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Friday, November 30, 2018

—

Speaker: The Honourable Geoff Regan

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Friday, November 30, 2018

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1005)

[*English*]

POVERTY REDUCTION ACT

Hon. Kirsty Duncan (for the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development) moved that Bill C-87, An Act respecting the reduction of poverty, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing and Urban Affairs), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am so very pleased to rise in the House today to introduce this important bill.

In August, the minister and I were honoured to launch “Opportunity for All - Canada’s First Poverty Reduction Strategy”. Today, we are introducing the bill that will make this strategy a reality.

“Opportunity for All” is the government’s response to what Canadians have told us about how we can fight poverty.

[*English*]

Over the past year and a half, we have been talking to people across the country to inform them of the development of our national poverty strategy. We have consulted people working on the front lines: researchers, indigenous partners and most importantly, people with lived experience. They have been telling us about the reality of struggling to make ends meet and satisfy basic needs. Essential things, such as providing for the needs of one’s children or taking care of one’s health, are simply out of reach for far too many people in this country.

We have heard about the plight of vulnerable people, namely seniors, youth, women, the LGBTQ2 community, racialized people, newcomers, persons with disabilities and single parents. It is a tragically long list.

We have heard that the poverty reduction strategy should acknowledge the challenges faced by these specific groups and should contain targeted policies and supports that specifically support them in the lives they lead and in ending their poverty.

We received ideas and insights into different ways to fight poverty. Bill C-87 is an attempt to do two things. First and foremost, it would set a poverty line right across the country. It would do so in a way that has never been done before. It would not simply be a measurement of income against the norm or against the achievable. It would set a poverty line by looking at a basket of consumer goods, such as housing, food and transportation, but would also rate things like access to health care, access to education and meaningful participation in democratic changes in communities.

The poverty line would be set across the country, but most importantly, it would also be regionalized across the country in different centres and different settings. That is because poverty is experienced, measured, felt and understood differently in different communities.

We are also working with indigenous communities to make sure that it reflects their experience and comprehension of what constitutes poverty by measuring the basket of goods they consider critical to a good life in this country.

Understanding poverty in this country in detail, from region to region, from community to community, from sub-population to sub-population and from nation to nation, is critical if we are going to attack it, lift people out of poverty and transform the lives of Canadians.

This project is also about making investments. I know that some have worried that the announcement of the poverty strategy is not attached to a major new set of spending initiatives. There is good reason for that. Our work on eliminating poverty did not begin with the formulation of this piece of legislation, nor did it begin with the idea that we should have a poverty line that is new and modern and measures poverty in real ways. Our work on eliminating poverty started the day we took office, the day we introduced tax cuts for middle-class Canadians, the day we introduced the Canada child benefit and the day we indexed that Canada child benefit. All those measures, and many more, \$22 billion worth of investments over our first two years in office, were aimed at lifting people out of poverty.

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They were successful. We have seen 300,000 children lifted out of poverty since we took office, and 650,000 Canadians. More importantly, over 550,000 full-time jobs have also been delivered, by Canadians to other Canadians, to make sure that poverty does not enter the lives of many families. In total, this is part of our commitment to eliminating poverty, reducing it substantially in this term of office and moving forward with even more aggressive strategies.

The investments some wanted with the announcement of this strategy are actually also forecast and have been pushed forward into this year, next year and beyond. For example, the national housing strategy, which is an integral part of reducing poverty in this country, is not just the \$5.6 billion investment made in our first two years of office. It is also \$40 billion that is locked into multilateral and bilateral agreements with provinces and territories over the next 10 years. In other words, it is a 15-year project, in many ways, to deliver affordable, safe and secure housing for Canadians right across the country. Some of that is in new housing builds. Some of that is in supports for rent supplements through the new Canada housing benefit and some of that is in simply honouring the operating agreements that were set to expire and allowed to expire by the previous government.

We also have a \$7.5-billion investment, with provinces and territories and indigenous governments, in early learning and child care. This is another substantial investment that will make a transformative change in the lives of Canadian families, and most importantly, Canadian children, to make sure that we eliminate poverty and the challenges many families have accessing child care and early learning opportunities.

There are other measures on the horizon as well. We have announced an expert panel to show us the way to implement pharmacare. It is not something we can simply switch a switch and cut a cheque for. There are complications in terms of how to integrate it with provincial plans, how to integrate it with doctors' offices across the country and how to create a national formulary. All these things are part of delivering that program, but at the end of the day, what the program is going to do is deliver more affordable health care to vulnerable Canadians right across the country. Again, it will be a step in the direction of eliminating poverty.

The reason this is so critical to us is found in the international covenants we signed on the United Nations' sustainable development goals. We know that the sustainable development goals are focused as much on the elimination of social inequity, poverty, gender inequity and racial inequity as they are on sustainable and prosperous development on the economic front. We need to make sure that as we build a strong country, we do not leave people behind, because the precious resource we have is, in fact, Canadians who contribute to the success of this program.

The poverty reduction strategy has to be seen as much more than simply a series of programs that support vulnerable Canadians. It has to be seen as a major way of rethinking our economy, rethinking our social programs and rethinking our footprint in the coming century to make sure that we build the most resilient generation of Canadians ever. That is the goal of the poverty reduction strategy. That is the goal of many of our social programs, when taken together as a coordinated approach to reducing poverty.

As I said, there is much more to do. We know that EI reform is critically important in reducing poverty. We know that the work we have done on EI reform has made it easier for seasonal workers to sustain their employment in industries that stop and start based on the natural cycle of the economy in some parts of the country. We also know that making EI quicker and easier to receive is one of the ways we do not create cracks that people can fall between. We know that working while on benefits, extended maternity benefits and all the changes we have introduced to EI to make it more flexible and more accessible to Canadians are ways we are focused on reducing poverty and some the challenges Canadians face from time to time.

At the end of the day, there is more to do, because eliminating poverty is not something we can rest on after we have made investments. We have to constantly look for new gaps in society and new areas where poverty starts to lock in. For example, we have an aging population. We know that seniors are aging into poverty differently than they did a generation ago, partly because of precarious work and partly because of a changing economy, which is seeing benefits and pensions reshaped even after people have paid into them for many years. Therefore, pension reform and the changes we made to the GIS are part of our poverty reduction strategy.

When we looked at poor seniors and seniors who were living in difficult and marginalized economic circumstances, we saw that one of the things that was driving certain pockets of seniors' poverty was gender. We knew that when women lost their partners, they sometimes lost their full pensions. We knew that women living alone did not suddenly cut the expenses of living where they were living simply because a member of the family was no longer partnered with them to pay the bills. The boost we made to the guaranteed income supplement and the reform of CPP were all forward-looking measures that were part of our strategy to end poverty. They were not announced as part of the strategy. They were part of the work we have been doing over the last three years. However, they have projected positive results into the future and will help us meet the targets spelled out in the poverty reduction strategy.

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Focusing in on building a strong middle class and focusing in on fighting climate change and providing adaption strategies to municipalities is also part of the poverty reduction strategy. If we look at natural disasters that have rocked this country, whether it is the fires in Fort McMurray, the floods in New Brunswick, the challenges in northern Ontario and Manitoba with water or the droughts that have hit some parts of this country, we know that as the economies are damaged in those parts of Canada, one of the things that also happens is that low-income Canadians suffer even more.

• (1010)

Getting those communities back on their feet means that we have economies those people can tie their lives to and move forward with. Minimizing the impact of climate change over the next decade and century will be just as critical in reducing poverty, because it will have a different impact on low-income Canadians.

We also know that poverty is different in the north and in remote communities. Access to healthy food and country food is becoming more difficult in places like the territories. With climate change, animal patterns, such as the herding of the caribou, pushes available food further away, or unfortunately, eliminates it altogether, in some circumstances. It changes access to healthy food and therefore has an impact on the way poverty is measured in northern communities.

As climate change moves forward, we know that some of the ice roads disappear, and therefore food security in the north is challenged. I was in the territories visiting Behchokö to look at some of the housing challenges there. The road we came into Behchokö on was like a roller coaster. I asked the member from the Northwest Territories when the road would be replaced, and he said that it had been replaced two years ago, but climate change had allowed the tundra to melt. The thaw-and-freeze cycle was heaving the road, and in doing so, destroying a very important investment, making it almost worthless as soon as it was finished.

These challenges have an impact on the economics and on the health and welfare of Canadians in the north. We have to turn our attention to that, because building strong infrastructure, like the connecting road between Yellowknife and Behchokö, is part of how poverty is reduced in those communities.

Access to health care is a critical driver in sustaining one's employment. If there is not access to the major centres in the north, and there is not access to the food and distribution centres in the north, we drive poverty into those communities.

When we look at poverty reduction and how we measure it, beyond just income and the large economic numbers previous formulas have looked at, access to these critical services is just as important. From that perspective, and from the perspective of the investments we are making in infrastructure, we can see that stronger transit infrastructure in major cities is also something that helps reduce poverty. If people can get to school, get to work and get home more easily, more reliably and more cheaply, with a more robust transit system across the country, it can have an impact on the quality of their lives. It is an impact that actually enriches people's lives by not taking as many dollars out of their pockets to pay for transit, by having the government step up and do that. It makes those things they need to have a better quality of life that much easier to access because of a stronger transit system.

All these investments do one other thing that is critically important. They deliver good-paying, often unionized, jobs to communities right across the country. It is the same thing with the housing policy. It is creating investments that not only sustain society in a progressive way but also create jobs and tie in supply chains. It means a good, strong economy focused on doing what this poverty strategy says must be done, which is eliminate poverty right across this country from coast to coast to coast.

We also need better data. We cannot simply rely on anecdotal evidence. We need to know whether racialized women are receiving health care at the same rate as other groups of women. We need to know whether indigenous children are faring as well coming out of the school system as non-indigenous children. We need to know exactly how government support for low-income communities impacts the economies in the communities where those dollars land. When the Canada child benefit lands in communities by the millions, right across this country, we need to understand the transformational change that has in people's lives so we can figure out where the gaps are and fill those gaps with new investments.

For example, when we make investments in child care, we need to know which families are getting it, which are not, and why not. If they are not getting it, we need to then look at our infrastructure programs to make sure the capital programs and the operating dollars are married to some of the other investments to make sure that we have good, strong, whole communities being built right across the country. Again, the poverty reduction strategy relies on data being generated through StatsCan and the long-form census as well as the segregated data that looks at subpopulations that experience poverty differently. We need to look at them in concert to make sure the investments we are making are reaching all Canadians and not just the averages, which previous systems, studies and poverty lines reached.

• (1015)

We also need to know from the data how many people we actually are lifting out of poverty and how many people we need to work harder to reach. The investment in data is as critical a part of today's announcement and the bill that is in front of us, as any of the measures I have spoken about from previous budgets or from future investments. Understanding what the problem is and measuring the problem is one of the best ways to start to manage that problem.

We know that poverty will change in the next decade and the next century. We know that poverty is not a static or singularly defined reality for Canadians. We know that in Atlantic Canada, for example, as fish stocks change, as communities transform and as new technologies provide opportunities for new businesses, the kinds of poverty we find in isolated or coastal communities also change. We need to make sure that, as we move forward as a country, we start to understand those details and understand how poverty is different from region to region to make sure our programs are not one-size-fits-all designed-in-Ottawa solutions, but rather ideas that grow from the ground up.

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One of the ways we are going to accomplish that is an advisory panel to the minister that will provide lived experience, a voice inside the ministerial offices directly to us in Parliament, to make sure we have a regionalized and diversified set of experiences reporting out, including academics and experts as well as activists and front-line workers and our partners in municipal, provincial and indigenous governments. We need to make sure we have an advisory panel that reflects the true diversity of poverty in this country so that as we evolve programs, we do not evolve them in a vacuum; we evolve them with a constant check-in to make sure the advice we are getting, the policy we are developing, and the programs we are delivering impact all Canadians in a way that is positive. That, too, is a critically important part of the bill that has been presented to the House here today.

As I said, we also have targets and those targets are critically important. We know, for example, that in 2015 there were 4.2 million people living in poverty in this country. We know that 1.3 million people are considered the working poor. We know that when we measure and set these targets to reduce poverty and achieve the 2030 targets set out in this bill, we have to do it methodically, persistently, and in a way that does not leave particular groups behind. Therefore, the targets that have been set, which are consistent with SDGs and consistent with our commitments to the United Nations, are aspirational targets. Can we do it faster? I hope we can. Can we reach more people quickly with stronger programs? We work every day to find out how to be more effective on that front, and we rely on some of the voices that come from across the aisle to get there, to make sure that our ideas become stronger and become more beneficial to the individuals in question.

At the end of the day, I want to leave members with one last thought and this thought is at the heart of what we are doing. We have an opportunity in this Parliament to set a way in the next century to build the most resilient generation of children in this country's history. We need them. We need every child in this country to make a contribution to the betterment of Canada. We do that by making sure that seniors can contribute and transfer their knowledge to the young ones. We do it by making sure that those of us who are working hard right now in Parliament or in companies, businesses or community centres across the country are focused on making sure we end child poverty as quickly and as furiously as we possibly can. If we can build that resilient generation of Canadian children, if we can build the happiest, healthiest, smartest and most resilient kids in the world, Canada will succeed. More important, those children will succeed.

That is why the poverty reduction strategy is a central piece of our thinking, a central piece and focus of the network of bills, laws and budgets we have passed over the last two years, and it is why it is the focus of our government, going forward into the next century.

I want all members to get behind this, not just for today but through to the end of this parliamentary session and to commit themselves to those ideals we just spoke about: ending poverty in this country; focusing on building the most resilient generation of Canadian children in the history of Canada; and making sure that no one in this country is left behind as we build a stronger country by eliminating poverty and building a better future for Canada.

● (1020)

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is a wonderful speech by the hon. gentleman on the other side, and a beautiful bedtime story. However, the annex of the bill is empty. There is nothing in it. It is a blank page. How did he come up with all these achievements that he is claiming that his government would achieve with this bill when the bill itself is empty?

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, members are not to be using props in the House and I believe my friend opposite is using the bill as a prop to demonstrate his point.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): My understanding of the rules is that the member can refer to a bill, but cannot use it as a prop. That was improper use of the bill and I see the member understands that.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

● (1025)

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing and Urban Affairs), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I guess I could ask them to read the budget, but I will not.

Let us look at what the debate in the House has—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The hon. member for Elgin—Middlesex—London is rising on a point of order.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Mr. Speaker, it is wonderful that the Conservative caucus is being called on a point of order and yet we just saw the Liberal parliamentary secretary do the exact thing. Therefore, I have a point of order on using props.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): I am sorry, I missed that. I was looking the other way. Did the hon. member have something?

Mr. Adam Vaughan: Mr. Speaker, I was suggesting that they read the budget, but hopefully they have.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): How about we all understand that we are not to use props because it is against the rules? Do I have unanimous consent? Very good.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Adam Vaughan: Mr. Speaker, as I was saying, the debate all week has been about the budget implementation bill and the members opposite have said there is too much in it. One of the biggest parts of the budget implementation bill, in fact almost two-thirds of it, is pay equity legislation. Pay equity eliminates poverty for hundreds and thousands of women across this country.

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So for the strategies we have employed, I said in my speech they are not in the poverty reduction strategy per se, they are in all of the work we have been doing since we took office: the national housing strategy, the Canada child benefit, the boost to the GIS, the improvements to the CPP and the pay equity legislation that was just introduced. It goes on and on. There is the \$7.5-billion investment in early learning and child care. All of these investments constitute the basket of investments we have made to reduce poverty and it is working as 300,000 kids are out of poverty and 650,000 Canadians have been lifted out of poverty as a direct result, not of the index in the bill but in previous budgets and bills introduced by this government, and I am proud to have made those possible as a member.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we all want poverty to be eliminated in our country and women have been at the front line of poverty, no question. When women are paid less because there is no proactive federal pay equity legislation, they are the ones who drop out of the workplace to look after kids or elders, with no universal affordable child care. They end up taking the brunt of family care and get into more precarious and part-time work. We have been calling on the government to reform EI legislation and it has not. It would have helped women in precarious work have more of a social safety net.

I cannot let my colleague's comment about pay equity go unanswered. CUPE says its members have been waiting decades for federal proactive pay equity legislation and, "Based on this legislation, it appears women could be waiting until 2027 for a full remedy. We urge the government to...ensure that women's equality rights are no longer denied." I moved 20 amendments to the budget implementation act in the finance committee, putting forward the exact amendments that the Ontario Pay Equity Coalition, CUPE, the Teamsters and the Canadian Labour Congress proposed, detailed amendments under tight timelines because the government has rammed through the budget implementation act and, therefore, the pay equity bill at every step of the way and the Liberals voted every amendment down. How do they answer that?

Mr. Adam Vaughan: Mr. Speaker, the approach to pay equity may differ on the other side of the House from the program that we have put in place, but there is also a difference sometimes in the way in which the motions that the member spoke to are received on the government side because they do not fit into the legislative framework. It is not that they are not necessarily good ideas, they just do not match the way in which the programs can be achieved.

I know that many times the opposition wants measures legislated rather than regulated, which is an inside baseball kind of way of explaining some of the challenges, but I would ask the member opposite to look at the regulations that flow from the legislation, because I think many of the things she wants would be achieved through regulation rather than legislation.

There is an issue that I always wonder about with the NDP, and I think if the member opposite and I had both been members of the House in 2006, we would not have defeated the government at the time when it had comprehensive pay equity legislation, comprehensive national day care, \$2 billion for housing and the Kelowna accord all put together. I think we would have waited for that to go through before we decided to play politics with an election. We

would have made sure that we locked in those achievements that were part of the last Martin government because that would have been great for Canada over the last 10 years. Unfortunately, some parties chose politics over policy and Canadians have been suffering for the last 10 years.

● (1030)

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

Mr. Speaker, over the last two to three years we have been talking a lot about measures that will have a profound positive impact on Canada. Some of those measures deal specifically with the issue of poverty. I am referring to the guaranteed income supplement in the first budget to alleviate and lift thousands of seniors, the poorest seniors in the country, out of poverty. We had the enhancement to the Canada child benefit program, lifting thousands of children out of poverty.

My colleague just commented on the issue of pay equity. Pay equity, in part, is being dealt with in this budget implementation bill.

My question for my colleague and friend is this. Does he not agree that, from a political point of view, over the last few years we have seen a very progressive government on a number of very important social files?

Mr. Adam Vaughan: Mr. Speaker, my remarks highlighted \$22 billion worth of investments we have made since the day we took office that are all aimed at alleviating poverty. The member down the aisle suggested the CPP reform and the GIS changes to support single seniors were a part of that. They are, as is the national housing strategy, which is not just the 10 years and \$40 billion, it is also the \$5.6 billion that was spent in the first two years of office, which is building housing now from coast to coast to coast, in particular, with a co-operative government in B.C., where every housing dollar that is being spent in B.C. has a federal contribution.

It would be nice for the NDP across the way to recognize that instead of complain about it, but that is the reality. Our investments of \$22 billion have lifted 650,000 Canadians out of poverty, 300,000 of whom are children. That is progress because of real dollars being delivered to real people to build real change in this country. I hope and pray that the next budget will do even more.

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Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague recently commented on all of the great work the Liberals have done in bringing seniors out of poverty with the increases to the GIS. The parliamentary secretary went on and on about it. However, I happened to notice that the departmental results released a couple of weeks ago show the opposite. They show that the number of seniors living below the low-income cut-off has actually risen. I asked the Library of Parliament to do a report. I have bad eyes, so I am not holding it as a prop, I am just reading it. It shows that for the market basket measure, low-income cut-off, 1992 base, and low-income measure after tax, the number of seniors living in poverty has increased since the government came into power in 2015. Therefore, I have to ask this. Why is the government focused more on rhetoric than helping our seniors?

Mr. Adam Vaughan: Mr. Speaker, with an aging population, we face challenges with the senior population. There is no question about that. As we have more seniors, we have more senior poverty. That is why we have to do more than simply talk about it, we have to make investments. The investments in affordable housing, the investments in the CPP, and reducing the age retirement from 67 to 65 will lift 150,000 seniors out of potential poverty all by themselves.

The endless focus on nothing but the size of the debt is ignoring the deficit that is built into people's lives and the social capacity that is missing, the infrastructure that is missing, the resiliency that does not arrive because we are not making the proper investments. We have to measure more than just the balance sheet. We have to measure the impact our policies are having on the lives of people. When people fall into poverty, all of us have failed. We take that responsibility seriously. We are doubling down on making sure that our investments in pharmacare and other programs, in particular, housing, are going to alleviate that and change those numbers, because if we do not alleviate poverty in seniors, they cannot make contributions to the rest of this country, and we need their contributions also.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am thankful for the opportunity to speak on Bill C-87, an act respecting the reduction of poverty, and Canada's first poverty reduction strategy. However, it is a six-page document, and so there is not a lot there.

This poverty reduction strategy is truly a re-announcement of 87 programs either that the government put into place or modified or that had been around for decades. Let us not kid ourselves when we talk about this poverty reduction strategy. It is a re-announcement of things that have happened since October 2015. That is all we are seeing here.

The Liberals talk about the fact that the bill would put in a metric, and the member for Spadina—Fort York talked about using this new measurement. I would like to let him and all Canadians know that this measurement has been used for decades. I applaud the Liberals for actually adopting it as the official measurement, but please do not believe that this was something they concocted and created. This measurement was used by the human resources and skills development department for years.

There are four key things that I will focus on.

I will begin with the current poverty rate. Last week, we had the financial update from our finance minister, and I read the comments from Canadians on Twitter and Facebook. They will support a government that runs a deficit if they believe that the money is being spent well and where it is needed. One of the biggest challenges I see here is that we have a government that has announced an \$80 billion deficit in its mandate. However, if we look at what it has spent and what the actual statistics are showing, they are two absolutely different stories.

I will start with what the parliamentary secretary said moments ago, that the poverty reduction strategy started the day the Liberals took office. The facts I am going to give members today will compare data from 2014, the last year of the Harper Conservative government, with 2016 data, which is a full year of the current government, noting that it was working on poverty from October 19, 2015. The numbers show that the level of poverty for all persons remained at 13%. Therefore, the data shows that between 2014 and 2016, it was 13% with no variation in those numbers whatsoever. However, there is an \$80 billion deficit.

For persons under the age of 18, the Liberals talk about the Canada child benefit, but we have seen a half percentage decrease based on this data, and we see an \$80 billion deficit. For persons between the ages of 18 and 64, there have been very minor, insignificant changes. We see a change of about 1%. However the statistic for seniors really scares me, and will scare many members of my caucus, especially since we really focused on seniors and pushed to make sure we had a seniors minister. We thought the Liberals were not focusing on seniors, and we were right. We have now seen a 2% increase between 2014 and 2016 of people over the age of 65 when it comes to poverty. We also see an \$80 billion deficit. What I am trying to show here relates to the Liberals' line that they are spending the money on the people who need it.

I am the first one to want to help somebody, but these numbers are not showing any changes. Instead, we are seeing deficit spending and we are not getting the results from it. That is one of the biggest challenges I see here. How can we support something when we are seeing no difference? This comes back to the metrics in the six-page bill, and they are not there. The targets are not there.

We recognize that the government is collecting data, and I will share some information.

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I have had the opportunity as the shadow minister for families, children and social development to go across Canada and speak to people on the ground. A couple of weeks ago, I was in Hamilton at the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness. One of the biggest discussions there was on the point in time count. We wanted to compare the 2016 and 2018 data. When this came out in 2016, I thought it was really important to collect that data. We need to know what is leading to homelessness. We need to know how many are homeless. If we have these numbers, we can know if we have reduced it or if it has increased. I am okay with that.

However, people on the ground are coming out and saying that they were told to do one thing in 2016, and with the point in time count, they were told not to go to certain areas. I actually heard this from people who were doing point in time counts. They were told not to go to those areas because poverty was flourishing, those streets had people who were homeless and they did not want those people in the count.

● (1035)

This comes down to the people working for the Government of Canada, who were telling them not to go into those areas where poverty had increased.

I also have heard from the people in Kelowna. The trip to Kelowna was really interesting, and I sat and spoke to people at OneSky. They are doing absolutely fantastic work. However, they shared with me the concern that they did the point in time counts in 2016 and 2018, and they also did a name list, something that is really a wonderful measurement on this that we can talk more about in another discussion. They said that the factors they got in 2016 and 2018, through the point in time count endorsed by the government, was in a 24-hour window. Let us say that John, who has been on that street corner for 364 days asking for assistance, happens to not be on that corner that day. His name does not count because he is not there in that 24-hour period.

What we see is that the counts are being done in a very micro amount of time. When the same organizations from Kelowna are going out and doing a name count, we see that those numbers actually almost quadruple. They actually are saying that their point in time count will show less than 100, but when they did a name count of people out on the streets, they are talking about 400 people. That is a huge significant difference.

If we are going to talk about metrics, let us make sure we are getting our metrics straight and let us be sure the measurements we are using are the same from one year to another year and not putting some challenges there so that we get different results.

One thing that I also heard that was really important was, “You keep on counting us but we still don’t have a home”. This is something that I want to bring to the attention of the minister, the parliamentary secretary and the government. It is lovely to collect this data; however, the people who are being asked for this data want to start seeing results. They are tired of doing these things and not seeing anything at the end of the day.

I now want to switch the page and talk about the national housing strategy. We have had some private members’ bills that have come through, so we have had an opportunity to talk about housing in

those areas. Let us actually talk about what the national housing strategy does.

Over one-third of this announcement is not new money. It is money that we saw in the 2016 and 2017 budgets. Therefore, when we talk about the national housing strategy, we are looking at old money and we are looking at some new money. A substantial portion requires provincial money. When the Liberal government talks about \$40 billion, it is not \$40 coming from the Canadian government, but funding that has to be matched. We have to make sure that those provincial governments are going to be at the table. Agreements have been signed, and kudos on that. However, we also have to make sure that these are agreements that the provinces are not being forced to make.

One of my biggest concerns is that the need for housing is now. We have heard our NDP colleagues talk about the need for housing. I recognize that we still see these challenges. We know that shelter use in Canada has actually increased under the government. It has not decreased. It has increased. More people are needing shelters.

What we look at is the strategy that goes from 2016 and then up to about 2029. We have the \$40 billion for 10 years. We see that it is end-loaded. The emergency is today. The emergency is not 10 years from now. Are we saying that for a person who has lived on the streets for two years, we will add 12, and that person will get their money then? We also have to look at that. Some of my biggest concerns are around throwing money at things without really solving the problem.

Right now at the status of women committee, we are studying shelters. We have had some fantastic witnesses who have come in. If we are looking at where the housing issues are; we have to look at the actual housing continuum; we have to look at the shelters, we have to look at the subsidized housing; we have to look at affordable housing and supportive housing. Then we also have to look at what is actually attainable for Canadians.

One of the biggest challenges we are seeing, which is something that the government has not addressed, is that we see people being kept in shelters because there is no room to move out of that continuum. Here is just a little news alert: Every day somebody is looking for a shelter across Canada. There are always people looking for help, whether it is women leaving abusive relationships or people who just cannot financially support themselves and their housing. They are looking for places. However, the continuum of housing is broken and the government continues to allow it to be broken and continues to expand the problem. When somebody goes to look for affordable housing, there are problems. One example is a young woman I know of who moved into a place in June, into second stage housing. She is stuck in that second stage housing because there is no housing available. The housing markets are not there.

Therefore, when we look at the national housing strategy we can talk about affordable, but what is the plan to actually get affordable housing built? What is the plan to break it down and make sure that we are working with all our communities, from the developers and the landowners to the people who are actually out there with the hammers? We have seen huge gaps, and the government is not addressing them.

Government Orders

•(1040)

We talk about this all the time, but there are a few quotes that I want to share with the House. The reality check is here.

CBC News posted on June 13, 2018, “Between 2014 and 2017, chronic homelessness in the city climbed by 21 per cent, while the use of emergency shelters rose by 16 per cent.” Under the Liberal government the city of Ottawa has seen an increase in chronic homelessness of 21%. How is the government addressing that?

From the same source, here is a second quote about a report entitled, “Homelessness in Ottawa: A Roadmap for Change”. This report examines how the city's 10-year plan is faring and offers suggestions on how to turn the tide. “While the report contains some good news—577 people were able to move into their homes since 2015, thanks to the city's use of Housing First model—Deans acknowledges Ottawa is not trending in the right direction.”

We are talking about a document that was just put out that looked at housing from 2014 to 2017. The people from Ottawa are saying we are not going in the right direction, and this is under the Liberal government.

I also want to share a few quotes that talk about Housing First.

The Liberal government talks about housing first, and let us be honest: the reason it does not like it is that the Conservatives put it in. It is that simple. We have seen many of our pieces of legislation that were done between 2006 and 2015 repealed, only because they were Conservative policy.

I want to read a few items, and these are really important and critical points.

From the Mental Health Commission's final report:

Over the two-year period after participants entered the study, every \$10 invested in HF services resulted in an average savings of \$9.60 for high needs.... Significant cost savings were realized for the 10 per cent of participants who had the highest costs at study entry. For this group, the intervention cost was \$19,582 per person per year on average. Over the two-year period following study entry, every \$10 invested in HF services resulted in an average savings of \$21.72.

From the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness, Tim Richter has spoken on this. People working in housing across Canada will understand who he is. I recognize that the parliamentary secretary knows him as well. He has indicated that we won't prevent and reduce chronic homelessness in Canada without Housing First. Removing the Housing First investment target could be risky because communities may drift away from the Housing First investment, harming efforts to reduce homelessness.

Finally, the last quote is from the Institute of Fiscal Studies and Democracy, which:

strongly objects to the government policy decision to remove the (65%) Housing First investment target.... Reaching Home leaves open the door for federal funding to be diverted toward homelessness interventions that are neither evidence-based nor best practice.

I just wanted to bring up that information, because we can sit here and talk about what a great deal the government is doing on the national housing strategy, and applaud, and all of these kinds of things, but we have people on the ground who face homelessness

every day, who face clients every day, and these are the reports we are getting back.

Last night I appeared on a panel on CTV. We were talking about the emerging crisis that we have with immigration and the costs. The PBO indicated that over the two-year period from July 2017 to March 2019, if the government stays on track, it will spend \$1.1 billion.

We really need to concentrate on the fact that the government has no true policies for the people who come into this country and does not have a plan on how we are going to assist these new immigrants.

Here is a quote from Toronto, which has seen a spike in refugee claimants and shelters this year, with average nightly numbers climbing to 3,191 this month, more than six times the level of two years ago.

Toronto Mayor John Tory has issued increasingly urgent calls for additional funding from federal and provincial governments. He says 41% of those in the city's already-strained shelter system are now refugee claimants. By November, this year is projected to hit 54%. As a result, for the first time the city is temporarily housing people in student residences at two community colleges, spaces that are filling up fast.

With yesterday's PBO report, we recognize that the cost of new immigrants into this country is basically on average what a minimum wage worker would make over the course of one year. That is what the Liberal government is spending because it does not have a plan. I wish it would start listening to what Canadians are saying.

•(1045)

I want to turn now to a positive note. The social finance fund was mentioned in the mini budget last week. Although it was supposed to be an economic statement, we saw a heck of a lot of spending included in it. The fall economic statement would make available \$755 million on a cash basis over the next 10 years to establish a social finance fund, with an additional \$50 million over two years in an investment and readiness stream. This is something our government started studying in 2011 and 2013. In 2015, it was in our federal budget. Therefore, this is something the Conservatives do believe in. However, part of the problem I have with this is where is the Liberal government going to find this money? We are already talking about an \$80 billion dollar deficit, and now we are talking about what we are going to do next. That is one of my concerns.

We also have to remind ourselves that with 10-year programs we have to see where that money is being spent. If we are talking about social programs being financed through this social finance fund to help meet urgent needs, including homelessness, this money is once again back loaded and does not appear for the first two years in this mandate. That is really important. This is money that would be spent after the 2019 election. Like everything else the government proposes, it would be spent after the election so that the government can include it in its platform for its four-year mandate. These are huge concerns to me as well.

Government Orders

The child benefit is something the Liberals constantly talk about. They say that the Canada child benefit has lifted 300,000 children out of poverty. Anything that we can do to help our children, we will always support, but we also have to make sure that what government is doing is on the right track. Part of my concern is that if the Liberals are saying they are doing all of these things and we see less than half a per cent decrease in child poverty, we have a problem.

The current government is truly on a poor track. It has a poor track record, and its program performance is horrendous. We support measures that purport to reduce poverty and provide a fulsome approach. We oppose the carbon tax because we know it will be one more cost for these low-income people. The government is coming out with one of its policies, and it is not a climate change policy. It is an economic and social engineering policy. There is nothing there that says what will happen. I cannot take a supposed train that would not go from my house to my workplace. It does not exist. Like any other consumer, I will be in my automobile, just like the many other Canadians who do not have public transit. We will be in our automobiles and will be gassing up and paying 11 cents more a litre because of the government. I applaud the Government of Ontario for banning this ridiculous carbon tax.

We have something that has come out with 87 different programs in it. In the last few months, we have seen job losses: at GM this week, 2,800 jobs have been lost; at Bombardier, 5,000 jobs have been lost; and we cannot forget about the people in Alberta. One hundred and ten thousand jobs in Alberta have been lost because of the Prime Minister and Bill C-69 and because the ridiculous policies I have cited. The Liberals look at what they want, but they do not look at what Canadians want and need, and they need jobs.

On this entire poverty reduction strategy, how come we are not asking about how we can stay competitive in Canada, how we can retain jobs here in Canada and how we can create jobs in Canada? We do not see that discussed in Bill C-87. We know there are many ways of looking at poverty, and there are many different pillars. One of the pillars is a strong fiscal position and an economy that is creating jobs. We do not see job creation. If we saw job creation we would not have 110,000 people in Alberta losing their jobs. If the government were worried about poverty reduction it would be putting in place initiatives that keep people working in Canada and not putting them in the employment insurance program. Employment insurance is not the option Canadian workers are looking for. They are looking to go to work every day. They are looking at putting bread and butter on the table for their families. Their job is to go out there and get a job as a family member to be able to do that for their families.

Bill C-87 is gutless. It is worse than what Seinfeld would say. It is “filled with nothing.” If they are really talking about helping people out of poverty, where are the guts?

• (1050)

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing and Urban Affairs), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one of the good things about elections is that they bring new voices to Parliament. It is nice to see the Conservatives finally talking about housing, and the importance of data and investments, transforming the lives of low-income

Canadians right across the country. For the last 10 years, while I was in Parliament, that was not something the Conservatives focused on.

On the issue of housing, of course housing programs are back-end loaded. When 1,000 units are added to one constituency in one year, and 1,000 the next year, and 1,000 the year after that, we go from having to support 1,000 houses to 2,000 to 3,000. If the dollars do not grow with the program, there is no provision for rent support or dollars for repairs, and there is no growth toward a stronger, larger system to house more Canadians. That is why it is back-end loaded. That is the way every housing expert in the universe, let alone Canada, supports.

I want to ask the member opposite about Housing First, which she was so proud of. Housing First has a deliberate design flaw in it that required people to live on the streets for six months before they got rent. A senior who lost income because of a death in the family, perhaps, would have to live on the streets before they could get a rent cheque from the Conservative government. The same was true for youth aging out of care in the foster system. We were telling the most vulnerable children in the country that they had to live on the streets for six months before we would even think about talking to them about support.

Can the member opposite really say that those two policies are the hallmark of their social achievement and what Conservatives believe is good housing policy? It literally killed people.

• (1055)

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Mr. Speaker, I recognize the great work the parliamentary secretary has done.

When we have discussions, though, there cannot always be a right or wrong answer. I am saying with regard to this policy that we have experts on the ground who are saying that we should not deviate from Housing First. Are there flaws? There are some flaws. However, the member is making it out to be the worst program ever, saying how it did not work well. I would really question that.

If Conservatives had never talked about housing, the homelessness partnering strategy would not have been supported. Housing First initiative would never have been put forward. These are policies that the Conservative government put forward. These are the policies that we worked on.

The member can talk about Conservatives being absent on housing, but we were there and are just not sitting here flaunting and applauding things that we have not actually done.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Mr. Speaker, one in six Canadians lives in poverty. That is 5.8 million Canadians. When I consulted people in my riding prior to introducing my poverty reduction bill, business people told me that this statistic is not helping our economic development. Groups made it clear that investing too little in poverty reduction is costing us more than investing enough.

Statements by Members

Investing in universal child care would enable people to go back to work full time. Investing in pharmacare would save Canadian employees and employers billions.

Does my colleague agree that investing in these measures would enable us to boost economic development? Ultimately, whatever it costs the government would come back to us fivefold.

It is important to invest in poverty reduction. Does my colleague agree?

[English]

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Mr. Speaker, it is really important to make smart investments. Once again, I really applaud the NDP member. She has done fantastic work and shows all of her compassion.

It is important to invest. Let me just give a snapshot of how the government is investing. Last week it was reported that \$500,000 was used to create a logo and branding for poverty reduction. Is that the way we are going to spend our money? It definitely is the way the Liberal government spends money, but is that what is best for Canadians? Is a \$500,000 bill the proper way to do this?

We need smart investments, and that is something the government cannot do.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): We will pause now for Statements by Members. The hon. member will have five minutes and 45 seconds coming to her when we return to the debate.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

HARRY LESLIE SMITH

Mr. Neil Ellis (Bay of Quinte, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I pay tribute to a constituent of mine, Harry Leslie Smith. Harry was an acclaimed writer who used his first-hand experience of growing up in England during the Depression and serving in the Royal Air Force during the Second World War to make a direct call to build up democracy and advance human rights across our world.

It was an honour to know Harry. He had a tireless spirit and always spoke up for the marginalized, styling himself as the “world's oldest rebel”. His focus was inspired by the many challenges he confronted in his earliest years. Harry's ability to connect with others across generations, cultural backgrounds and with personal stories inspired us all to listen and learn about the past, but especially to participate in building our own futures.

The scale of tributes pouring in for Harry shows the real impact of his legacy, which will be carried on by his son John.

I stand with Harry.

* * *

[Translation]

NATIONAL UNITY

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the leaders who go down in history are the ones who unite Canadians

on the important issues of our times in order to build a better Canada. Recognizing our first nations and the two founding nations, the French and the English, as the underpinnings of an open and welcoming society is essential.

Our country's future depends on national unity and on our ability to work with all the nations living together across Canada in the hopes of ensuring individual and collective prosperity. There is no point in working against one another and rekindling a sterile debate that is fraught with consequences.

Let us all be proud of what we can contribute to our country in a constructive manner for future generations.

* * *

• (1100)

[English]

JEWISH REFUGEE DAY

Mr. Marco Mendicino (Eglinton—Lawrence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today on Jewish Refugee Day, I wish to commemorate the nearly one million Jewish refugees who were forced to flee Iran and other Arab countries due to religious persecution. These Jewish families were devastated as they were forced into exile and forced to experience injustices, the most egregious human rights violations, systemic violence and even genocide. Fortunately, some were able to flee to Israel, Europe, South America, and even here in Canada where their vibrant communities today exemplify their strength and resilience.

While the community continues to thrive, we remember these refugees and their lived experiences, as many suffer similar injustices around the world today. On this day, let us reflect and recognize the persecution and the sacrifices of these Jewish refugees and what they had to endure. Let us also celebrate their accomplishments and resilience, all of which are a testament to the strength of this community.

* * *

[Translation]

HIV-AIDS

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, December 1 is World AIDS Day. It is a time to remember that too many lives have been affected by HIV and AIDS, to thank the people on the front lines who work with HIV-infected individuals, and to raise public awareness.

[English]

In 2016, more than 63,000 people were living with HIV across Canada, and we saw an 11% increase in the number of reported cases.

Statements by Members

[Translation]

We are therefore very concerned about the fact that some community organizations may have to shut down because of a lack of funding. Many people are reporting a decline in services for individuals living with HIV and their families. If we want to end the stigma associated with HIV-AIDS and prevent the virus from spreading, we must continue to invest in a variety of approaches.

[English]

If we truly want a future without HIV-AIDS, we all have to work together.

* * *

[Translation]

TWO COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS IN VAUDREUIL—SOULANGES

Mr. Peter Schiefke (Vaudreuil—Soulanges, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today, I have the honour to rise in the House to acknowledge the exceptional work of two community organizations in Vaudreuil—Soulanges, the L'Actuel volunteer centre and the Circle of Friends in Saint-Lazare.

In addition to supporting local organizations, the L'Actuel volunteer centre provides direct support to people who are living alone, isolated, or losing their autonomy. The centre's incredibly dedicated volunteers help the most vulnerable members of our community enjoy the holiday season every year.

[English]

Created and led by Judy Nagy, the Circle of Friends started in the Saint-Lazare—Hudson area and now has over 700 members who cross our whole community. In times of crisis, they support our families by pooling their resources to provide needed meals, transportation, child care and pet care to families who are in crisis.

Thanks to the dedication of these volunteers, our community is stronger. I would like to give my warmest thanks to the women and men in our community who put the needs and well-being of others above their own every single day.

* * *

WILLARD KINZIE

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I stand in the House today to pay tribute to the late Willard Kinzie. Willard Kinzie was the first mayor of the city of Barrie following its incorporation in 1959. Residents of Barrie have an incredible waterfront today. It is because of Mayor Kinzie's vision, leadership and love of the city that generations of Barrie residents get to enjoy our waterfront along Kempenfelt Bay.

When I was first elected to council in 2006, like so many of my colleagues, I relied on Mayor Kinzie's wisdom and knowledge to serve my constituents. He taught me so much about our history and public service.

Mayor Kinzie was active in Barrie until his passing, always there to provide guidance and mentorship to city council. Mr Kinzie served as mayor from 1957 to 1961, but because of the rules of the day, he could only serve one term. One can only imagine what he

could have done if given more than those four years. Fortunately, he continued to give decades of his life to the city and the people he loved. We will miss him dearly. We thank Mayor Kinzie for his bold vision and for not listening to the naysayers. We also thank his family for sharing Willard with us so that we could learn so much and be inspired by him.

May God bless Willard Kinzie and use him to create an even better heaven.

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●(1105)

[Translation]

HOLIDAY TRAIN

Mr. Jean-Claude Poissant (La Prairie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a very special event was held in my riding on November 25.

For the 20th year in a row, the CP Holiday Train rolled through the riding, making stops in Kahnawake, Saint-Constant, Deslon and Saint-Mathieu. At each stop, the crowds lining the track were treated to Christmas classics performed by Jojo Mason and Sam Roberts Band.

According to the organizations, more than 10,000 people came out to see the Holiday Train. That speaks volumes about the success of this event. The Holiday Train provides a special way to raise money for various local charities. This year alone, Canadian Pacific has donated over \$20,000 to charity.

I invite the public to give generously to the various fundraisers being held in my riding this Sunday. Their donations will help many families receive Christmas baskets and enjoy the wonderful holiday season.

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[English]

TORONTO FOUNDATION FOR STUDENT SUCCESS

Mr. Geng Tan (Don Valley North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when we improve the health and the well-being of our children, they do better in school. It is estimated that one in five Canadian children is at risk of starting school on an empty stomach. This is why school nutrition programs have become so popular.

Earlier this month, I joined the Toronto Foundation for Student Success as it teamed up with schools such as Muirhead Public School in my riding to prepare and deliver healthy breakfasts to students. I watched each student smile happily.

I commend the dedication of the Toronto Foundation for Student Success, participating schools, and the devoted parent volunteers who help prepare and serve these nutritious meals so that all students can start their day ready to learn.

*Statements by Members***ADOPTION AWARENESS MONTH**

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today marks the end of Adoption Awareness Month. Throughout this month, we take special notice of adoptive families and community partners across Canada and celebrate the joys and challenges that exist for families formed by adoption.

For me, adoption is a topic that is close to home. My husband, Mike, was adopted at birth. Last week, I had an opportunity to meet with Adopt4Life—Ontario's Adoptive Parents Association, who were in Ottawa along with the Adoption Council of Canada, and faculty and students from the University of Western Ontario to raise awareness about how Canada can better support families formed by adoption and how adoption has changed over the years.

We spoke about the importance of attachment between children and their parents in families formed by adoption. Attachment is a crucial aspect of human development. This is often disrupted for kids in child welfare.

I encourage MPs to support policies that help adoptive parents to strengthen these bonds and enable their children to thrive.

* * *

[Translation]

BIKE ACROSS THE LAC SAINT-JEAN

Mr. Richard Hébert (Lac-Saint-Jean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to an organization in my riding that recently received a tremendous honour.

Once again, Bike Across the Lac Saint-Jean beat two other finalists from across the country to win the Pursuit Adventure/Outdoors Award at the 2018 Canadian Tourism Awards.

Bike Across the Lac Saint-Jean has not been around for long, but it has already made a name for itself in the sports world and in our region's tourism industry. This award reflects just how important this event is to the Lac-Saint-Jean region.

I want to offer my sincere congratulations to all those involved in this great race, especially David Lecointre and Michel de Champlain, the general director and the president of the organization. They are making our region proud.

The 2019 edition of the event will take place in my riding from February 14 to 16, from Roberval to Péribonka. Congratulations once again.

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[English]

BEST BUDDIES

Mr. Chris Bittle (St. Catharines, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Best Buddies is an international program that has operated for over 50 years and now has 2,500 chapters worldwide. Today, I rise to speak about one of them. Niagara's chapter of the Best Buddies program partners with students at Brock University, and provides opportunities for members like Stephanie Smith to participate in monthly outings and activities, including trips to the local hockey arena to cheer on our IceDogs, trips to Heartland Forest to learn about our

natural environment and even an annual trip to Toronto to attend a theatrical production.

Stephanie met with me earlier this year to highlight how much Best Buddies means to her, her friends and the many students at Brock University. The Brock chapter of Best Buddies was established in 2008. The program pairs adults who have intellectual disabilities with students at Brock University to help build friendships, expand networks and participate in monthly activities. In Niagara, the chapter of Best Buddies is coordinated by Community Living St. Catharines, and I would like to take this opportunity to thank them for helping to make this great program possible.

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● (1110)

JEWISH REFUGEE DAY

Mr. David Sweet (Flamborough—Glanbrook, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this year has been a particularly difficult one for the global Jewish community. The attack on the Tree of Life synagogue in Pittsburgh last month, as well as too many other anti-Semitic events even here in Canada, are a painful reminder that the fight against anti-Semitism endures.

Today, on Jewish Refugee Day, we commemorate the 850,000 Jews across the Middle East who were displaced from their homes in Arab countries and Iran as a result of racism and religious persecution during the 1940s to the 1970s.

As part of the annual commemoration, B'nai Brith is doing truly outstanding work in honouring and educating people on the horrors that Jewish families and individuals have faced, while also promoting awareness of many other great injustices.

On behalf of my parliamentary colleagues, I want to assure the Canadian Jewish community that we remember the Jewish refugees forced from their homes on this day of commemoration, and that we will always fight against anti-Semitism and racism in all of its forms, here at home and around the world.

* * *

[Translation]

LA FRANCOPHONIE

Mr. Darrell Samson (Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, tomorrow, on Saturday, December 1, the Franco-Ontarian resistance movement will be holding rallies across Ontario to protest the cuts that Doug Ford's Conservatives made to services in French. These cuts represent an unacceptable infringement on the rights and services that the community has worked to secure. Once again, the Conservative government is clearly showing that it has no respect for the 600,000 Franco-Ontarians and the millions of francophone Canadians. As an Acadian from Nova Scotia and as chair of the official language caucus, I stand with Franco-Ontarians. The Ford government must reverse its decision to scrap the Office of the French Language Services Commissioner and the project to build a French-language university in Ontario.

I want all Franco-Ontarians to know that Acadians are with them.

THE FRANCOPHONIE

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Franco-Ontarians wage a daily battle to protect their linguistic rights and keep the French language alive. The ideological decision made by Doug Ford's Ontario government to eliminate the Office of the French Language Services Commissioner and the proposed French-language university threatens the vitality of the Franco-Ontarian community. The entire French minority in Canada is concerned about this unjustified decision. As history has shown, Franco-Ontarians are brave and never give up in the fight to maintain their rights.

Canadians across the country are mobilizing to defend the official languages. Now the Liberal government needs to prove that it cares about francophone communities by announcing that it will fund its fair share of Ontario's French-language university. I would also like to acknowledge the courage that MPP Amanda Simard has shown in her unwavering defence of the Francophonie.

This Saturday, I hope everyone will participate in the rallies in support of Franco-Ontarians.

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[English]

CARBON PRICING

Mrs. Kelly Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, Saskatchewan gained another ally in its court challenge against the Liberals' carbon tax when New Brunswick's Attorney General gave notice that that province will intervene on Saskatchewan's side. Canadians know that the Liberal carbon tax is nothing more than a cash grab designed to make up for their reckless spending.

We understand that this is a global issue, and that unless countries like China reduce their greenhouse gas emissions, global emissions will continue to increase. The Liberals' carbon tax gives exemptions to big businesses, while their anti-resource legislation hurts the middle class and cripples Canada's economy, all the while doing nothing for the environment. Their carbon tax is not an environmental plan, it is a revenue plan.

Residents of Saskatchewan welcome New Brunswick's support in our fight to make life more affordable for middle-class Canadians and those working hard to join it.

* * *

[Translation]

INVICTUS GAMES

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this year's Invictus Games were held from October 20 to 27 in Australia. The Invictus Games are the only international adaptive sporting event for active duty and veteran service members. They provide a unique opportunity to honour the men and women who have made incredible sacrifices for their country.

● (1115)

[English]

This year's Invictus Games have been filled with some incredible moments of strength, courage and compassion. I am very proud of

Oral Questions

our 39 athletes who competed this year against 17 countries around the world. These games show us the power of sport. These men and women found the motivation to move on and not to be defined by their injuries.

[Translation]

Our government knows how important it is to support veterans and their families. That is why we reopened Veterans Affairs offices. We believe that veterans' access to services is essential.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

MEMBER FOR BRAMPTON EAST

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there was a troubling media report last night claiming that the Liberal member for Brampton East and the Minister of Innovation were both given confidential information about a real estate transaction in Brampton. The report said that the results of the investigation into this deal have been referred to the RCMP.

My question is for the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development. Is this media report true? Did the minister receive confidential information about a real estate transaction in Brampton?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, any insinuation of wrongdoing by the Minister of Innovation is absolutely false and repeating outside the chamber will be met with a strong response from the minister's lawyer.

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there is still so much we do not know involving the saga around the Liberal member for Brampton East. What we do know about this saga is that it involves a police investigation touching on drugs, money laundering, international terrorism and a million dollar gambling debt. The Prime Minister and these Liberals need to come clean and tell us what else they are hiding about this growing scandal.

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have repeated several times, it was last week that the member informed us that he was addressing certain challenges and that he is receiving treatment from a health professional. We believe he is receiving the support he needs.

The member very well knows that when it comes to the RCMP, it works independently of government. That is the proper way for it to function. I hope she would agree.

Oral Questions

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the House leader needs to get her story straight, because up until now both the Prime Minister's Office, the House leader and the whip have been saying that they learned of these problems on November 22. However, we just learned that the Prime Minister's Office is now saying it was told about an RCMP investigation on November 17. Which is it?

The deception and cover-up just keep getting worse. Canadians deserve some honest and clear answers. Let us start with something very simple. On what date did the Prime Minister and his office become aware of this RCMP investigation?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again, the member should very well know, as all members should, that the RCMP works independently of the government. The government does not direct investigations. When it comes to the member in question, it was last week that he informed the office that he was undergoing certain challenges. We hope he receives the treatment and support he needs.

[Translation]

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the RCMP's investigation into the member for Brampton East has put the Liberal government in hot water. The question is no longer whether or not he will resign, but why the Liberal Party has not shown him the door.

The question is simple. What is the truth behind this murky business, and why is the Prime Minister defending the member for Brampton East?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member told us last week that he is addressing certain challenges and is receiving treatment from a health professional. We hope he receives the support he needs. The member knows very well that the RCMP operates independently of government.

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, why is the Prime Minister defending the indefensible? We are talking about potential ties to organized crime. It is outrageous.

The Liberal government's integrity and reputation are at stake. Canadians are concerned and deserve answers.

Did the actions of the Liberal member for Brampton East jeopardize our national security?

• (1120)

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member should know that the RCMP operates independently of government. We respect that independence.

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[English]

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, a few weeks ago the Prime Minister used his best negotiating tactic to forestall Trump to abolish tariffs on steel and aluminum. He was going to deprive the cameras of his presence at the signing of the USMCA. Great negotiating tactics.

However, after all of that, the Prime Minister went ahead and signed the agreement without getting rid of the tariffs on steel and aluminum. The deal should not have been signed with these tariffs still in place. Why are the Liberals going ahead and betraying our steel and aluminum workers?

Ms. Pamela Goldsmith-Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs (Consular Affairs), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are very focused on eliminating the unjustified and illegal tariffs imposed by the U.S. on Canadian steel and aluminum. This is a top priority for our government.

We have put in place strong responsive measures to defend our workers that have been well received by Canadians. We have also signed the auto section 232 side letter, which gives Canada important protections against the threat of U.S. automotive tariffs that would have hurt our economy and thousands of good-paying jobs on both sides of the border.

[Translation]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, thousands of jobs in the steel and aluminum sector are in jeopardy, but that is not all. There is also a clause that gives the United States oversight of Canada's dairy sector.

This is the third time in three years that the Prime Minister has weakened supply management, this time by signing a document that hands control of our system over to the Americans and puts our sovereignty at risk.

Why are the Liberals always using our farmers as a bargaining chip?

Mr. Jean-Claude Poissant (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the NDP says certain things in the House, but behind closed doors, it admits that this agreement will protect thousands of Canadian jobs. The NDP leader actually applauded the agreement at an event in Ottawa on Tuesday, October 30. The NDP member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, who is also the NDP's Quebec lieutenant, called it the best deal possible.

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MEMBER FOR BRAMPTON EAST

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we cannot say it enough. This is a bad agreement for farmers and aluminum and steel workers.

When he was elected, the Prime Minister said he was going to do things differently. He said he would put an end to conflicts of interest and any appearance of conflict of interest.

After the investigations into the Prime Minister himself and into the Minister of Finance, and as the commissioner is looking into the case of the hon. member for Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, now it is the hon. member for Brampton East who is being investigated. This time the RCMP is involved, which makes it even worse.

Oral Questions

What is happening in the Liberal Party? Do they think they can do whatever they want?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member said a lot of things. He can do what he wants, but he knows full well that the RCMP works independently from the government. On this side of the House, we respect the work of the RCMP.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government does not seem to be taking this very seriously.

This is not trivial. When the member for Brampton East sat on the Standing Committee on Finance, he asked some very troubling questions, such as, “How many resources does FINTRAC have to go after each little \$10,000 transaction? If I’m money laundering, I’m not doing transactions in the millions to catch attention. I’m doing them at the \$10,000, \$15,000 limit to get away with it.”

If those questions drew the attention of the RCMP, why did they not draw the attention of the Prime Minister?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we take all of this quite seriously. I repeat that the RCMP operates independently of government. I understand very well that the member is also very interested in this matter. However, on this side of the House, we respect the independence of the RCMP, which will continue to do its work.

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[English]

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals said that the Prime Minister would not attend a new NAFTA signing ceremony with Donald Trump if the steel and aluminum tariffs were still in place.

Workers in our steel and aluminum sectors have been greatly affected by these tariffs, and yet we saw the Prime Minister with Donald Trump this morning, signing this deal.

Can the Liberals confirm that the tariffs have been removed?

• (1125)

Ms. Pamela Goldsmith-Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs (Consular Affairs), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada has always been clear that the section 232 tariffs and the negotiations on the new trade deal are entirely different issues. Section 232, after all, is actually a national security consideration, and it is absurd to suggest that Canada could pose any kind of security threat to the United States.

It is overwhelmingly in the best interests of both Canada and the United States that these reciprocal tariffs be lifted. In the meantime, our strong responsive measures to defend our workers will remain firmly in place.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a couple of weeks ago, the Liberals said that the Prime Minister would not grace Donald Trump with his presence at the signing ceremony of the new NAFTA deal if the steel and aluminum tariffs were not removed.

This morning, we saw the Prime Minister standing side by side with Donald Trump at that very ceremony. So much for claiming to have the backs of steel and aluminum workers. Why did the Prime Minister capitulate to Donald Trump and give him the signing ceremony he said he would not?

Ms. Pamela Goldsmith-Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs (Consular Affairs), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am rather surprised to hear the response from the opposition this week criticizing Canada’s retaliatory measures in response to the illegal and unjustified section 232 tariffs. Last Monday, they called our response dumb, and yet it has been well received by Canadians and was supported by the Conservatives at the time. Firstly, the Conservatives are asking us to capitulate on NAFTA. Secondly, they are asking us to abandon our retaliatory measures. It is a darn good thing they are not at the negotiating table.

[Translation]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I hope the minister and the government plan to repeat that to our steel and aluminum workers who continue to suffer as a result of those tariffs.

On November 7, on behalf of the Government of Canada, our ambassador to the United States said that Canada would not sign as long as the steel and aluminum tariffs remained in place. This morning the government signed, and yet the tariffs are still in place.

Why does the government say one thing and do the opposite?

[English]

Ms. Pamela Goldsmith-Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs (Consular Affairs), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian industry stands behind our measured, perfectly reciprocal dollar-for-dollar response to these illegal and unjustified tariffs. I would like to remind my hon. colleague that the Canadian Steel Producers Association has said, “Canada’s retaliatory tariffs are vital in protecting the jobs of 23,000 steelworkers, stabilizing our domestic market, and creating the opportunity for Canada’s steel producers to enhance supply chains.”

[Translation]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the question is very simple.

As long as the free trade agreement remained unsigned, we had leverage to pressure the American government to lift its tariffs on steel, aluminum and softwood lumber. There are 80,000 workers in Quebec alone who are directly affected by those tariffs.

In a lovely photo of all the leaders taken this morning, the Prime Minister signed. Since he signed, one would expect that those tariffs had been lifted, but they are still in place.

Why?

*Oral Questions**[English]*

Ms. Pamela Goldsmith-Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs (Consular Affairs), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as we have always said, section 232 tariffs and the negotiations on the new trade deal are entirely different issues. Our position remains clear and firm. These tariffs are entirely illegal and unjustified. The new NAFTA agreement is further proof that our government puts Canadians and workers at the forefront of every single one of our decisions and actions. Just as we fought for Canadians at the NAFTA negotiating table, we will continue to fight against these tariffs for our steel and aluminum workers.

* * *

CARBON PRICING

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Actually, Mr. Speaker, they put Donald Trump at the forefront of their agenda on trade, capitulating to him.

Back here at home, Canadians are suffering under carbon taxes. In Calgary, the school board just reported that it had to spend \$3.3 million on carbon taxes and had to cancel five school buses, affecting 400 school children, because the carbon tax was too expensive to keep those buses in operation. Ironically, school buses are good for the environment because they put everybody on the same vehicle, instead of more cars on the road.

How many Ontario school buses will have to be cancelled when the Liberals impose their new carbon tax on January 4?

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is really unfortunate that there is a new generation of Conservatives who do not seem to understand that climate change is real, that it is having a real impact. In fact, there are some, like the member for Cariboo—Prince George, who do not even seem to think that climate change is real. We know that we need to take action and to take the measures that make the most sense. When we look at putting a price on pollution, we have the president and CEO of the Business Council of Canada saying, “We support the price mechanism because it provides the economic incentive for consumers to change their behaviour and for businesses to invest in technologies that progressively reduce their emissions over time.”

What Canadians want to know is what exactly is the Conservative—

• (1130)

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

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Well, Mr. Speaker, our plan certainly is not to hammer school children, consumers and families with higher taxes and then the quote the lobbyists of CEOs to defend it all. In fact, those same CEOs have gotten themselves exemptions from the carbon tax while making everyday Canadians pay.

The government's own documents admit that the carbon tax will have to be six times higher than the government admits right now. That means a 66¢ per litre tax on gas. Will the minister confirm that the tax is going to go up 66¢ a litre if this party is re-elected?

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am quite happy to present the document that explains exactly how pricing pollution will work. In provinces that have not stepped up and want to make it free to pollute, we have said that we will take all of the revenues from the price on pollution and give them back to Ontarians, give them back to Manitobans and give them back to Saskatchewanians, because we know we need to do right by the environment and we can also make life affordable.

Once again, what Canadians want to know is what—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The hon. member for Carleton asked a very good question and I am trying to hear the answer. I am having a hard time, so I would ask the members to quit shouting across and let the hon. Minister of Environment finish her answer.

Hon. Catherine McKenna: Mr. Speaker, maybe I could just talk about what doctors from around the world are saying. They are saying a price on pollution is the best treatment for a major public health crisis afflicting the country: climate change. Mark Carney, Governor of the Bank of England, said, “You need a price on carbon and a price on pollution.” Canada as of today has both. Not only does it tackle climate change, it also unlocks the \$30 trillion economic opportunity of clean growth. We can grow the economy, we can tackle the climate—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The hon. member for Laurier—Sainte-Marie.

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FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, according to news reports, many experts say there is definite proof that Canadian weapons have been used in the Saudi-led war in Yemen. They say photos and videos clearly show Canadian armoured vehicles and rifles on the scene and that Canadian companies train pilots taking part in hostilities.

We are talking about potential complicity in war crimes. Will the government wake up and launch an immediate independent investigation?

Oral Questions

Ms. Pamela Goldsmith-Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs (Consular Affairs), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada calls for an immediate ceasefire in Yemen. We deplore the humanitarian disaster and demand immediate access for life-saving food and aid. Canada has led a resolution at the UN to renew the mandated experts to examine human rights violations in Yemen. We require and expect that Canadian arms exports are used in a way that fully respects human rights. If there is evidence that Canadians arms are being misused or have been diverted, we will suspend those export permits as we have done in the past.

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we provide humanitarian assistance and then we provide arms to the country that prevents that humanitarian assistance from reaching those who need it.

[*Translation*]

We have been calling on the government for three years now to stop exporting weapons to Saudi Arabia. Some of the reasons for that include political prisoners, torture, the oppression of women and forced disappearances, not to mention the terrible war in Yemen, which brought famine, destruction and war crimes to that ravaged country.

What is the government waiting for? When will it finally stop exporting weapons to Saudi Arabia?

[*English*]

Ms. Pamela Goldsmith-Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs (Consular Affairs), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government condemns the horrible murder of Jamal Khashoggi and is deeply concerned by reports of the participation of Saudi officials. We strongly demand and expect that Canadian arms exports are used in a way that fully respects human rights.

As the Prime Minister said, we are actively reviewing existing export permits to Saudi Arabia and, of course, during this review, no permits are being issued.

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FINANCE

Hon. Diane Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals are going to have to pay \$23 billion next year just for the interest on the country's debt and they are going to borrow \$20 billion to pay for it. That is like using one credit card to pay off another. Every sensible Canadian knows that is a recipe for financial disaster.

To fix the problem, the Liberals need to keep their promise to Canadians to balance the budget. When will they?

• (1135)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in 2015, under the Conservative government's disastrous policies, Canada was headed for a recession. In fact, Canada was technically in a recession in 2015, with the worst job creation and the worst GDP growth since the Second World War. We took a completely different approach, one that has been praised by the international community. It involves investing in our infrastructure, investing in Canadians, reducing inequality, and

giving more to the middle class. In fact, because of our actions, next year, the average Canadian family will have \$2,000 more in its pocket than it did under the former government. The economy is growing and our debt-to-GDP ratio is steadily declining, which is fiscally responsible.

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[*English*]

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I grew up in Calgary during Pierre Trudeau's national energy program and 36 years later, we have another made-in-Canada energy crisis. The Prime Minister has killed northern gateway, brought in a tanker ban, killed energy east by changing the application process and spectacularly failed on Trans Mountain. Canada is practically giving away its energy under the government.

When will the Liberals finally stop making things worse and will they kill the “no more pipelines” bill, Bill C-69?

Mr. Paul Lefebvre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we understand the frustration and we care deeply about supporting our energy sector. Our focus is on ensuring that every barrel of Alberta oil gets its full value. That is why our government has made addressing this national issue an urgent priority. We know that the long-term solution is to build pipeline capacity and expand to global markets. That is what we are doing.

Actually, the Minister of Natural Resources, a proud Albertan, was in British Columbia having those consultations with first nations with respect to the Trans Mountain expansion project. We are also having discussions with stakeholders and provinces to look at all short-term options to make sure we get this right.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals need to stop talking about their feelings and fix the crisis they have created.

Under Conservatives, four new pipelines were built and companies wanted to build three more, two to new markets, when the Liberals came to power, but the Liberals chased them all away. Provinces, industry and financial experts all agree that the Liberals “no more pipelines” bill, Bill C-69 will do exactly what it is designed to do: stop any new pipeline from being proposed or built in Canada again.

Will the Liberals act and commit right now to scrap their “no more pipelines” bill, Bill C-69, yes or no?

Oral Questions

Mr. Paul Lefebvre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Bill C-69's better rules would lead to more timely and predictable reviews, and encourage further investments in Canada's natural resources sector and in our people. The Conservatives gutted this process, and we see the results. Nine-nine percent of our oil exports were to a single buyer, the United States. The Conservatives' approach failed.

We are working to restore trust and make sure that good projects can move forward and grow our economy.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the reality is that in 2019, companies planned to have completed three brand new pipelines in Canada, but the Prime Minister deliberately sabotaged all of them. Those pipelines are gone because of the Liberals, and their "no more pipelines" bill, Bill C-69 will mean no new pipelines proposed or built in Canada again.

This week, Trican Well Service had to lay off 70 employees. Thousands more job losses are expected in the new year, but I guess that is what the Prime Minister wants, since apparently he thinks oil and gas and trades workers are dangerous to rural communities.

Will the Liberals commit right now to scrap their "no more pipelines" bill, Bill C-69, yes or no?

Mr. Paul Lefebvre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, while the previous government failed to get the job done, we are taking decisive action and seeing results.

We secured the largest private sector investment made in history through the \$40-billion LNG Canada project. We are helping producers build up refining capacity here in Canada, because we know that means more value for every barrel. We announced major tax incentives in the fall economic statement for refiners and upgraders. We are moving forward in the right way through meaningful consultations on the Trans Mountain expansion project.

This is the progress that we have been making, but we know there is more work to do, which is exactly what we intend to do.

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[*Translation*]

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals have just caved in to President Trump again.

NAFTA 2.0 includes a clause that gives the United States oversight of our supply management system. Give me a break. By sacrificing dairy producers, the Liberals are sacrificing our food sovereignty.

Do they still have the nerve to tell us that they signed a good agreement?

Mr. Jean-Claude Poissant (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we understand that there will be repercussions for our farmers and we are committed to supporting them fully and fairly.

To support their success, we are forming working groups with dairy producers and processors and with egg and poultry producers

and processors. We will help our supply managed producers and processors innovate, grow, and remain competitive and sustainable for future generations.

• (1140)

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Salaberry—Suroît, NDP): Mr. Speaker, what the member just said makes no sense. As a farmer himself, he should be ashamed. Three times in three years—in the agreement with Europe, in the TPP and now in the United States-Mexico-Canada agreement—the Liberals opened breaches in supply management. Worse still, there is a clause in the agreement that gives the U.S. oversight of our system.

The Liberals promised to protect supply management at all costs. Farmers believed them, but they bitterly regret it now.

After opening up nearly 10% of our market to foreign producers, how can the Liberals continue to claim that they are there to protect our farmers?

Mr. Jean-Claude Poissant (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will say it again.

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 on October 30. The NDP member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, who is also the NDP's lieutenant, described it as the best possible agreement. The NDP privately admits that this is a good agreement because it protects the millions of Canadian jobs that were in jeopardy.

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PUBLIC SAFETY

Ms. Anju Dhillon (Dorval—Lachine—LaSalle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last Wednesday, a major wind storm cut communications for the people of the Magdalen Islands. The storm made it impossible to communicate with the mainland and the people were cut off from the rest of Quebec.

Thursday afternoon, the Quebec public safety minister, Geneviève Guilbault, declared that the emergency was beyond the provincial government's capacity to respond.

Can the minister explain what our government is doing to help the people of the Magdalen Islands?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our thoughts are with the people of the Magdalen Islands.

I have spoken with the Minister of National Revenue and we immediately responded to Quebec's request. A Hercules aircraft is on its way with the personnel needed to assist in the evacuation.

On behalf of all Canadians, we are grateful for the first responders, Canadian Armed Forces and the teams of people working during this very difficult time.

[English]

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Mr. Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon—Grasswood, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals are not taking Canada's national security seriously. New Zealand is the third of our major allies to block their biggest telecoms from giving Huawei access to their 5G network. They understand that giving the Chinese government access is cause for alarm.

Why does the Liberal government not understand the national security risk, and say no way to Huawei?

Mr. David Lametti (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as we have said a number of times, our government will never compromise our national security, full well understanding that we need to attract foreign investment, full well understanding that 5G is part of where we are going in the future in terms of providing quality service to Canadians.

For some time now the Conservatives have been playing politics with national security. But now it seems that the mastermind of these questions—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): One moment please. The translation is not working.

We are okay now. I will ask the hon. parliamentary secretary to continue.

Mr. David Lametti: Mr. Speaker, as I said, our government on a number of occasions in the House will never compromise national security in these matters, yet we have to be open to global investment and 5G is part of our plan moving forward in order to provide good quality service to Canadians from coast to coast.

For some time, the Conservatives have been playing politics with our national security. It seems the mastermind of these questions, their director of communications Jake Enwright, is working for the same company they say is a threat to our economic prosperity. It makes one wonder who they are serving.

• (1145)

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, once again, they are sneakily trying to change the subject.

The United States, Australia and New Zealand, three of the Five Eyes, abandoned Huawei, but the other two countries in this security alliance—just two—are still waiting. Why?

Even Germany and Great Britain have serious doubts with respect to national security.

Why does the Prime Minister think this company does not pose a threat to Canada's national security?

Mr. David Lametti (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I just said in English, we are open to global investment that will drive our growth and to developing the 5G system in

Oral Questions

Canada. This system will be very important to Canadians' future, but we will never compromise national security.

It is strange that the Harper government's director of communications, Jake Enwright, is now working for the company my colleague just mentioned. That makes one wonder.

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IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is up to Mr. Enwright to answer those questions. I am here as the official opposition and I am asking the question. It is important for Canada.

We now have another problem: illegal immigrants. Yesterday, we learned from the Parliamentary Budget Officer that it is going to cost \$1.1 billion between now and 2020 to process the files of the illegal immigrants who have come to Canada.

What is more, yesterday, the minister misled the House by saying that the Parliamentary Budget Officer had it wrong when he said that the system was not working.

Most of the illegal migrants are from Nigeria, which proves that the Prime Minister's irresponsible tweet had an impact everywhere except the United States.

When will the government fix this problem?

Mr. Peter Schiefke (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister (Youth) and to the Minister of Border Security and Organized Crime Reduction, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, every time the Conservatives and my hon. colleague try to convince Canadians that a tweet is the reason why people are arriving at our borders, they are questioning Canadians' intelligence.

Like every other country, Canada is seeing an increase in migrants. Canadians are proud that we have one of the best systems in the world for protecting our borders and ensuring that every asylum seeker has access to a fair and transparent system. Ultimately, that is what Canadians expect of us and that is exactly what we are doing.

[English]

Mr. Bob Saroya (Markham—Unionville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday we learned that the Prime Minister's famous tweet will cost Canadian taxpayers over \$1 billion by 2020. This does not include millions spent by the provinces on top of it. Since that tweet, 38,000 illegal border crossers have walked into Canada. Meanwhile, real refugees who play by the rules continue to wait for years. When will the Prime Minister admit his failures at the border and fix this crisis immediately?

Mr. Peter Schiefke (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister (Youth) and to the Minister of Border Security and Organized Crime Reduction, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again, every time the Conservatives try to convince Canadians that, because of a tweet, we have migrants coming to our borders, it questions their intelligence. The one thing I will say is that they are very quick to forget their own record.

Oral Questions

In fact, 230,000 asylum seekers came into Canada under their watch. What did they do to improve on the system? They did absolutely nothing. Wait a minute, I made a mistake. They cut \$400 million from the system. In fact, they went so far as to cut medical services from women and children.

That is their record, not ours. We are going to do better.

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INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Romeo Saganash (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the housing crisis in the north is so severe that Nunavik alone needs 1,000 houses, today alone. It is a serious problem. The lack of housing leads to social challenges, marginalization and mental health problems. A woman recently died in my riding after losing her home. The UN declaration directs Canada to ensure the well-being of indigenous elders, women, youth and children.

The Inuit want to know. Will the Prime Minister call a state of emergency to finally address the housing crisis?

Mr. Dan Vandal (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in support of distinctions-based housing strategies with our first nations, Inuit and Métis partners, budget 2018 invested \$600 million over three years for first nations housing, \$500 million for Métis nations housing and \$400 for Inuit-led housing. This funding is a significant step toward addressing the housing gap in indigenous communities. We will continue working to close the unacceptable housing gap in indigenous communities.

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• (1150)

STATUS OF WOMEN

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as the 16 days of activism to end violence against women go on, women's groups across Canada still struggle to keep their doors open. These groups give critical front-line service to women fleeing violence. They told us, "if you value the lives of women, you're going to appropriately fund those organizations that are serving these women and potentially saving their lives."

Liberals say they want to end violence against women. Why will they not fund core, secure operations funding for these brave groups saving women's lives?

Mr. Terry Duguid (Parliamentary Secretary for Status of Women, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government understands that a strong and vibrant women's movement across Canada is essential to supporting the middle class and those working hard to join it. Women's organizations must have the capacity and resources to do their good work.

That is why, after 10 years of being undermined by the Harper government, we launched the capacity-building funds stemming from budget 2018, an investment of \$100 million over five years to increase organizational and sector capacity. The women's movement across the country has asked for a reliable, predictable and accessible source of funds—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The hon. member for Battle River—Crowfoot.

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NATURAL RESOURCES

Hon. Kevin Sorenson (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Alberta is losing over \$80 million a day on heavily discounted oil. We are losing foreign investment that is leaving Alberta and Canada. We have lost over 100,000 jobs, and the bleeding is not about to stop anytime soon, because the current government has halted, cancelled or delayed every major energy project, has put in ridiculously onerous regulations and is giving us the no-pipeline bill, Bill C-69.

I am not asking if but when this Minister of Natural Resources will kill Bill C-69.

Mr. Paul Lefebvre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let us be very clear. The piece of legislation, Bill C-69, would encourage further investments because it would give investors greater certainty through short timelines, early engagement and one project meaning one review. The Conservatives can focus on rhetoric. We will focus on getting the job done for our energy sector.

Mr. Martin Shields (Bow River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal government has failed Canadian energy workers. Over 100,000 and counting are out of work. Small businesses across my riding of Bow River have been devastated, and they do not even get the carbon tax exemptions the Liberals have given to large corporations. Rather than fix the problems they have caused, the Liberals are doubling down with their anti-Canadian energy bill, Bill C-69. This bill will be the final nail in the coffin of Canadian energy.

When will the government show it cares about Canadian energy workers and cancel Bill C-69?

Mr. Paul Lefebvre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said before, Bill C-69 means one project one review, to give certainty to the industry.

Let me tell my colleagues that the horizon is actually looking very well for the energy sector. I know the current times are difficult. However, over the next 10 years, there is over half a trillion dollars in proposed private sector investment in the natural resources sector alone. In Alberta alone, that includes 102 energy projects representing an investment of \$178 billion.

These projects do not just mean development for energy resources. They mean jobs for Albertans.

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister promised several important pieces of indigenous legislation before the next election. Three years in, there is nothing to report. The rights and recognition framework has stalled. The language act is nowhere to be seen. On the child welfare act, today they proudly announced that someday they are going to table some legislation. Additions to reserve is buried in a budget bill, with no consultation. They have over-promised, with no delivery.

Can the minister tell us if any of the promised legislation will be law before the end of this Parliament?

Mr. Dan Vandal (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is delivering on a new relationship with indigenous peoples that empowers communities and advances self-determination. New investments of \$16.8 billion through budgets mean 156 new school projects, 359 new water projects and 165,000 requests from first nations children approved under Jordan's principle.

We know there is more to do, and we are committed to getting the job done.

• (1155)

Mr. William Amos (Pontiac, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my riding of Pontiac is on traditional Algonquin territory, and I am so proud to be working with this great nation, including the Algonquin of Barriere Lake.

[Translation]

I am working with their communities to address priorities such as housing and schools.

[English]

Over successive federal governments, the default management and prevention policy has really hindered the success of this and many other first nations communities.

Our government has been working with communities to enhance financial and administrative capacity, and the Algonquin of Barriere Lake are well on their way to exiting this policy. Can the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indigenous Services please update this House on the work under way toward a more respectful fiscal relationship with first nations?

[Translation]

Mr. Dan Vandal (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for Pontiac for his question and for the good work he does for his constituents.

[English]

Our government is indeed advancing a new fiscal relationship between Canada and the first nations, based on the recognition of rights, co-operation and partnership. We are implementing proposals from first nations, including more flexible and predictable long-term funding for eligible communities, a replacement of the default prevention and management policy, and the establishment of an advisory committee that will guide this work.

Oral Questions

We will continue to work with partners to build a strong future together for first nations and all indigenous peoples.

* * *

[Translation]

AIR TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the realities in Canada's regions are quite different from those in urban centres. We need to create tools to help these regions develop. The government must consider the specific needs of certain geographical areas. In terms of security, these people must not be forgotten. In Abitibi—Témiscamingue, at the Rouyn-Noranda airport, Nav Canada wants to eliminate the night flight services commonly known as FSS.

How does the minister plan on protecting our regions?

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the safety and security of our transportation network is our top priority. My minister is working with Nav Canada on this file to ensure the safety of operations at these two airports. No decision has been made, but no one is talking about cancelling night flights.

* * *

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Mrs. Eva Nassif (Vimy, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as a proud francophone and member of Parliament for Vimy, in Quebec, I was extremely upset by the Ontario Conservatives' cuts targeting Franco-Ontarians.

I would like to know what the government is doing to support the vitality of minority language communities and how it plans to keep them vibrant?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Tourism, Official Languages and La Francophonie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Vimy for her excellent question and for the great work she is doing on behalf of her constituents.

We have an excellent plan to support linguistic communities and francophones across the country.

We have invested \$2.7 billion, the largest investment in history, in our official language minority communities. We have always said that we would be here, we have always done our share and we will continue to do so.

I will be marching on Saturday along with Franco-Ontarians. I hope to see many MPs there, as well.

*Oral Questions**[English]***INTERNATIONAL TRADE**

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this morning the Prime Minister signed the USMCA along with the presidents of the United States and Mexico.

The problem is that appendix 3, sections C10 and 11, undermine Canadian sovereignty and our ability to manage our dairy sector without U.S. intervention. Canada cannot afford to hand over sovereignty of our dairy sector, effectively giving up our ability to provide food security for Canadians.

Why did the Prime Minister capitulate to Donald Trump at the expense of our dairy sector?

[Translation]

Mr. Jean-Claude Poissant (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as we have always said, our party is the one that created supply management, and our party is the one that defended it.

It is important to note that the Americans wanted supply management gone. We made sure that will not happen.

We know there will be repercussions, and we are committed to fully and fairly compensating our producers and processors.

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CONSUMER PROTECTION

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the National Assembly just unanimously adopted a motion condemning the provisions in Bill C-86 that provide weaker consumer credit protection than Quebec laws and will cause confusion about which rules apply to certain insurance contracts.

The motion calls on the government to ensure that provisions in Bill C-86 governing these two sectors will not apply where Quebec standards are already in place.

Will the government amend Bill C-86 to clarify that Quebec laws will continue to apply in full?

• (1200)

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as always, we are committed to providing financial services consumers with the best possible protection while respecting provincial jurisdiction. That is exactly what we are doing as we work with the provinces.

Mrs. Marilène Gill (Manicouagan, BQ): Mr. Speaker, this is the second time that this banker's government has tried to deprive Quebec consumers of their rights.

With Bill C-86, there is a real possibility that Quebec's Office de la protection du consommateur will no longer have any recourse against banks. That means that people who are getting gouged will no longer have any free recourse and will have to pay to take their bank and its army of lawyers to court.

When will the 40 Liberal MPs from Quebec start defending their constituents instead of being the banks' lackeys?

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I just mentioned, we have always

been committed to offering Canadian consumers as much protection as possible when it comes to their financial services, while still respecting provincial jurisdictions. That continues to be the case with Bill C-86.

* * *

*[English]***NATURAL RESOURCES**

Mr. Darshan Singh Kang (Calgary Skyview, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, with Alberta's economy hurting, Albertans are worried for their future. Bill C-69 is also a huge concern.

Office vacancies are close to 30% in the city of Calgary, and the downtown core has lost over \$12 billion dollars in assessed value since 2015. With pipeline paralysis and oil being sold at \$10 a barrel, unemployment has risen to 8.2% in Calgary.

My question is for the Minister of Natural Resources. Will the minister seriously consider the province's request to help buy more rail cars in order to reduce the market access backlog and to avoid cutbacks in oil production?

Mr. Paul Lefebvre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we understand the frustration and care deeply about supporting our energy sector.

We know that the solution is to build pipeline capacity and expand to global markets. That is the work we have been doing and will continue to do.

Currently, there is no consensus within the industry on short-term solutions. That is why we are in active discussions with stakeholders and provinces, including the Government of Alberta, with the goal of bolstering the competitiveness of this sector.

We welcome workable solutions, and we will not back down from supporting this sector and the hard-working Canadians it employs.

* * *

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Erin Weir (Regina—Lewvan, CCF): Mr. Speaker, USMCA, CUSMA, MUSCA, as we hear these strange new acronyms for the deal signed this morning, we might prefer the sound of Muzak. Certainly, we need to face the Muzak and address the American tariffs that remain on our steel and aluminum exports. It would be Muzak to my ears if the government could commit to not ratify the new NAFTA until those American tariffs are lifted.

*Routine Proceedings***ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS**

[Translation]

Ms. Pamela Goldsmith-Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs (Consular Affairs), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, eliminating the unjustified and illegal tariffs imposed by the U.S. on Canadian steel and aluminum is a priority for our government. It is overwhelmingly in the best interests of both Canada and the United States for those reciprocal tariffs to be lifted. In the meantime, our strong responsive measures to defend our workers remain in place.

Let me say this directly to Canadian steel workers: “The Government of Canada has your best interests at heart and has your back”.

[Translation]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The member for Louis-Saint-Laurent on a point of order.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Mr. Speaker, regardless of what party we may belong to, we have a duty as parliamentarians to show the utmost respect for all Canadian diplomats, particularly those who work in our embassies, including the embassy in Mexico. In response to our questions earlier, the member for Vaudreuil—Soulanges said twice that the connection we are making between the migrant crisis and the Prime Minister's tweet questions people's intelligence.

As we learned on April 3 in a National Post article, our diplomats in Mexico who were dealing with the crisis were wondering “how to address these enquiries given the Prime Minister's tweet”. Everyone gets a little carried away sometimes. We can understand partisan attacks.

Will the member have the honour to say that our diplomats are indeed doing a good job and that no one is questioning their intelligence?

• (1205)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): That is not a point of order.

The hon. member for Calgary Rocky Ridge on a point of order.

[English]

Mr. Pat Kelly: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a similar point of order in that it involves the same member. The Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister, in an answer to a question from the member for Markham—Unionville, questioned his intelligence.

We have a long-standing policy in this House, and you have ruled on this many times, that we may not insult another member's intelligence. Therefore, through you, I invite the parliamentary secretary to withdraw his comments.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): I understand how it has been taken now. My apologies to the hon. member for Louis-Saint-Laurent.

I encourage all members to be courteous to each other and take under advisement that we try to maintain a certain level of civility within the chamber and to keep that in mind as we proceed.

[Translation]

FRENCH SERVICES IN ONTARIO

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Tourism, Official Languages and La Francophonie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 32(2), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the federal government's plan to work in partnership with the Government of Ontario on all projects that support the vitality of French-language services in Ontario.

* * *

[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 eight petitions.

* * *

[Translation]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PUBLIC SAFETY AND NATIONAL SECURITY

Mr. Sven Spengemann (Mississauga—Lakeshore, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 27th report of the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security on supplementary estimates (A), 2018-19.

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PETITIONS

HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, this week again I am presenting a petition calling on the Prime Minister to sign the order to bring into force Bill C-452 to crack down on pimps. Last week, I presented e-petitions. Today, I am presenting a paper petition signed by 649 petitioners. How many young girls have suffered from this government's complacency on this file? Again, we are calling on the Prime Minister to pick up his pen and sign the order. That is four times now that we have asked for that.

[English]

ANIMAL WELFARE

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a number of petitions from people who state that the time has come to end testing on animals for cosmetic purposes, and, it is important to note, not research purposes, especially with some of the new techniques out there. I am pleased to present these petitions on their behalf.

Routine Proceedings

FISHERIES

Mr. Fin Donnelly (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise to table an electronic petition with 2,657 signatures. The petitioners are concerned about the impact that gillnets are having on sturgeon. They call on the government to encourage, implement and promote alternative sustainable salmon harvesting techniques that will reduce the impact on salmon stocks of concern, and reduce and eliminate sturgeon bycatch and the subsequent physical damage to and mortality of sturgeon; provide funding to research and implement sustainable fish harvesting technologies, such as fish wheels, fish traps and fish-safe seines; adopt policies and regulations that require gillnets to be fully attended and monitored during entire gillnet soak time, while this transition phase of implementation takes time; and ban all nighttime gillnet use.

I would like to conclude by congratulating Kevin Estrada from the Sturgeon Slayers in Chilliwack, British Columbia, for his hard work on this important petition campaign.

● (1210)

PHARMACARE

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to table yet another petition from a fairly large number of petitioners in Winnipeg North. They are asking for the Prime Minister and the government to recognize the value of a universal pharmacare program. They are asking the government to work with the different stakeholders, provinces and territories, with the idea of adding some form of a pharmacare program to our fantastic health care system.

[Translation]

NANJING MASSACRE

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Salaberry—Suroît, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am presenting a petition signed by 656 people from across the country.

December 13 marks the sombre anniversary of the Nanjing massacre. In 1937, members of the Japanese Imperial Army raped between 20,000 and 80,000 Chinese women and girls and killed roughly 300,000 people. Witnesses of the Nanjing massacre described these atrocities as hell on earth.

The military sexual slavery system of the Japanese military expanded rapidly, affecting an estimated 200,000 women from Korea, the Philippines, China, Burma, Indonesia and other countries.

Canadian citizens are calling on the Government of Canada to declare December 13 of each year as Nanjing massacre commemorative day.

[English]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Mr. Speaker, because five new anchorage spots for 300-metre long freighters off the Island of Gabriola in my riding of Nanaimo—Ladysmith are proposed in order to receive Wyoming coal exports to China, coal that was refused by all western U.S. ports, the petitioners in this petition urge the government to recognize that these anchorages harm fish habitat, risk oil spills, and would introduce heavy industrial activity into quite a pristine area. Moreover, there

would be no local benefit whatsoever, and not even a benefit for Canada. They urge the government to refuse the establishment of these five new industrial anchorages off Gabriola.

[Translation]

VISION CARE

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Mr. Speaker, petitioners are asking the government to commit to acknowledging eye health and vision care as a growing public health issue.

They are also asking the government to respond to this problem, particularly for Canada's most vulnerable, that is, children, seniors suffering from diabetes and indigenous people.

The development of a national framework for action to promote eye health and vision care would benefit all Canadians through the reduction of vision impairment from preventable conditions and changes to known risk factors.

* * *

[English]

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: Questions Nos. 1982 to 1985.

[Text]

Question No. 1982—**Mrs. Cathy McLeod:**

With regard to the government's closure to the public of the Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada office in Winnipeg without an appointment: (a) what is the government's rationale for no longer allowing access to general public without a prior appointment; (b) how many clients were served at this location between January 2015 and September 2018, broken down by month; and (c) what is the breakdown in (b) by purpose of visit, (for example, obtaining a status card, etc.)?

Mr. Dan Vandal (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as it relates to the office located at 365 Hargrave Street, Winnipeg, Manitoba, no data is available, as there was no appointment process in place for this location while access was provided to the general public. In an effort to balance service standards with the safety of the public and staff, and following the closure of the office at 365 Hargrave Street to the general public, a new appointment process was put in place at the new location to minimize disruptions and to ensure that services continued as efficiently as possible.

Routine Proceedings

The ISC office for secure certificate of Indian status, located at 391 York Street Winnipeg, Manitoba, was opened on November 23, 2016, and continues to provide services to the general public by appointment. The majority of appointments are for secure certificate of Indian status card applications, marriage and death registrations, name changes and amendments. The approximate number of visits from November 2016 to September 2018, broken down by month, are as follows: November 2016: 34; December 2016/January 2017: 235; February 2017: 172; March 2017: 250; April 2017: 141; May 2017: 213; June 2017: 221; July 2017: 253; August 2017: 373; September 2017: 297; October 2017: 331; November 2017: 384; December 2017: 273; January 2018: 331; February 2018: 381; March 2018: 408; April 2018: 349; May 2018: 435; June 2018: 299; July 2018: 624; August 2018: 382; and September 2018: 330.

Question No. 1983—Mrs. Cathy McLeod:

With regard to the 10-year grant funding mechanism announced by the Minister of Indigenous Services on December 6, 2017: (a) how many First Nations provided a written expression of interest by the July 13, 2018, deadline; (b) how many First Nations have met the eligibility criteria, as confirmed to the Department of Indigenous Services by the First Nations Financial Management Board; (c) what is the breakdown of (a) and (b) by province or territory; (d) what are the details of reporting mechanisms for accountability to band members; (e) will the Department of Indigenous Services or the First Nations Financial Management Board body determine if the reporting mechanisms for accountability to band members are adequate and have been met; and (f) what is the complete list of First Nations individuals and organizations that were consulted between December 6, 2017, and October 16, 2018?

Mr. Dan Vandal (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with regard to (a), there were 214 first nations that provided a written expression of interest by the July 13, 2018 deadline. As of October 15, 2018, a total of 252 first nations had submitted a written expression of interest.

With regard to (b), the First Nations Financial Management Board has not yet completed its assessment of the first nations who sent in an expression of interest.

With regard to (c), the breakdown of eligible first nations by province or territory is not yet known. The number of first nations who expressed interest in the 10-year grant is distributed by province or territory as follows: Alberta, 17; British Columbia, 88; Manitoba, 30; New Brunswick, 8; Newfoundland and Labrador, 3; Nova Scotia, 11; Northwest Territories, 2; Ontario, 45; Prince Edward Island, 2; Quebec, 14; Saskatchewan, 32.

With regard to (d), under the 10-year grant, measures for accountability to first nation members are codified in the financial administration law, FAL, or financial administration bylaw, FAB, of the first nation and reinforced in the funding agreement. First nations must enact and maintain a FAL or FAB in order to be eligible and to maintain eligibility for a 10-year grant.

Under a FAL/FAB, the first nation must have a policy for first nation information or involvement. The council must establish such a policy and/or procedures or give directions respecting the means by which members of the first nation must be informed about or involved in consideration of the following: the annual budget; the multi-year financial plan; and budget deficits or extraordinary expenditures. Additionally, the council must post a public notice of each council meeting when each of the following is presented for approval: the multi-year financial plan; the annual budget; and

amendments to the annual budget. Members of the first nation may attend that part of the council meeting when the matters referred to in the above are being considered.

With regard to (e), under the 10-year grant compliance measures are replaced by practices that strengthen first nations governance and empower first nation citizens to hold their leaders accountable. This includes ongoing monitoring of the co-developed eligibility criteria for 10-year grants by the First Nations Financial Management Board. This monitoring would include an assessment of the adequacy of reporting to band members as per the reporting provisions codified in the first nation's financial administration law, FAL, or financial administration bylaw, FAB. On an annual basis, the First Nations Financial Management Board will report the results of their assessment of eligibility criteria to ISC. ISC will support the first nations to remediate any issues related to maintaining eligibility for 10-year grant, including the reporting mechanisms for accountability.

With regard to (f), from October 11 to November 20, 2017, Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada, INAC, and the AFN met on nine occasions with first nations leaders and technical experts around the country to seek their input on options to address predictability of funding, sufficient funding for program delivery, and mutual accountability. The feedback from participants on their priorities and major concerns were considered and reflected in the report entitled, "A new approach: Co-development of a new fiscal relationship between Canada and First Nation". The Assembly of First Nations presented this report to all first nations chiefs in attendance at Assembly of First Nations' special chiefs assembly in Ottawa, on December 6, 2017. Department of Indigenous Services Canada officials continue with ongoing co-development work related to the 10-year grant with both the Assembly of First Nations and the First Nations Financial Management Board. Beginning in January 2018, Indigenous Services Canada staff participated in a number of information sessions across many regions to provide first nations participants with more information about the grant.

Question No. 1984—Mrs. Cathy McLeod:

With regard to funding for the Indigenous Early Learning and Child Care Framework: (a) for what will funding be utilized, broken down by item; and (b) what is the percentage and total of the funding that will be utilized for administrative costs?

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing and Urban Affairs), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with regard to (a), in support of the indigenous early learning and child care, ELCC, framework, the Government of Canada is committing up to \$1.7 billion over 10 years to strengthen early learning and child care programs and services for indigenous children and families starting in 2018-19. This is part of the commitment of \$7.5 billion over 11 years the government has made to support and create more high-quality, affordable child care across the country.

Routine Proceedings

Over the next 10 years, up to \$1.02 billion will support ELCC for first nations and will be managed in partnership with first nations. Up to \$111 million will support ELCC for Inuit and will be managed in partnership with Inuit. Up to \$450 million will support ELCC for the Métis Nation and will be managed in partnership with the Métis Nation. New funding will be aimed at improving and increasing access to culturally rooted early learning and child care programs and services, aligned with the co-developed goals and priorities set out in the Indigenous ELCC framework.

In addition to distinctions-based funding, enhanced funding of \$34 million over 10 years will also be available to enhance the aboriginal head start in urban and northern communities, AHSUNC, program. In addition, a total of \$44 million over 10 years will support quality improvement projects, that is, application-based, indigenous-led projects to advance foundational elements of indigenous ELCC.

With regard to (b), of the total new funding of \$1.7 billion, \$46.8 million, or 2.7%, over 10 years would be allocated to administrative costs related to federal operating requirements. These funds will enable Employment and Social Development Canada, ESDC, Indigenous Services Canada, ISC, and the Public Health Agency of Canada, PHAC, to support implementation of the indigenous ELCC framework and ensure effective program monitoring and reporting.

Question No. 1985—Mr. Dean Allison:

With regard to the October 2018 announcement that the government would provide \$50 million to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees: (a) what specific written guarantees, if any, does the government have that the funding will not be used for anti-Semitic or anti-Israel activities; and (b) what is the website location where the text of any written guarantees mentioned in (a), can be located?

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of International Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on October 12, 2018, Global Affairs Canada announced Canada's continued support to Palestinian refugees through the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, UNRWA. Canada committed \$40 million over two years to help meet the basic education, health and livelihood needs of millions of vulnerable Palestinian refugees, especially women and children. In addition, Canada committed \$10 million to UNRWA's emergency appeal for Palestinian refugees impacted by the regional crisis caused by war in Syria.

Importantly, Canada's funding is also contributing to UNRWA's neutrality activities, which include regular inspections of the agency's facilities by specially trained UNRWA officers who can identify, report and take action on violations of neutrality; training for UNRWA staff on neutrality, including in social media, and for senior staff on how to carry out effective installation inspections; promotion of students' knowledge and skills reflecting United Nations, UN, values, including human rights, conflict resolution, gender equality and tolerance, through educational activities and materials; and UNRWA's development, distribution and use of additional educational materials, as part of the agency's approach to enable teachers to promote neutrality. This support also builds on funding Canada provided from 2017 to 2019 to hire a neutrality coordinator to monitor activities and respond promptly to allegations of neutrality violations. This assistance demonstrates how Canada

and UNRWA are working together to ensure respect for the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, operational independence and impartiality. This is essential to the effective delivery of its work and to Canada's continued support to UNRWA.

Canada is aware that UNRWA has faced various criticisms and allegations. In Canada's view, UNRWA has demonstrated its commitment to establish conditions to ensure that assistance is provided to the most vulnerable while increasing strong accountability and neutrality measures among its over 30,000 employees. Canada is working with UNRWA to establish additional measures to ensure thorough monitoring, reporting and accountability. Our funding enables us to be an active member of UNRWA's Advisory Commission, and we continue to work on a regular basis with UNRWA and other donor governments to advance reforms related to governance, effectiveness, monitoring and financial administration. Canada's participation provides an opportunity for oversight, influence and engagement on key issues.

Canada and other donors support UNRWA's efforts to ensure that UNRWA students learn UN values such as neutrality, human rights, conflict resolution, tolerance, equality and non-discrimination based on race, gender, language and religion. UNRWA has in place a formal framework to review all textbooks and, where needed, provides additional training for teachers to address any problematic issues related to neutrality, bias, gender equality or age appropriateness.

Canada exercises enhanced due diligence for all international assistance funding for Palestinians, including funding for UNRWA. This includes strong anti-terrorism provisions in funding agreements, ongoing oversight, regular site visits, and a systematic screening process. All programming and funding mechanisms are thoroughly examined to ensure consistency with Canadian values and to meet the highest standards of transparency and accountability. If and when issues arise, Canada and UNRWA engage quickly and openly.

Regarding additional measures that Canada requires UNRWA undertake to ensure its neutrality, Canada and UNRWA have agreed to a framework for cooperation that outlines shared commitments and Canada's expectations regarding the implementation of UNRWA's reform initiatives, regular monitoring and reporting, and compliance with Canadian anti-terrorism requirements. This framework for cooperation is publicly available on the Global Affairs Canada Internet site: http://international.gc.ca/world-monde/issues_-development-enjeux_developpement/priorities-priorites/where-ou/gac_un_unrwa-amc_nu_unrwa.aspx?lang=eng.

*Government Orders***GOVERNMENT ORDERS**

Upholding the neutrality of its operations allows UNRWA to deliver effectively on its important assistance to Palestinian refugees. Canada will continue to take all allegations of neutrality violations very seriously.

Our government will continue to support the provision of assistance to the most vulnerable on behalf of Canadians, in a way that reflects Canadian values. Thanks to UNRWA's work, more than three million people have access to primary health care, and over half a million Palestinian refugee girls and boys benefit from the quality education provided to them in UN schools.

* * *

[English]

QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if the government's response to Questions Nos. 1980 and 1981 could be made orders for return, these returns would be tabled immediately.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Text]

Question No. 1980—**Mr. Glen Motz:**

With regard to the government consultations entitled "Reducing violent crime: a dialogue on handguns and assault weapons": (a) how many invitation-only events are planned as part of the consultations; (b) in what municipalities will those events be held; (c) in what electoral districts will those events be held; (d) will the Member of Parliament for the electoral districts referred to in (c) be invited to those events; (e) what organizations or individuals will be invited to those events; (f) what organizations or individuals were selected specifically by the Office of the Minister of Border Security and Organized Crime Reduction to be invited to those events; and (g) what is the projected cost for each event?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1981—**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher:**

With regard to government expenditures in relation to the 2018 re-election bid of Michaëlle Jean as the Secretary General of the International Organisation of la Francophonie: what is the total of all related expenditures, broken down by type of expense?

(Return tabled)

[English]

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

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[English]

POVERTY REDUCTION ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-87, An Act respecting the reduction of poverty, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Chris Bittle (St. Catharines, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member talked about her passion to see the end of poverty. I would like to ask her about one particular policy, which was the increase in the age to receive old age security and the guaranteed income supplement. The previous government changed the age from 65 to 67, which affected our most vulnerable seniors, taking \$13,000 out of their pockets each year.

If the member is such a fan of reducing poverty, why did she and her party support that, and how can she continue to go on suggesting that poverty was a focus for the government, when the Conservatives were impacting our most vulnerable seniors?

• (1215)

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Mr. Speaker, my sister, Linda, is 56 years of age. She is not a senior, and she would have been one the first to actually be impacted by these changes to old age security announced by our Conservative government.

There has been so much information the government has put out about old age security and reducing poverty. That change to old age security was not put into effect immediately. It was going to be done over time. Many other countries around the world are now increasing the age for old age security from 65 to 67, based on life expectancy studies and a variety of different things. These are the important things we looked at.

May I note that as I have indicated, the statistics we have today indicate that poverty for seniors has been increasing under the current government by 2%.

[Translation]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my colleague spoke at length about employment earlier. I would like to ask her a question about employment and also about the north in general.

I travelled to Nunavik with my colleague who represents the area. I saw that houses are really overcrowded, and that 14 people were living in a house. I also saw that the cost of food is extremely high.

We know that the nutrition north Canada program works more or less. However, the people of Inukjuak had solutions. I met with people who talked about building greenhouses to grow their own food. One of the major problems is that they lack the infrastructure, like electricity. The farms are a few kilometres away but they do not have access to this electricity.

I thought to myself that if we trained the people living there to build houses, there would be more jobs and the houses would be appropriate for the climate and culture. We could solve several problems at once.

In talking about employment, does my colleague agree with this way of thinking?

Government Orders

[English]

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Mr. Speaker, I remember a few years ago when poverty reduction was being studied by the HUMA committee. I happened to be part of that committee during that study, and we had someone who lived on reserve come in and talk about the opportunity for economic development.

It is imperative that the government recognize that we need to make sure that we provide opportunities for first nations people to have economic opportunities. The cost of food is extravagant. There is something we need to do there as well. We saw just last week that the Liberals are increasing the money, yet they are not tackling the problems we have with the northern food strategy.

There are many things we need to do, but we need all partners at the table, including indigenous people. Their voices need to be heard.

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for Elgin—Middlesex—London for her passion for poverty reduction.

One of the things we see a lot from the government is announcements, but no delivery. In fact, someone made the comment the other day that the Liberals get an A for announcements but a D for delivery.

The Institute of Fiscal Studies and Democracy, which is headed by the former parliamentary budget officer, Kevin Page, put out a report on the national housing strategy in which he commented that he was not able to find the money. We heard the parliamentary secretary say that the government has spent \$5 billion so far. In fact, Kevin Page's organization, in the five years going forward, can only find \$1.5 billion that has actually been budgeted, much less spent.

He said that the national housing strategy is purely a glossy document with no delivery. I wonder if the member would agree with that.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity to sit down with the group the member is referring to and review some of these documents. It is true. We saw funding in the 2016-17 years for the national housing strategy, and the rest we see in this document. It has not been budgeted.

The bottom line is that the Liberals talk, talk, talk but do not deliver. When we talk about a D for delivery, that is exactly where they are at. They may have some ideas, but they do not know how to implement them, and that is the biggest challenge we have seen with the government in the last three years. We have seen the economy becoming dismal in places like Alberta. They do not know how to deliver on good promises.

• (1220)

[Translation]

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise to speak to a topic I am very familiar with. For the second time in this Parliament, a bill to reduce poverty has been introduced in the House.

I congratulate and thank my colleague, the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, for his commitment to those most in need. With this bill, he is following in the footsteps of Ed

Broadbent, who got a motion to eliminate child poverty passed in 1989. He is also following the example of Tony Martin, Jean Crowder and so many other political figures who made the fight against poverty the primary reason for their involvement.

If we look at the figures, we can see that such a bill has never been more timely. This month, we marked National Child Day and National Housing Day. We know how important these days are. They were created not as a time to celebrate, but rather to sound the alarm. They raise awareness about the issues and hard realities that some of our fellow Canadians face in those areas. They provide an opportunity for community organizations and associations to speak out against the injustice. Canada is a rich country with a wealth of resources, yet we allow our children and fellow citizens to grow up and live in poverty.

The figures are alarming. One in six Canadians lives in poverty. That is 5.8 million people, including 250,000 who end up homeless every year and 1.7 million households living in substandard or unaffordable housing. Unfortunately, that is not all. Children are even worse off: 1.4 million Canadian children live in poverty. That is 200,000 more children than last year, and more than one in three of these children live in an indigenous community.

Because this situation is urgent, and because the bill is part of the New Democrat legacy, we will be supporting this bill. However, I must say I am shocked, because I myself introduced a poverty reduction bill in February 2016, just over two years ago. That bill was developed after long consultations with organizations from across the country. It had the support of many anti-poverty agencies, and it built on the community work I have been doing for decades to improve the lives of the people of Saint-Hyacinthe and Acton Vale in my riding of Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot.

The purpose of Bill C-245 was to strengthen Canada's social and economic safety net. I wanted to add social condition to the Canadian Human Rights Act, so that poverty would no longer be grounds for discrimination. I also included community organizations, the municipalities, the provinces and the territories as privileged partners in this poverty reduction strategy. Make no mistake, if our federal role is to give guidance and show leadership, then we cannot do without the support of these stakeholders, who work on the ground every day to help those who are most in need.

Most of the Liberals and Conservatives voted against Bill C-245. Why? The Liberals said that they were going to do better to significantly reduce poverty in Canada. Did they keep that promise? I do not think so.

Let me be clear. Bill C-87 is necessary, but it barely scratches the surface of what needs to be done to eliminate poverty. I would like the Liberal government to tell me what concrete, urgent action it is taking to eliminate poverty in Canada. The minister announced that this plan would make Canada a leader in poverty reduction. I do not think that is true.

Government Orders

I commend the efforts that have been made so far, such as the Canada child benefit, but to be honest, we still have a long way to go. Bill C-87 sets the minimum targets recommended by the United Nations. There are no new investments and no new programs. What does this bill really do? It establishes minimum targets, a very debatable poverty line, and an advisory council.

As far as the poverty line is concerned, I have to wonder whether Canada really hopes to become a leader in poverty reduction by lowering its standards. That is the issue. Members should know that anti-poverty organizations are afraid that poor people will not longer qualify for subsidy programs, because this metric excludes them from the government statistics. The poverty line used by the Liberals is the market basket measure. Let me reiterate this for the House: this measure is a smokescreen that masks the reality of poverty in Canada.

●(1225)

Economist Andrew Jackson has demonstrated that using the low income measure, 828,000 seniors live in poverty. Using the market basket measure, the number would be 284,000 over the same period. That is a difference of about half a million seniors. Is the government really okay with using the lower figures and leaving half a million unaccounted-for seniors out in the cold?

In addition to turning a blind eye to poverty, this indicator does nothing to lift people out of poverty. It measures the income needed to purchase a basket of basic goods. Since Canadians whose income exceeds that threshold are no longer considered poor, they are no longer counted in the government's statistics. That is not right.

The market basket measure excludes many day-to-day expenses, such as health care costs, day care fees and support payments. Even those who reach that income threshold are still living in poverty. Being able to meet those basic needs does not mean one is no longer poor—far from it. People in that position live in uncertainty, and the slightest unexpected expense can cause tremendous financial stress.

This week my team spoke with representatives of Comptoir-Partage La Mie, a food bank in Saint-Hyacinthe. Every week volunteers there provide support to nearly 200 families in financial difficulty and provide them with food to help make ends meet. People must not assume that assistance is given first come, first served. Each case is examined individually in order to provide the most appropriate assistance and maximize the limited resources each family has. Their poverty level is \$100 above the basic income. When you work on the ground every day, you realize that people in need are not there to try to take advantage of the system.

The precariousness is real, and with a margin of only \$100, these people are not wealthy. They have just a bit of wiggle room to pay their bills and perhaps some unexpected expenses, like if their car breaks down, for example.

These organizations have limited resources, yet they work miracles in our communities. I commend them. They have limited resources because they receive very little assistance from the federal government. Still, they manage to face reality and realize that being able to afford only the basic necessities does not mean getting out of poverty.

That is why I am so disappointed to find this government, that claimed to be so ambitious, incapable of seeing that poverty is overtaking Canada's children and families. The bill cannot merely be about reducing numbers. We must implement concrete measures.

There must be a review of existing programs. Today many families do not receive the Canada child benefit, especially in remote indigenous communities even though poverty and insecurity are rampant in those communities. Of the 20% of poor children in Canada, one in three lives in an indigenous community.

Poverty is an endless cycle that affects entire families. To break this cycle, we must address the structural inequalities that affect these children from birth.

We must also reform the unfair EI system. For almost 30 years, the government has not contributed a single cent to the employment insurance fund. After 20 years of Conservative and Liberal reforms, this system is in a pitiful state and unable to provide families with the help they need. It is not acceptable that we are living with a system that has not been overhauled since the 1970s and that excludes 60% of our workers.

EI reform would help lift thousands of families out of precarious situations, and even out of poverty. However, we cannot forget that because EI has such a low qualification rate, these workers are being denied access to training adapted to their needs. I am talking about the so-called middle class and those who are working hard to join it.

The less fortunate should not have to fight for access to federal benefits. Since we are not all equal in the face of poverty, we must expand access to EI and make the Canada child benefit available to everyone. We should make sure that grandparents who have guardianship of a child are also eligible. The same goes for our seniors.

I want to commend the initiative to make the guaranteed income supplement automatic for seniors at the age of 65. The NDP had been calling for this for decades.

●(1230)

However, the reality is that many more seniors do not receive this benefit, even though they are entitled to it. I wrote an open letter in January to inform my constituents and I received hundreds of emails and calls. There were a lot of people who were disappointed to learn that it was not automatic.

Why not expand this measure to all workers who worked their whole lives to build this country?

The government must also adopt the low income measure for calculating poverty. The low income measure sets the poverty level at half of the median income, which is more realistic. It also for international comparisons, which should interest the government, since it was to be a leader in the global arena.

Government Orders

The government must set more ambitious short-term goals. On November 5, the day before this bill was introduced, British Columbia adopted a bill to reduce child poverty by 50% in five years. Anti-poverty organizations are calling for a similar measure.

Is the government really going to wait more than a decade to do something, letting a generation of children grow up in poverty?

We need to get these measures in place faster so we can help Canada's future generations now. Let's not fool ourselves. These programs are a step in the right direction, but they address only part of the problem.

We cannot radically reduce poverty in this country unless we attack it on all fronts. We need to be bold and adopt fairer and more ambitious measures for Canadians.

Reducing poverty calls for profound social change. Sending out cheques is not enough any more. When child care costs \$80 per day per child, the Canada child benefit is not nearly enough to change peoples lives' and give them a little breathing room at the end of the month. What we need is a universal, affordable, nationwide child care system.

The government made an election promise to launch a full-scale attack on poverty, not just a superficial one. I am now asking the government to keep that promise and put its money where its mouth is. Canadians need a complete overhaul of our public policies and services.

Martin Luther King said that true compassion is more than flinging a coin to a beggar; it comes to see that an edifice which produces beggars needs restructuring. Attacking the root causes of inequality is the one and only way we can hope to put an end to poverty.

Let us attack it, then, beginning with a universal, affordable child care service. Campaign 2000 and the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives have described such a service as a cornerstone to poverty reduction.

This service is crucial so that parents no longer have to choose between expensive child care and going to work. It is especially important to reducing poverty among women, who are more often affected when it comes to having to choose between child care and going back to work.

Affordable, high-quality child care for everyone would also help give children from disadvantaged backgrounds a more equal start in life.

The same thing goes for uninsured medical expenses and dental costs, which are not included when calculating the poverty level and pose a heavy burden on family budgets.

How can we talk about an equal and just society if we are not all equal when it comes to health care costs?

Bringing in drug and dental plans is more than necessary, it is essential if we truly want to address inequalities in an effort to eliminate the scourge of poverty.

We keep saying that work is the way out of poverty and guarantees dignity. However, work is not accessible to everyone. Let

us bring in guaranteed income for people in need. I am talking about people who cannot work because of physical or mental limitations. Believe me, it is not a choice. It is the weight of a disability that they suffer daily. It is our role, that of parliamentarians, but also that of the government, to provide these people with a decent income to live on. Bringing in a basic income guarantee would help maintain dignity and reduce the stigmatization that our constituents go through every day.

Having a fair tax system also goes a long way to reducing poverty.

●(1235)

To tackle the root causes of inequality, let us overhaul the income tax system to better redistribute wealth to the most vulnerable groups. To reduce poverty, we must look at society as a whole. We must reconsider the causes of inequality. The gap grows every year, and the wealthy keep coming out on top, while the income of the middle class remains hopelessly stagnant.

The government cannot sell us a brand-new poverty reduction strategy with no new programs or funding, as I mentioned, and then turn around and increase tax breaks for the rich. I would like to remind members that we are losing \$8 billion a year because of a lack of political courage. Let us put an end to this travesty. Community organizations keep saying that this bill is a good starting point but does not do enough to address the challenge of poverty in Canada.

Campaign 2000, Citizens for Public Justice, Collectif pour un Québec sans pauvreté, FRAPRU, the Elizabeth Fry Society, the Broadbent Institute, and many other organizations are asking this government to set the bar higher. The OECD recommends measures to support employment, offset low incomes and increase affordable full-time child care services for families.

I want to acknowledge the tremendous work that employees and volunteers at community organizations do to help the less fortunate. The Centre de Bénévolat de St-Hyacinthe, which is celebrating its 50th anniversary this year, works hard to support those in need. The volunteers working on the ground are far removed from Ottawa's initiatives, recommendations and directives. What really counts for them is what they can immediately do to help a mother who is drowning in debt after school starts in September or a retiree who needs help filling out his guaranteed income supplement application because he was over 65 on January 1, 2018.

The Centre de Bénévolat de St-Hyacinthe, the Centre de Bénévolat d'Acton Vale, Moisson Maskoutaine and the Comptoir-Partage La Mîe have all come to the same conclusion: people are struggling financially, and they need more than just a basket of necessities. Single people are becoming increasingly vulnerable. Incomes are too low.

Government Orders

Claudine Gauvin, director of Moisson Maskoutaine, told me that, of the 870 requests for Christmas food assistance, more than half came from single people. Sick single people are particularly vulnerable, because their health-related expenses are so high. Moisson Maskoutaine, the Centre de Bénévolat de St-Hyacinthe, the Centre de Bénévolat d'Acton Vale and the Comptoir-Partage La Mie provide a great deal of support to our community. They collect toys for children and organize coffee chats and community kitchens, helping isolated and disadvantaged people create strong social ties.

Since the majority of those affected are single people, I no longer want to hear the government say that the Canada child benefit will fix everything.

The work done by these organizations should guide our debate here in Ottawa and the work we will be doing together in committee. Our sole objective should be to make sure that what we do has a meaningful effect on helping Canadians across the country emerge from poverty. Aside from targets and measurement tools, we need to combat poverty by making meaningful, far-reaching changes to our services and public policies.

In conclusion, I would like to share the words of my colleague, Ed Broadbent, who said the following nearly 30 years ago: "Let us affirm today...that as a nation by the beginning of the 21st Century...child poverty...will be a relic of the past." The knowledge of our failure must guide our actions. We have broken promises and left commitments unfulfilled, and child poverty is far from being a relic of the past. It is even worse. It is now a scourge. Back in 1989, the House of Commons set a goal of eliminating child poverty in Canada by the year 2000, and we have already missed that deadline by 18 years. We are a long way from meeting that goal.

If there is one thing I hope members will retain from my speech today, it is that I want us to be ambitious and honest for our children, who deserve to see an end to the cycle of poverty once and for all. We owe them this now.

•(1240)

[*English*]

Mr. John Oliver (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, reflecting on my community of Oakville, as of 2016, 25% of households in the town of Oakville are spending 30% or more of their income on housing costs, 11% of households were in core housing need, and 50% of new housing sales were at prices below an affordable threshold.

It is safe to say that the national housing strategy, the first one of its kind, has already started and that some of the important work that we needed done to achieve Canada's poverty reduction targets is already under way, with many more to come.

Because my colleague was looking for concrete actions on the national poverty strategy, could she reflect on the national housing strategy and the improvements she will be seeing in her own riding from that initiative?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy: Mr. Speaker, a national housing strategy is essential. However, communities like Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot feel that, yet again, this strategy is not really meant to help them.

In Saint-Hyacinthe, there are still 200 households on the waiting list for affordable housing. Seniors living in small towns in my riding are afraid they might have to move away because there is not enough money to keep low-income housing units habitable.

Communities like Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot feel forgotten. They feel like there is nothing left for them once the big cities have taken their share. With housing costs so high, people are having a hard time buying food after they pay the rent, so we need a much more ambitious strategy to make housing more affordable across the country. We need ambitious strategies now.

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for her excellent speech and her commitment to the fight against poverty, a commitment shared by all NDP members.

Why are we so committed? Not just because fighting poverty is an important value, because we are generous or because we want to make sure nobody gets left behind, but also because it benefits everyone. Studies show that reducing inequality leads to better health outcomes for both the poor and the rich. Society as a whole benefits.

Does my colleague agree that fighting poverty is not only the right thing to do, but also the smart thing to do, something that benefits us all?

Should investing in citizens always be the government's priority?

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy: Mr. Speaker, the organizations fighting against poverty have been clear. Doing nothing to eliminate poverty costs more than taking action.

When I introduced Bill C-245, I held consultations in the riding of Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot. It was the business community there that told me that the poverty rate in our communities is hindering our economic development.

We need to invest in health care by implementing a universal pharmacare program, which would save our society billions of dollars. Even employers are saying so. We need practical measures to help those living in poverty now, not in five or 15 years' time. That would reduce the poverty rate and boost our regional economic development.

[*English*]

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Spadina—Fort York, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member opposite for her comprehensive list of ideas and initiatives that she clearly supports and has been a long-time advocate for. They are measures that our government is considering, in particular around EI reform and around making sure we do more than just the Canada child benefit—for example, the \$7.5 billion investments in early learning and child care, which are locked in now for the next 10 years in bilaterals with the various provinces.

Government Orders

As well, the investments with indigenous governments and an indigenous-led child care program are part of those long-term investments that go well beyond the Canada child benefit, which has already lifted 300,000 children out of poverty.

I have a question for the member opposite, because I have raised this issue a dozen times in the House now, and I still have not had an explanation. On page 66 of their platform, when considering the housing crisis in this country—which the party opposite spoke about prior to the last election, so it could not have been absent from their imagination as they put together a platform—in 2017, 2018 and 2019, their investments into affordable housing were zero, zero and zero. Also their spending, their attack, on homelessness—which we have doubled to \$220 million by increasing it by \$100 million—was only going to be \$10 million a year.

Finally, the only commitment they made to the indigenous housing program was \$25 million, which would have been delivered this year, and that was for all the water plants, all the schools, all the hospitals, all the community centres and all the housing, including repairs to the housing, which she spoke of as being overcrowded.

Do they regret the platform they put in front of Canadians the last time? Will they promise to do better in the next election?

• (1245)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy: Mr. Speaker, one day, I will be pleased to be part of the government and to hear my colleague tell me what I am not doing to reduce poverty.

My colleague talked about EI reform, but the government needs to invest in the EI fund. The government has not put a cent into the EI fund since the early 1990s. That led to the Liberal reform in 1996 and the Conservative reform 10 years later. Today, six in 10 workers do not have access to EI.

The government is generous enough to create new programs, but it is raiding the EI fund to do so, even though it is not contributing to that fund. If the Liberals reform employment insurance, they will either have to pay into the fund or do away with EI sickness benefits and caregiving benefits. They will also have to do away with maternity and parental benefits. When women want to return to the labour market, they are penalized and do not have access to EI.

My colleague spoke about child care services. He is not talking about an affordable universal child care program, but that is what we need. When Quebec established a child care program, women were able to return to the job market. The program had a major impact.

The provinces are already doing a great deal with respect to child care. With regard to eliminating and reducing poverty, many provinces have much more ambitious objectives than the federal government. Community organizations and municipalities are on board. The provinces and territories are ready. All that is needed to truly eradicate poverty is strong leadership from the government.

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Montreal has community shops called share stores. The largest is located in the riding of Hochelaga. Every share store serves between 500 and 800 households. I fear that they will be serving just as many people next year, because this strategy has no teeth.

Leilani Farha, executive director of Canada Without Poverty and UN special rapporteur on adequate housing, said that unfortunately, the CPRS does not introduce any significant new programs to address our disproportionately high rates of poverty in Canada, relying instead on the programs this government has released since 2015.

Does my colleague share my fears?

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy: Mr. Speaker, I share the same concerns as my colleague.

I have a short anecdote that speaks volumes. This summer, I attended a golf tournament dinner for a foundation that helps raise money for a palliative care home in Saint-Hyacinthe. One of the two co-chairs of the fundraiser, a prominent businessman in my region, said a few words. He told the 200 people attending the event, people with means, that the gap between the rich and the poor is growing and that it is their responsibility to fight against poverty. I could not believe it. When the richest people in our society realize that the gap between the rich and the poor is growing and that it makes no sense, it is time to turn things around.

The government talks about 300,000 children who have been lifted out of poverty through the Canada child benefit, but there are still 1.4 million children in need and we have to do something for them.

• (1250)

[*English*]

Hon. Filomena Tassi (Minister of Seniors, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook.

I am pleased to take part in today's debate on Bill C-87. The bill is important and needs the support of all parliamentarians. It is important because it is enacting legislation for Canada's first-ever national poverty reduction strategy. The strategy brings together the many elements of poverty reduction policies and programs that our government has introduced and implemented since taking office.

Since 2015, our government has been focused on growth that benefits everyone. We have taken concrete steps to strengthen the middle class and help those working hard to join it. Today, I would like to use my time to speak more specifically about some of these concrete measures and steps we have taken.

I want to mention one of the first things we did upon coming into office. Of course, I am talking about improving the income security of our Canadian seniors. We all know that Canada's population is aging. Canada has a growing number of seniors. There are approximately 6.4 million people who are 65 years of age and over. In the 2016 census, for the first time our seniors population outnumbered the number of our youth 14 and under. In the next 25 years this number is estimated to reach over 11 million people, which represents one-quarter of the population.

Government Orders

Any way we look at it, Canadians are living longer and healthier lives. This increasing longevity is good news, and it should be celebrated, because it brings with it more wisdom, experience and expertise that is being offered to our communities. We are grateful for the contributions that our seniors make to our homes, our families, our places of worship and our workplaces, and we want to ensure their vibrant participation.

However, as a government, we recognize it is our duty to make sure that seniors have the support they need to thrive and to prosper. I am honoured and humbled to serve in the role of minister of seniors. When I was first appointed, the Prime Minister asked me to do something very important. He asked me to travel across the country and to listen to our seniors, their family members and organizations that work with and for seniors, and I have been doing that. I concede that income security is stated as something that is important to our seniors.

Also, let us look at the factors facing Canada's seniors today. Study after study has shown that women are especially vulnerable to financial difficulties. In fact, almost all single female seniors who live in poverty rely on government benefits as their major source of income. For a number of seniors, old age security and the guaranteed income supplement are not extra sources of disposable income. For many, they are the only sources of income and are used to pay rent and to buy food.

Our government knows the facts. We have taken steps to improve seniors' income security. That is where the old age security program comes in. The old age security program, OAS, has a clear purpose, and that is to provide a minimum level of income to seniors and contribute to their income replacement in retirement. The OAS program is actually composed of a number of benefits. First is the OAS pension, which is paid to everyone who is 65 years of age and older who meets the residence and legal status requirements. Second is the guaranteed income supplement for low-income seniors. Third, are the allowances for low-income Canadians aged 60 to 64 who are the spouses or common-law partners of GIS recipients, or who are widows or widowers.

• (1255)

Recognizing income security as an issue for seniors, when we came to office we immediately repealed the previous government's measure to move the eligibility age for OAS and GIS from 65 to 67. This act, in and of itself, prevented 100,000 seniors from entering into poverty. The benefits under the OAS pension are putting thousands of dollars into the pockets of the lowest-income Canadian seniors each year.

Another of our actions was to increase the guaranteed income supplement by up to \$947 per year for the most vulnerable single seniors. This improved the financial security of close to 900,000 seniors and is lifting approximately 57,000 seniors out of poverty. It was the right thing to do.

Last year we launched a new automatic enrolment for the guaranteed income supplement benefit for those who are entitled to it. The GIS provides much-needed monthly non-taxable benefits to OAS pension recipients who have a low income. As of last December, when eligible seniors are automatically enrolled for OAS, Employment and Social Development Canada automatically reviews

their household income to see if they are eligible for GIS benefits. If they are eligible, they are automatically enrolled without needing to apply. There are now 210,000 seniors receiving this benefit as a result of automatic enrolment.

Each month over 18,000 individuals turning 64 years of age are automatically enrolled in the OAS pension. This means that these clients are also being automatically assessed for their eligibility for GIS without ever having to complete an application.

Our actions to improve seniors' income security does not stop there. We have also enhanced the Canada pension plan for today's workers. This enhancement will increase the CPP retirement benefits people receive when they retire. It will also provide larger benefits for contributors with disabilities, widows and widowers. This also means that contributions are increasing accordingly, typically by 1% for most people. Enhanced benefits will grow over time as people work and contribute to the plan. Today's youngest workers will receive up to 50% more from the CPP when they retire. These changes to the CPP will reduce the number of families at risk of not being able to maintain their quality of life in retirement by a quarter.

In the area of workplace pensions, our government made a commitment in the 2018 budget, restated in my mandate letter, to consult with stakeholders on this very important issue. I am very pleased to announce that last week, together with the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, we announced that consultations have now been opened nationally. I would encourage all Canadians who have expertise or who wish to share a story to go online and give their valuable input on this very important matter.

Our government is looking for a solution that works, not a Band-Aid solution. This is a decades old problem. We recognize the seriousness and the complexity of this problem, and we are working to get this right.

Seniors are an important part of our communities, and our government places enormous value on their contributions. We know that when a senior can contribute to society, everyone benefits. Seniors have so much to contribute, and we want to encourage them to continue to make these worthy contributions. It is only fair that they get the recognition and support they need so they can have the secure retirement they deserve and can look forward to the years ahead. Bill C-87 would help us do just that by enacting legislation for Canada's first-ever national poverty reduction strategy. It is up to all of us in this House to decide whether they want to contribute to the well-being of Canada's seniors. It is my hope that all parliamentarians will vote in favour of this legislation.

• (1300)

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister talked about senior poverty rates. As I understand the data, it is actually identical to when we took office. The one thing that I have not seen is a reduction in the poverty rates for seniors.

Government Orders

I also find it absolutely stunning that the government has a bill without anything in the annex. It is kind of like today, when we heard that the government is going to have child welfare legislation and introduce a bill someday. Here we have a bill introduced that really does not have any teeth to make meaningful difference for people on the ground. As we analyze what the government does, its ability to talk without making a real difference for people in communities who are suffering is quite stunning.

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Mr. Speaker, in fact, our government has invested \$22 billion across all programs since we have taken office. This has resulted in lifting 650,000 Canadians out of poverty.

With respect to the issue she raises of seniors, which she knows is close to my heart, the stats according to Canada's official poverty line of the MBM method say that in 2015, we were at 5.1% and in 2016 at 4.9%.

However, we recognize that there is more work to do and that is why this legislation is so important. This legislation is taking the bold move of recording, of coming up with a poverty line and committing to that line. I have had constituents and others talk to me about the importance of committing to a measure and then tracking it. That is exactly what we are doing in this legislation.

With respect to seniors, the OAS and the GIS rollback from 67 to 65 has prevented 100,000 seniors from going into poverty. As well, we had the GIS increase, the bump-up, which lifted 57,000 seniors out of poverty. It is just unfortunate that the Conservatives did not support either of those two measures. However, we are going to continue to work hard to ensure that our seniors receive the secure future they deserve.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be able to ask my colleague a question about this important bill. However, I am disappointed that the government voted against Bill C-245 introduced by my colleague from Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot. Her bill proposed bringing in a national anti-poverty strategy and was far better than the government's.

When we were debating my colleague's bill, the government said it was not good enough and that it would do better. Now we have a bill in front of us that is less ambitious than my colleague's, including when it comes to the proposed method for measuring the extent of the problem. The government has decided to use the market basket measure. Under the old method of measuring poverty, there were 828,000 seniors living in poverty in 2016, while the new method indicates that there are 284,000 seniors living in poverty. This new calculation tells us that 600,000 seniors no longer live in poverty when in reality, they still do on a daily basis.

Why did my colleague decide to use the less ambitious method for measuring poverty in Canada?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

[*English*]

Mr. Speaker, I am working on my French and I think it is important to eventually get to the point where I am bilingual. I will continue to work on that.

This is a very bold plan. The market basket measure also takes into consideration other services like health services. I would say that our government is committing to a very bold plan. The plan is to reduce poverty by 20% by 2020 and by 50% by 2030. If we look at the Canadians who are living in poverty now, we will be at 10% by 2020 and 6% by 2030. Ultimately, we would like to see it at zero per cent.

We will continue to work hard to ensure that our government's programs and policies keep this in mind and drive the poverty rate in our country down.

● (1305)

Mr. Darrell Samson (Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the people in my constituency of Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook for giving me the honour of speaking on Bill C-87, the poverty reduction act. This is an exciting time.

Canada is a great nation and many people want to immigrate to this great country. We continue to focus on and work hard toward a just society, but we want the wealthiest Canadians to pay their fair share and to do a little more to help the middle class, by helping to create opportunities for those in the middle class and those striving to be part of it. We need to make sure there are safety nets in place so that people do not fall below the poverty line. We have a responsibility to help those below the poverty line join the middle class. That is the focus.

It is hard to believe that in Canada one in eight Canadians is below the poverty line. We talk about all the great things that are happening, but we still have more work to do. Throughout my speech, I will indicate the many areas where our government is focusing investment on different initiatives to ensure that we are helping, as I said, those below the poverty line, those striving to join the middle class and middle-class Canadians.

We have set clear targets in this bill. We have committed to reducing poverty by 20% by 2020 and 50% by 2030. To do that, we must have a baseline for poverty to monitor whether people are above or below the baseline. This is the first time we have had a baseline and an automatic review as we move forward so that we can make the adjustments required.

This act would establish a national advisory council that would give advice to the minister and monitor the activities on the ground, where funding is going and whether it is achieving the objectives we have set. We are also going to consult. The advisory council will consult with all Canadians, including academics, communities, indigenous peoples and people living below the poverty line. They are very important.

Government Orders

There is transparency in this bill. Each year, we will have to report to the minister on the progress happening on the ground. As well, the advice of the council to the minister will be made public. That is transparency. We will report the progress made toward our targets and whether the minister is following through on the advice being given to him. Those are clear steps.

When I talk about a just society, as I indicated, we need to make sure that the wealthiest Canadians are paying their share and that we are lifting up those who live below the poverty line. We need to make sure that we are helping those striving to join the middle class. We need to ensure that we create opportunities so that the middle class can continue to prosper and that more people can contribute, including the wealthiest Canadians. It is important to have safety nets to ensure that people in the middle class are not falling below the poverty line.

● (1310)

There are three very important pillars that are part of this bill, and that is what I want to focus my speech on. What have we done, what are we doing and what will we do to ensure that all Canadians live above the poverty line and that all Canadians have opportunities?

Let us look at what we have done when it comes to the first pillar, which is basic needs. Shortly after coming into power, we introduced the CCB, which contributes directly to families with kids to help them. In my riding alone, \$5.2 million per month is received by families through the CCB. That is \$60 million a year. That is happening across the country. It is very important.

We have invested \$40 billion over 10 years in a national housing strategy. In the riding of Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook, 155 units have been built in the last year and a half. That is an investment of over \$1 million.

On affordable housing, our government is focusing on vulnerable people: seniors, veterans, families fleeing domestic violence, and people with disabilities. Homelessness is very challenging as well. The veterans affairs committee is now discussing homeless veterans and how to ensure that we can identify them and help them. One key avenue is housing.

We have done other things to support our veterans. The Canadian Forces income support, the caregiver recognition benefit and the war veterans allowance are major investments to support our veterans.

The second pillar is education. Education is the equalizer. Therefore, we have invested in early learning. We have invested \$11 million over three years in Nova Scotia alone. We have invested in Canada student grants and loans for low-income Canadians to support these individuals.

We have invested in veterans with the education and training benefit. It is \$40,000 if they have six years of service and \$80,000 if they have 12 years of service.

We have invested \$450 million in indigenous skills and employment. There is also a youth employment strategy, a women's apprenticeship incentive, pay equity legislation, and of course, the accessibility legislation debated a couple of weeks ago.

I need to speak about black Canadians. In my riding of Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook, Preston is the oldest black community in Canada, and we have the biggest black cultural centre in Canada.

The last pillar is the safety net to ensure that people do not fall below the poverty line. We introduced the new Canada workers benefit, which has seen two million Canadians lifted into the middle class.

We reduced the wait time for employment insurance from two weeks to one week, and we introduced the parental sharing benefit, which is an five additional weeks for parents.

Finally, we have made enhancements to the Canada pension plan, because we know that Canadians today do not have access to benefits and pensions like they did before. This will help them with a strong Canada pension plan.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP):

Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech and his passion. His voice is practically still ringing in the House.

I am going to ask a very practical question. Looking at the reality in my riding, Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, I see that there are 14,000 people who earn less than \$10,000 a year and 36,000 people in total who earn less than \$20,000 a year. I represent a riding where roughly 80% of people are renters. One-third of them spend more than 30% of their budget on housing. I am talking about real poverty. Unfortunately, most of the money in the Liberal plan to build social and affordable housing is not going to flow until several years from now, but these people need help now.

What does my colleague have to say to these people who need social housing now?

● (1315)

Mr. Darrell Samson: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question. It is important to recognize that we have built over 14,000 buildings for housing. That is extremely important. It is also important to note our many other investments. We cannot address poverty with just one strategy. All the other strategies I mentioned in my speech are extremely important. There is another point I want to make, but I am going to say it in English to be perfectly clear.

[*English*]

Do not let perfect be the enemy of good.

[*Translation*]

This strategy might not be perfect, but it is very good. We will keep working to ensure that future plans are excellent.

Government Orders

[English]

Mr. Jim Eglinski (Yellowhead, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I was just doing a little research, and I see the Netherlands has probably the lowest rate of poverty among seniors of anywhere in the world. In Canada, back in 1976 about 36% of seniors were on the poverty role, and now that has dropped considerably down to the level where we are today. Noting that, the only way the Netherlands can keep its numbers down is by supporting its seniors by way of pensions. Everyone gets a pension.

I wonder why the Liberal government, in its Bill C-87, did not address the issue of pensions for seniors who have lived in Canada for at least 55 or 65 years of their life.

Mr. Darrell Samson: Mr. Speaker, I agree that there is no question we are challenged with a changing demographic in the sense that there are more seniors today, and as we move forward there will be even more. My riding had the biggest increase in the number of seniors in the last five years in Nova Scotia. Therefore, we have to do much more for seniors.

In the example the member gave, the Netherlands is also the country that has the third or fourth highest taxes in the world. We have to be careful to find a balanced approach, and it is many prongs that will do that.

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing and Urban Affairs), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I also note that one of the taxes the Netherlands has is a carbon tax, but we will put that off to another day and another debate. The Netherlands too has priced pollution and also is eliminating cars in the downtown core by 2030. The Netherlands also has an incredibly aggressive housing program.

I wonder if the member opposite could reflect on the fact that we have spent \$5.6 billion so far and we have 14,000 units of housing approved, under construction or built. Particularly when it comes to seniors, 12,000 of the 60,000 units that will be built under the national housing strategy are dedicated for seniors, including 20% of the units being universally accessible for people to age in place and age comfortably, if they have disabilities now but also into the future. I wonder if the member could also reflect on whether those programs are things that the member opposite supports and sees as important ways to reduce poverty in this country.

Mr. Darrell Samson: Mr. Speaker, my colleague is exactly right. We have invested \$5.6 billion. There is no question that I am seeing it in my riding with seniors and housing, but as I indicated, we are also answering to many vulnerable people. We are also speaking about veterans, seniors and people with disabilities. The investment is very high, but it is over time because it takes time to build these units as we move forward.

• (1320)

[Translation]

Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to acknowledge my colleague from Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook, who is always very lively when he speaks in the House. However, I find it unfortunate that he has once again demonstrated that the Liberals are spending with abandon. They do not have a plan and they are certainly not getting results.

I am rising today to speak to Bill C-87, an act respecting the reduction of poverty.

On November 6, 2018, the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development introduced the poverty reduction bill. According to the summary, the bill “enacts the Poverty Reduction Act, which provides for an official metric and other metrics to measure the level of poverty in Canada, sets out two poverty reduction targets in Canada and establishes the National Advisory Council on Poverty”.

I want to begin by telling the government that poverty exists in Canada. They can implement measures, set up an advisory council and create organizations that will assess and consult, but I can say right now, on November 30, 2018, that poverty still exists here in Canada. Unfortunately, one in six Canadians are living in poverty. I think it is important to consider that and to implement the measures necessary to meet these people's real needs.

The act provides for the creation of a national advisory council on poverty. This council would be considered a full-time committee and its members would be employees of the Government of Canada. The government is adding a layer of bureaucracy and expenses that will serve its machinery before serving the poor. That is the unfortunate part of the bill being introduced today. We are not against helping the poor, on the contrary, but we should be looking after them and not the Liberal machinery of government.

There is no need to bring in legislation to change how the government measures poverty. We all know that there are poor people in Canada. What concrete action will be taken tomorrow to improve the comfort and quality of life of these Canadians who have the right to be respected? This could have been done quickly and concretely with the structures already in place. However, the government prefers to put in place measures, mechanisms and structures.

Creating an official poverty line could help the government because it creates an illusion. We know that this government likes to wave a magic wand and use smoke and mirrors. However, we know that there are no results and that we are light years away from seeing any, just like a balanced budget.

I remind members that during the 2015 election campaign, the government told Canadians that it would run a small deficit and then balance the budget in 2019. We have no idea when the budget will be balanced, so I am compelled to say that the government misled Canadians.

More than 1,000 people representing organizations from across the country attended workshops and breakout groups on more than 40 topics, with the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour. Once again, the people who work with organizations and with the less fortunate have solutions, and they are saying that this bill does not meet its objective.

Our leader, the Leader of the Opposition and member for Regina—Qu'Appelle, introduced a bill supporting new parents. This bill would have eliminated taxes on maternity and parental benefits. This is one of many meaningful measures. The Conservatives are working to help real people: workers and the less fortunate.

•(1325)

We can work with them to find meaningful solutions, instead of creating organizations and structure, which creates more red tape, since public servants must be hired. Money is being thrown around everywhere, but it is not going to the right places. I can suggest measures. All my colleague from Québec has to do is ask and I would be happy to make some suggestions.

The Liberals are also hurting Canadian families by cancelling measures. They say they want to help the poor, but the got rid of income splitting and tax credits that helped Canadians families, such as the children's fitness tax credit and the post-secondary education credit.

Conservatives are ready to get behind measures that work. The government is proposing measures to “evaluate” and “consult” and “look at options”, but nothing is really happening and poor people are entitled to help from the Canadian government. These are respectable people.

We need to raise overall standards by creating jobs, enabling these people to achieve their goals, respecting them, and giving them incentives to go to work so we can elevate our society as a whole. These people can participate in society, and I am ready to work with them, but the government is not creating a system that can make that happen. On the contrary, it is creating structures. It says it wants to help the least fortunate, but unfortunately, it is spending recklessly. Its approach makes no sense.

I will give an example of the Liberal government's wastefulness. The Liberals spent \$500,000 on developing a logo, trademark and name for an agency to help the less fortunate around the world. Wow. The advisory council is simply an aid agency, but the Liberals decided to spend \$500,000 on its image and not on helping the poor, the less fortunate, or our constituents. This government is all about image.

In addition, it spent \$4.5 billion to buy an old pipeline. Imagine how many people could have been helped with that money. Then, the Minister of Finance invested \$210,000 on producing a budget cover. Plus, on September 19, the government led by our member for Papineau treated itself. It bought 86 bottles of wine, 196 beers, six small bottles of vodka and no less than \$143,000 in food. All of that was consumed during a short trip abroad. What about the poor? What do they get?

As for the vacation with the Aga Khan, that cost \$127,000. That is the amount we know about, but it is possible that more money was spent. We do not really have an accurate picture of the situation. On top of that, the Prime Minister's tweet that said “Welcome to Canada” is going to cost Canadian taxpayers \$1.1 billion because of the illegal immigrants crossing the border. I can give plenty of numbers. In his speech, my colleague talked a lot about numbers and sums of money. I can give those, too, but I can prove that it is wasteful spending.

We agree that solutions need to be found. This coming weekend, many organizations in my riding are hosting holiday food and toy drives. I am proud to say I will be attending drives in Saint-Augustin and Sainte-Catherine-de-la-Jacques-Cartier on Sunday morning to raise money for the poor. That is what meaningful action looks like.

Private Members' Business

This government is incapable of taking action and keeping its promises. It always gives only in theory, which is unfortunate.

We will be voting in favour of the bill at the next stage, but I hope the government is listening to what I am asking it to do, which is improve the bill so that it directly benefits those most in need.

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

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[*English*]

PARLIAMENT OF CANADA ACT

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I am quite aware that the House is normally reluctant to circumvent the PMB process by giving unanimous consent to PMB bills. However, today we are faced with an extraordinary situation, where the next bill we are about to debate, Bill S-234, has no sponsor and will be killed if it does not get unanimous consent.

Since this bill is also totally uncontroversial, I am hoping we can pass it at all stages without using any more of the House's most precious resource, which is time.

•(1330)

[*Translation*]

There have been discussions among the parties, and I hope to get unanimous consent for the following motion: That notwithstanding any standing order or usual practice of the House, Bill S-234, an act to amend the Parliament of Canada Act with regard to the parliamentary visual artist laureate, be deemed to have been read a second time and referred to a committee of the whole, deemed considered in committee of the whole, deemed reported without amendment, deemed concurred in at the report stage and deemed read a third time and passed.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): I am sorry, but there is no unanimous consent.

At this time, the House still has not designated a sponsor for Bill S-234, an act to amend the Parliament of Canada Act with regard to the parliamentary visual artist laureate. Accordingly, pursuant to the statement I made on Monday, September 17, the bill will be dropped from the Order Paper pursuant to Standing Order 94(2)(c).

[*English*]

It being 1:32 p.m., the House stands adjourned until next Monday at 11 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

Private Members' Business

(The House adjourned at 1:32 p.m.)

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