean this up on our own accord. There was no help from the federal Government. Even though it could have called back the people who were helping deal with the tsunami debris cleanup after the Japanese earthquake that had brought marine debris to our coasts, it did not. Those people worked so diligently and hard to mastermind cleanups on our coast, cleanups that could be applied on a regular basis. Instead, the federal government chose to sit back and left us high and dry. Therefore, we have no confidence in any future oil spill cleanups. The government failed to build trust and relationships with volunteers and community citizens who were out there protecting our environment. It had a great opportunity.

People are still wondering where that money is. They want to know there is a plan in place should this happen again. We know there is not. The world oceans charter that the government has developed does not talk about marine debris. There is no funding at all allocated for cleaning up marine debris. We know there are Canadians from coast to coast to coast who are cleaning up marine debris every day, people like John Burchette of Tofino to Mark over on Lasqueti Island and all over Vancouver Island who are dedicated to cleaning up our oceans. However, they do require some support. I hope the current government will come up with a plan and provide the necessary resources.

• (1820)

Ms. Kamal Khera (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first and foremost, I want to thank the member for Courtenay—Alberni for his continued interest in combatting plastic pollution in our waterways and oceans.

As we all know, the private members' business system is a lottery. No member is guaranteed the opportunity to introduce a bill or motion. It is not lost on me that the MP for Courtenay—Alberni could have chosen any other topic to introduce a bill or motion on, but chose this issue as it is extremely important to all Canadians. I know it is for my constituents in Brampton West as well.

To the member's question, there is no doubt that plastics play an important role in Canadians' lives. However, it is their mismanagement that poses a threat to our livelihoods and ecosystems. Preventing plastics pollution is a pressing global issue that requires action by all. Canada made ocean health and addressing plastics pollution a priority in the 2018 G7 presidency. During the G7 leaders' summit in June, we launched the oceans plastics charter and the Charlevoix blueprint for healthy oceans, seas and resilient coastal communities.

Canada also committed \$100 million to help vulnerable regions improve their waste management practices and combat plastic pollution. In fact, while the Minister of Environment and Climate Change was recently in Nova Scotia, she announced that we would be eliminating the use of unnecessary single-use plastics in all government operations. I am proud that our government has taken a leadership position on this file and hope that other levels of government and other organizations will begin to follow suit.

In terms of the plastics charter and other G7 commitments, these undertakings provide a springboard for action in Canada. Federal, provincial and territorial governments are currently working together through the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment to develop a national approach that responds to the charter and moves toward zero plastic waste. Our shared goal is to keep all types of plastic in the economy out of landfills and the environment. This is an ambitious vision that will require actions by governments, industry, consumers and individuals. We are working with all of these partners to identify innovative ideas to improve the design, use and management of plastic products.

There is no one solution that will address this issue. This will require action by governments, industry, retailers, consumers, researchers and, of course, all Canadians, including youth. It will also require a shift in emphasis from end-of-life management to treating plastics as a resource. We need action that embraces a circular approach to materials management. We need to go beyond focusing on one product type, like straws, and take concerted action throughout the life cycle of plastics.

While we recognize the need to address single-use plastics in Canada, such as straws or bags, we are working with the provinces and territories to develop a more comprehensive approach to effectively address this issue, and this includes evaluating all available policy options.

Mr. Gord Johns: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the parliamentary secretary for commenting on some action the government is taking and undertaking.

I talked about marine debris and the lack of legislation and the regulatory void that is in place. We also learned that is the same with single-use plastics in our country. I will applaud the government for committing to getting rid of single-use plastics in federal facilities. We would like to see the federal government follow the lead of the European Union, which is going to phase out most single-use plastics by 2021. If the federal government really wants to take action on this issue, it would follow that, but also support my motion.

My motion, Motion No. 151, was designed by the University of Victoria. It includes seven reforms to address plastic pollution. It gives the government the framework to take concrete steps to help prevent plastic from entering our waterways and aquifers.

Ms. Kamal Khera: Mr. Speaker, I again want to thank the hon. member for his advocacy and all of the important work he does on behalf of his constituents, the environment and oceans, and I certainly look forward to debating his private member's motion.

Adjournment Proceedings

This is a complex issue that requires a comprehensive response. This includes evaluating all available actions and policy tools. That is why we are working with our domestic and international partners to find solutions throughout the life of plastics. This includes making plastic design and production more sustainable; improving collection, management systems and infrastructure; adopting a more sustainable lifestyle, including through education; improving our understanding of this issue and solutions through research and innovation; and finally, taking action to remove the plastic litter that is already covering the world's shorelines and waterways.

We look forward to continuing to mobilize international and national action on this issue and I certainly look forward to working with my hon. colleague on the other side of the House.

• (1825)

[*Translation*]

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Mr. Speaker, from the beginning, we have been saying that the agreement the Liberals signed is bad for our farmers, bad for our SMEs and bad for Quebec.

The federal government is not listening to its Quebec counterparts right now. The government does not seem to understand all the losses it will be inflicting on our dairy farmers, for example, who will have to be compensated following the recent trade deals signed by Canada.

According to the Quebec government, Ottawa needs to compensate farmers who will bear the brunt of its three new trade deals, namely the brand-new United States-Mexico-Canada agreement, the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership, which could come into force soon, and the Canada-European Union Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement, which has been in force for a year now.

The government thinks it only needs to provide compensation for two agreements, namely NAFTA 2.0 and the CPTPP. It feels that it has already compensated for the impact of the third agreement, the one with Europe. That is what the Liberal government seems to be saying. The fact is that the support in question is inadequate and has failed to offset the effect of allowing the Europeans to flood the Canadian market with an additional 17,700 tonnes of cheese.

For our dairy farmers, losing 10% to 12% of the market to foreign farmers will cost them the equivalent of a month's salary every year. Yes, an entire month.

While in my riding, I met Fabien Fontaine, the CEO of Délimax. He told me that, in recent years, government cuts to agricultural insurance programs, transatlantic trade agreements and required changes to animal husbandry practices have severely undermined the financial viability of veal production and processing operations in Quebec.

The transatlantic trade agreement now allows European veal producers to send us their goods without paying the nearly 30% tariff they used to be subject to even though they do not have to follow the same rules governing the use of certain products. Furthermore, for

the past 20 years, the European veal industry has enjoyed generous subsidies to upgrade its veal production facilities, but we have not.

In my last speech in the House, I asked the government to keep its promise about the measures it will be taking to compensate farmers.

Last week, farmers learned that the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food invited them to two working groups with a mandate to estimate the financial impact of recent trade agreements and determine how to compensate them fully and fairly. I should point out that the government promised solutions before Christmas.

However, these working groups will not be looking at the agreement with Europe or the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership. The minister seems to think that the matter of compensation for the European agreement has already been settled.

Quebec's new Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, André Lamontagne, does not seem to share that opinion.

Last week, he said he hopes that these task forces also take into account the economic losses caused by the trade agreement with the Europeans.

I add my voice to his because Quebec's new Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, André Lamontagne, also represents a good portion of my riding. The riding Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot includes the Maskoutains and Acton RCMs that we share. I therefore add my voice to his and ask the government if it will adequately compensate producers.

Mr. Jean-Claude Poissant (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot for her important question.

The Government of Canada strongly supports the supply management system, farmers, their families and producers.

The NDP says one thing in the House, but behind closed doors it admits that this agreement protects Canadian jobs. The leader of the NDP celebrated the agreement at an event in Ottawa last Tuesday evening. The NDP member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, who is also the NDP's Quebec lieutenant, described the United States-Mexico-Canada agreement as the best possible agreement. The NDP privately admits that this is a good agreement because it knows that it protects the millions of Canadian jobs that were in jeopardy.

Canada's supply managed sectors are essential to ensuring our country's prosperity and growth. As the saying goes, if you ate today, thank a farmer. The dairy, egg and poultry industries combined create several thousand jobs in our country and generate \$32 billion in economic activity.

Canada's dairy industry, one of the largest segments of the Canadian agri-food sector, generates farm gate sales of \$6.5 billion, processing sales of \$14 billion, and more than 40,000 jobs.

The USMCA preserves and maintains Canada's supply management system and its three pillars, namely production control, the pricing mechanism and import control. Our government preserved and maintained the supply management system when it negotiated CETA and the CPTPP, and when it renegotiated NAFTA.

Adjournment Proceedings

We have announced new working groups consisting of producers and processors in the dairy, poultry and egg industries. The working groups will bring together representatives from Canadian dairy organizations and associations, regional representatives and senior officials from Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada. They will develop mitigation strategies to fully and fairly support producers and processors and help them adapt to the United States—Mexico—Canada agreement.

Supply-managed industries can count on the full support of our government. Our commitment has never wavered.

● (1830)

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy: Mr. Speaker, I speak for the citizens of Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot in the House. What I am hearing in my riding is that dairy, poultry, egg and beef producers are worried. The entire agri-food chain is worried because every percentage of market share given up in an international agreement has a direct effect on our family farms.

What upsets producers even more is that these international agreements are being signed with countries where there is no reciprocity in standards and where environmental standards and approved products are not the same. They feel that they will suffer losses and compete against foreign producers, both European and American, who receive subsidies and support from their government.

Many things are said in the House, but every percentage of market share is a threat to producers.

Mr. Jean-Claude Poissant: Mr. Speaker, I would like to refer to something the NDP member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie said.

He told the Canadian negotiators that he wanted to congratulate everyone in the room for the tremendous job they did. He added that the United States-Mexico-Canada agreement was the best possible deal and that it would protect workers across the country.

We agree. The deal meets expectations in terms of stability, growth, maintaining employment and protecting thousands of Canadian jobs. Our government takes a balanced approach to trade. We are defending the supply management system just as we promised we would.

Strong dairy, poultry and egg industries and a competitive agricultural sector are vital to ensuring Canada's prosperity, creating good jobs, growing the middle class and providing high-quality goods to Canadian consumers.

● (1835)

[*English*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan is not present to raise the matter for which adjournment notice has been given. Accordingly, the notice is deemed withdrawn.

[*Translation*]

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

(The House adjourned at 6:35 p.m.)

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