



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

House of Commons Debates

VOLUME 148 • NUMBER 161 • 1st SESSION • 42nd PARLIAMENT

OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Thursday, April 6, 2017

Speaker: The Honourable Geoff Regan

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, April 6, 2017

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

•(1005)

[*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 responses to two petitions.

* * *

[*Translation*]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Hon. Denis Paradis (Brome—Missisquoi, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, two-thirds of our House colleagues are either bilingual or working on it. Before I present the report, I would like to acknowledge the outstanding contribution made by the Translation Bureau's translators, interpreters, and terminologists as well as all of its employees to building a country that is proud and respectful of its two official languages.

I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the fourth report of the Standing Committee on Official Languages entitled "Follow-up to the Study of the Translation Bureau—Reverse the Trend: Strive for Excellence".

[*English*]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Darren Fisher (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the fourth report of the Standing Committee on National Defence in relation to its study of force protection.

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

FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Hon. Robert Nault (Kenora, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the seventh report of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development, entitled "A Coherent and Effective Approach to Canada's Sanctions Regimes: Sergei Magnitsky and Beyond".

This unanimous report is the culmination of the committee's statutory review of the Freezing Assets of Corrupt Foreign Officials Act and the Special Economic Measures Act, as referred to the committee pursuant to the order of reference of Thursday, April 14, 2016, and as required by section 20 of the Freezing Assets of Corrupt Foreign Officials Act.

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

I want to congratulate the committee for its fine work.

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DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS AND GOVERNMENT SERVICES ACT

Mr. Ramesh Sangha (Brampton Centre, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-344, An Act to amend the Department of Public Works and Government Services Act (community benefit).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am absolutely honoured to stand in the House, with the support of the member for Don Valley North, to introduce my first private member's bill, the community benefit act, or CBA, regarding the federal investment in infrastructure.

The CBA is the modern way of giving power to communities. This will benefit not only my riding of Brampton Centre but ridings across Canada. My bill will define what community benefits are and how government can collaborate with communities to obtain maximum benefits. The CBA will provide for community participation so they can achieve their fair share of the federal government's spending. The CBA will ensure reliable growth and meaningful employment while fostering a healthier environment.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

* * *

[*Translation*]

CANADA LABOUR CODE

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (for Ms. Christine Moore) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-345, An Act to amend the Canada Labour Code (pregnant and nursing employees).

Routine Proceedings

She said: Mr. Speaker, pursuant to the motion passed unanimously in this House last month, I am pleased to introduce, on behalf of the member for Abitibi—Témiscamingue, a bill standing in her name on the Order Paper, and move the motions for the introduction and first reading of the bill to amend the Canada Labour Code in order to authorize the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour to enter into an agreement with the government of a province that provides for the application, to pregnant or nursing employees, of certain provisions of the provincial legislation concerning occupational health and safety.

The bill also requires the minister to prepare a report on the agreements and to cause the report to be laid before each House of Parliament. This bill represents an important step forward for female workers in a given province, ensuring that they all enjoy the same rights and compensation when they are pregnant or nursing, regardless of whether their job falls under provincial or federal jurisdiction.

Passing this legislation could help ensure that women are not forced to choose between sustaining their income and risking the health of their unborn child or finding themselves in a precarious financial position.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

* * *

• (1010)

[English]

FIREARMS ACT

Mr. Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-346, An Act to amend the Firearms Act (licences).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I especially want to thank the member for Foothills for being my first seconder on this bill.

The bill is an enactment that amends the Firearms Act to eliminate the expiry of certain firearms licences and to provide for the relinquishment of licences. It also requires individuals to update their licence application information every 10 years and provides for the suspension of licences in certain circumstances.

The essence of the bill is the premise that an expired licence should not make a law-abiding firearms owner a criminal.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

* * *

PETITIONS

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is a real honour for me to stand on behalf of the residents of Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, who recognize the effect climate change is having on the Cowichan River, in my home, in the Cowichan Valley. They are calling on the federal government to take the action necessary to provide federal funding to raise the weir at Lake Cowichan so we have adequate flow levels in the river to sustain important fish and fish habitat, which, I should note, is under federal jurisdiction.

ANIMAL WELFARE

Mr. Robert Oliphant (Don Valley West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to table seven petitions from across the country relating to animal protection. Petitioners call on the Minister of International Development and La Francophonie to develop more funding toward the protection of animals during disasters.

I would like to thank World Animal Protection for its hard work and dedication to this issue, which is crucial for so many of the world's vulnerable.

RAIL TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise with a petition regarding the Algoma rail service, which was cut by the current government. It is very important that the petitioners receive rail transportation service, which is necessary not only for first nations but for the population along that corridor. The corridor was closed by the previous government. It was reinstated and is now closed again.

The petitioners are calling for the end of this political football. They want the government to actually do what is necessary to make sure there is reliable travel for men, women, and children in this area.

CRIMINAL CODE

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to present my first electronic petition. There are a thousand signatories calling on the government to automatically designate persons convicted of multiple sexual crimes against a child or children as dangerous offenders, to increase mandatory minimum sentences for sexual crimes against children, to increase the period of parole ineligibility for persons convicted of sexual crimes against children, and to ensure that criminals convicted of multiple sexual offences against a child or children serve their sentences consecutively.

RAIL TRANSPORTATION

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksing, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise again to table a petition to the Minister of Transport. The petitioners are from Sault Ste. Marie, Prince Township, Massey, Echo Bay, Blind River, and even Saskatoon. It is with respect to the Algoma passenger rail. The petitioners indicate that it has not been operating for quite some time now, which has resulted in substantial hardship for residents, businesses, and other passengers. In terms of the impact, the \$2.2-million investment from the remote subsidy funding they used to get actually netted about \$48 million in return. Therefore, as members can see, it is quite problematic.

Again, 75% of the properties in proximity to the rail line are inaccessible except by rail service. For those who have access to roads, we are talking about bush roads.

Routine Proceedings

The petitioners call upon the Minister of Transport to put the Algoma passenger train back in service to ensure that the mission of Transport Canada, to serve the public interest through the promotion of a safe, secure, efficient, and environmentally responsible transportation system in Canada, is fulfilled.

• (1015)

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I too have a petition from the good folks of Sault Ste. Marie with respect to this incredibly important transport service. I know that the previous government put some temporary measures in place to keep it going. I believe that some of the folks who campaigned in the last election said they would do better if the Liberals formed government, and they have not. This is about the Algoma passenger train, which services what are truly rural and remote communities that desperately need that service for both safety and the economy. It seems to me that it would be incumbent upon the current government to follow through on what the petitioners have asked for and to simply follow through on its promises, as difficult as that might be from time to time.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the following questions will be answered today: Nos. 877, 879, and 883.

[Text]

Question No. 877—Mr. Arnold Viersen:

With regard to the mandate letter to the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs, and, specifically, the section which called for the Minister to re-engage in a renewed nation-to-nation process with Indigenous Peoples to make real progress on the issues most important to First Nations, the Métis Nation, and Inuit communities: (a) how many nation-to-nation meetings has the Minister held with the over 600 First Nations, the Métis Nation, and Inuit communities since November 4, 2015, broken down by (i) date, (ii) location, (iii) name and title of the First Nation, Métis Nation, or Inuit community, (iv) attendees, (v) recommendations that were made to the Minister; and (b) what are the details of any briefing notes or correspondence related to the meetings referred to in (a), including (i) title, (ii) date, (iii) sender, (iv) recipient, (v) subject matter, (vi) file number?

Ms. Yvonne Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister's mandate letter to the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs reflects the Government of Canada's commitment to work with first nations, Inuit, and Métis Nation partners on a renewed, nation-to-nation, Inuit-crown and government-to-government relationships with indigenous peoples, based on recognition of rights, respect, co-operation and partnership.

Between November 4, 2015, and February 16, 2017, the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs travelled across the country to attend numerous meetings with indigenous communities. The minister also regularly meets with first nations, Metis Nation, and Inuit communities while in the national capital region. Through these meetings, the minister has met with countless first nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples and their representative organizations.

Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada does not define who is a nation. That is for first nations, Inuit, and Métis to determine.

Question No. 879—Hon. Tony Clement:

With regard to security at government owned residences: (a) how many RCMP officers are located at 24 Sussex Drive; (b) how many RCMP officers patrol 24 Sussex Drive; (c) how many private security contractors are located at 24 Sussex Drive, broken down by (i) company, (ii) value of the contract; (d) what security infrastructure upgrades have been made to 24 Sussex Drive since November 4, 2015, broken down by (i) company that provided the upgrade, (ii) value of each contract; (e) how many RCMP officers are located at Rideau Hall; (f) how many RCMP officers patrol Rideau Hall; (g) how many private security contractors are located at Rideau Hall, broken down by (i) company, (ii) value of the contract; (h) what security infrastructure upgrades have been made to Rideau Hall since November 4, 2015, broken down by (i) company that provided the upgrade, (ii) value of each contract; (i) how many RCMP officers are located at Rideau Cottage; (j) how many RCMP officers patrol Rideau Cottage; (k) how many private security contractors are located at Rideau Cottage, broken down by (i) company, (ii) value of the contract; and (l) what security infrastructure upgrades have been made to Rideau Cottage since November 4, 2015, broken down by (i) company that provided the upgrade, (ii) value of each contract?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the RCMP does not disclose any information that may expose a security posture adopted to ensure the security of any given principal, site, location, or event.

In processing parliamentary returns, the government applies the principles set out in the Access to Information Act, and information has been withheld on the grounds that the information could reasonably be expected to be injurious to the government.

Question No. 883—Mr. Jim Egliniski:

With regard to the February 16, 2017, band election conducted by the O'Chiese First Nation: (a) when did the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs approve the application by the band to change its election rules; (b) why did the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs approve the change; (c) what specific rules were changed; (d) is the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs aware of allegations that individuals were refused the right to run in the election as a result of decisions made by the Chief and Council that were based on a previous bias; (e) what reasons was the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs provided with regarding why certain individuals were refused the right to run for office; (f) does the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs consider the reasons provided in (e) to be valid; and (g) what specific requirements has the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs put in place to ensure that the O'Chiese First Nations conducts elections in a transparent and legal manner?

Ms. Yvonne Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with regard to (a), the minister signed an order that removes the O'Chiese First Nation from the Indian Bands Council Elections Order on November 16, 2016.

With regard to (b), the O'Chiese First Nation had met all the requirements under the conversion to community election system policy. The first nation developed a community election code that was approved by the community at a ratification vote, and the council had made a request for the change by formal resolution, all of which accords with the policy. The conversion to community election system policy sets the rules and the process surrounding a first nation's conversion from holding the election of its council under the Indian Act to holding these elections under community-based election rules. The policy has been in place since 1996. Since then, upwards of 100 first nations have developed and implemented a community election system through this policy.

Speaker's Ruling

With regard to (c), the totality of sections 74 through 80 inclusive of the Indian Act and the Indian Band Election Regulations were replaced by the O'Chiese First Nation Election Act, the O'Chiese First Nation Election Regulations, and the O'Chiese First Nation appeals regulation.

With regard to (d), (e), (f), and (g), as the O'Chiese First Nation now conducts its elections under its own community election rules, it is the first nation's role to ensure that its elections are conducted in a transparent and legal manner. However, application of the community election rules must still comply with the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and individuals who believe those rights have been infringed can access the courts for redress.

* * *

[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 responses to Question Nos. 878, 880 to 882, and 884 to 886 could be made orders for returns, these returns would be tabled immediately.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Text]

Question No. 878—Mr. Arnold Viersen:

With regard to the media availability of the Prime Minister, since November 4, 2015: (a) how many media availabilities and press conferences has the Prime Minister held or participated in, broken down by (i) date, (ii) location; and (b) what are the details of any briefing notes or memorandums provided to the Prime Minister in relation to the media availabilities and press conferences in (a), broken down by department, agency and crown corporation, including (i) title, (ii) date, (iii) sender, (iv) recipient, (v) subject matter, (vi) file number?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 880—Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach:

With regard to infrastructure spending: since the 2016 budget was tabled, what infrastructure projects for post-secondary institutions in Quebec have received grants, broken down by (i) riding, (ii) funding program, (iii) total project budget, (iv) amount of federal grants, in dollars and as a percentage of the total project budget, (v) the date of the announcement?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 881—Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach:

With regard to the Prime Minister's youth council: (a) what is the mandate of the Council; (b) how many times has the Council met since it was first established, and how long has each meeting lasted; (c) how many times has the Council met with the Prime Minister and for how long; (d) what stakeholders have met with the Council, including (i) ministers, (ii) Members of Parliament, (iii) government officials, (iv) organizations, (v) businesses; (e) what has the Council's budget been since it was first established, broken down by year; (f) what topics have been discussed during the Council's meetings; and (g) have the Council members signed a confidentiality clause and, if so, (i) what type, (ii) what are the details?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 882—Mr. Kelly McCauley:

With regard to travel expenses for departmental employees between November 5, 2015, and February 16, 2017, what was: (a) all extended travel pay, broken down by (i) amount spent, (ii) department (iii) branch or sector, (iv) staff title; and (b) all

"weekend travel home" pay, broken down by (i) amount spent, (ii) department, (iii) branch or sector, (iv) staff title?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 884—Mr. Dave MacKenzie:

With regard to materials prepared regarding Bill S-201, An Act to prohibit and prevent genetic discrimination: for every briefing document prepared, (i) what is the date on the document, (ii) who was the sender, (iii) who was the recipient, (iv) what is the title or subject matter of the document, (v) what is the department's internal tracking number?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 885—Mr. Blake Richards:

With regard to the rules used to define active versus passive income for purposes of the small business deduction: (a) when was the review of the rules, which was originally started in Budget 2015, completed and if the review was not completed (i) when did the government decide to discontinue the review, (ii) what were the reasons for the discontinuation of the review; (b) prior to the discontinuation or completion of the review in (a), were any consultations or analyses undertaken by the Minister of National Revenue or the Minister of Finance and, if so, what were (i) the results, (ii) the date of each consultation, (iii) the location of each consultation, (iv) the name and title of individuals or groups consulted, (v) the recommendations that were made to the Ministers; (c) when was the decision made to change the interpretation of rules, which was issued through a bulletin by the Canada Revenue Agency on August 23, 2016, and by whom was the decision made; (d) prior to the issue of the bulletin in (c), were any consultations or analyses undertaken by the Minister of National Revenue or the Minister of Finance; and (e) if the answer to (d) is in the affirmative, what were (i) the results, (ii) the date of each consultation, (iii) the location of each consultation, (iv) the name and title of individuals or groups consulted, (v) the recommendations that were made to the Ministers?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 886—Mr. John Brassard:

With regard to the use of mefloquine by members of the Canadian Armed Forces as an anti-malaria drug as directed by the Minister of National Defence: (a) how many Canadian Armed Forces members have been given mefloquine annually in each of the years since mefloquine was first used by the Canadian Armed Forces in 1993; (b) what other anti-malaria drugs has the Canadian Armed Forces administered to forces members; (c) what year did the Canadian Armed Forces change the use of mefloquine from mandatory to optional for Canadian Armed Forces members; (d) how many members of the Canadian Armed Forces have been returned to Canada from deployment for not taking or refusing mefloquine; and (e) how many Canadian Armed Forces members were refused deployment to a mission for refusing to take mefloquine?

(Return tabled)

[English]

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

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

[Translation]

PRIVILEGE

DISTRIBUTION OF BUDGET — SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: I am now prepared to rule on the question of privilege raised on March 22, 2017, by the hon. member for Louis-Saint-Laurent concerning the advance distribution in the House of the Minister of Finance's budget presentation documents.

Speaker's Ruling

[English]

I would like to thank the member for Louis-Saint-Laurent for having raised the matter in the House, as well as the members for Victoria, Flamborough—Glanbrook, Carleton, and Banff—Airdrie for their comments.

[Translation]

In raising the matter, the member for Louis-Saint-Laurent contended that an unacceptable breach of privilege had occurred when copies of the budget presentation were distributed to government members only, while a vote was taking place in the House, in advance of the Minister of Finance's budget presentation. This, he claimed, provided government members with privileged access to confidential budget information.

[English]

As members may recall, what transpired in the House on March 22, the day of the budget presentation, was rather exceptional in procedural terms in that an unexpected recorded division was under way at the time the Minister of Finance was scheduled to commence his speech. It was in this context that the pages, who earlier in the day had been given instructions to begin distribution at 4 p.m., began distributing some copies of the budget document during the vote, rather than just before the Minister of Finance rose, as is the usual practice. Thus, while the documents should not have been distributed during the vote, and the distribution was stopped as soon as I was aware that it was happening, this was a purely administrative error, which, unfortunately, gave some government members premature, albeit momentary, access to the budget documents.

[Translation]

It is our practice that information contained in the budget is kept secret until the Minister of Finance stands in the House to deliver the budget speech. However, it is also the practice that closed-door informal sessions are held by the Department of Finance prior to the budget presentation in the House of Commons—lock-ups as they are commonly known. These lock-ups have long played a role in the way parliamentary business is conducted, allowing members, as well as the media, advance access to sensitive information contained in the budget so they can be prepared to respond to questions once it has been made public. However, parliamentary convention also states that members should refrain from divulging that protected information prior to it being made public by the Minister of Finance later that day. There is no evidence that those members to whom the budget documents were inadvertently distributed on March 22 divulged their contents in any way.

• (1020)

[English]

The issue then is whether, in this case, the premature, even if short-lived, access of some members to budgetary information constituted a breach of members' privileges, thereby impeding them in the performance of their parliamentary functions. *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, second edition, states at page 894:

...Speakers of the Canadian House have maintained that secrecy is a matter of parliamentary convention, rather than one of privilege.

[Translation]

In the past, Speakers have had cause to address this very relationship between parliamentary convention and privilege. On November 18, 1981, at page 12898 of the *Debates*, Speaker Sauvé stated:

... a breach of budget secrecy cannot be dealt with as a matter of privilege. It might constitute a very important grievance for members. Such action might have a very negative impact on business or on the stock market. It might cause some people to receive revenues which they would not otherwise have been able to obtain. All of these are possible consequences of breaches of budget secrecy, but they have no impact on the privileges of the member. They might do harm—irrevocable in some cases—to persons or institutions, but this has nothing to do with privilege.

[English]

For his part, Speaker Fraser ruled on June 18, 1987, at page 7315 of the *Debates* that:

Budgetary secrecy is a matter of parliamentary convention. Its purpose is to prevent anybody from gaining a private advantage by reason of obtaining advance budgetary information.

The limits of parliamentary privilege are very narrow and it is not a responsibility of the Chair to rule as to whether or not a parliamentary convention is justified, or whether or not the matter complained of is a breach of that convention. That is a matter of political debate and not one in which the Chair would wish to become involved.

[Translation]

Although, as Speaker Fraser surmised, it is not for the Chair to pass judgment on the appropriateness of a parliamentary convention, as Speaker, I continue to shoulder the responsibility of ensuring that members are in no way prevented from carrying out their parliamentary functions. In response to a question of privilege raised about the premature disclosure of information contained in the main estimates, Speaker Milliken reminded members in his ruling of March 22, 2011, which can be found at page 9113 of the *Debates* that:

... in such instances when there is a transgression of [a] well-established practice, the Chair must ascertain whether, as a result, the member was impeded in the performance of parliamentary duties.

[English]

While, in the case before us, there may be a grievance, there has been no evidence suggesting that any member was unable to perform his or her parliamentary duties. Accordingly, I cannot find that there is a *prima facie* case of privilege.

Before I conclude, please let me take a moment to state how thankful I am, and I am sure we all are, for the continued professionalism of the House of Commons pages. They do extraordinary work in serving all members of this House, and for this they deserve our support and gratitude and obviously have it.

[Translation]

I thank all honourable members for their attention.

[English]

ACCESS TO HOUSE OF COMMONS—SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: I am now prepared to rule on the question of privilege raised on March 22, 2017, by the member for Milton regarding delayed access to the parliamentary precinct.

Speaker's Ruling

[Translation]

I would like to thank the hon. member for having raised this matter, as well as the members for Beauce, Perth—Wellington, and Hamilton Centre for their comments.

● (1025)

[English]

In raising this matter, the member for Milton indicated that she was prevented from attending a vote in the House of Commons and, thus, impeded in the performance of her parliamentary duties when her access to the parliamentary precinct through her normal transport was temporarily blocked. The member for Beauce confirmed that he was subjected to the same delay.

[Translation]

As Speaker, it is my role to ensure that the privileges of the House and the individual privileges of members are protected, including that of freedom from obstruction; for it is that privilege of unfettered access to the parliamentary precinct which ensures that members are able to discharge their responsibilities as elected representatives. I take my role in this regard very seriously. That is why upon hearing the question of privilege raised by the hon. member for Milton I stated that I would obtain a report into what occurred.

[English]

In fact I have received two reports of the incident. The first, from the House of Commons Corporate Security Officer and Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms, provides an excellent minute-by-minute summary of events and is supplemented by witness statements. The second report was received from the acting director of the Parliamentary Protective Service.

Based on these reports, here is what appears to have happened on March 22nd. At approximately 3:47 p.m., the bollards at or by the vehicle screening facility were lowered to allow for the arrival of a bus transporting journalists to Centre Block for the presentation of the budget. The media bus, under Parliamentary Protective Service escort, immediately proceeded to Centre Block. Seconds later, after the media bus had proceeded, a House of Commons shuttle bus arrived at the vehicle screening facility but was not allowed to proceed to Centre Block. In the ensuing minutes, two more shuttle buses arrived at the vehicle screening facility and were similarly delayed. I am informed that members were on at least some of these buses.

During these delays, which lasted a total of nine minutes, two members, the member for Milton and the member for Beauce, were waiting at the bus shelter near the vehicle screening facility. At approximately 3:54 p.m., the member for Beauce entered the vehicle screening facility and made inquiries of parliamentary protective staff about the delays and then decided at approximately 3:55 p.m. to leave the bus shelter and walk up the Hill. As members will know, it was around this time that a vote was commencing in the House.

[Translation]

House of Commons Procedure and Practice, second edition, on page 110, states:

Incidents involving physical obstruction—such as traffic barriers, security cordons and union picket lines either impeding Members' access to the Parliamentary

Precinct or blocking their free movement within the precinct...have been found to be *prima facie* cases of privilege.

[English]

The importance of the matter of members' access to the precinct, particularly when there are votes for members to attend, cannot be overstated. It bears repeating that even a temporary denial of access, whether there is a vote or not, cannot be tolerated. The Parliamentary Protective Service needs to better familiarize itself with the operations of the House so that its posture reflects and gives priority to the needs of the House, its committees, and its members at all times, and it needs to ensure that Parliamentary Protective Service staff are always alert to changing circumstances in this regard.

[Translation]

—This was stressed as long ago as 2004, when, in its 21st report, the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs stated:

The denial of access to Members of the House—even if temporary—is unacceptable, and constitutes a contempt of the House. Members must not be impeded or interfered with while on their way to the Chamber, or when going about their parliamentary business. To permit this would interfere with the operation of the House of Commons, and undermine the pre-eminent right of the House to the service of its Members.

As my predecessor stated on March 15, 2012, at page 6333 of *Debates*:

...the implementation of security measures cannot override the right of Members to unfettered access to the parliamentary precinct, free from obstruction or interference.

● (1030)

[English]

Obviously these kinds of incidents, which have given rise to the issue now before us, have been all too frequent. It is for this reason that my predecessor stated on May 12, 2015, at page 13,760 of *Debates* that protective personnel:

...need to know the community they serve. They need to be sensitive and responsive to the community they serve, and they need to be familiar with the expectations of the community they serve. This includes having the primary function of this place top of mind as they go about performing their duties.

Clearly there was a failure in that regard on this occasion.

It is precisely to prevent the recurrence of events like that of March 22nd that some months ago I asked the director of the Parliamentary Protective Service, as one of his annual objectives, to provide mandatory training on an ongoing basis for all members of the service on the privileges, rights, immunities, and powers of the House of Commons, including unfettered access of members of the House of Commons to the parliamentary precinct.

[Translation]

The Chair has every confidence that the leadership of the Parliamentary Protective Service will be able to achieve this important understanding of the parliamentary community they serve by availing themselves of all opportunities available for relevant training, including those previously offered by the procedural staff of the House.

Privilege

[English]

In the meantime, given the evidence that members were impeded in the fulfilment of their parliamentary duties and in view of the guidance provided by precedents, the Chair can only conclude that there are sufficient grounds for finding a prima facie question of privilege. I now invite the member for Milton to move the appropriate motion.

REFERENCE TO STANDING COMMITTEE ON PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Milton, CPC) moved:

That the question of privilege regarding the free movement of Members of Parliament within the Parliamentary Precinct raised on Wednesday, March 22, 2017 be referred to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

She said: Mr. Speaker, I would like to share my time with the member of Parliament for Beauce on this topic.

I want to thank you, Mr. Speaker, for your thoughtful ruling.

I do appreciate the time that the Parliamentary Protective Service puts in to making sure that our privileges, our rights, and our duties are supported in this place. I also want to thank those who provide the transport around the precinct, who I know were not at fault for what ended up happening. As I said, I truly appreciate the work they do every day to allow us to do the work we do every day here in this House on behalf of Canadians.

I thought I would give the House a bit of an idea from my perspective of what happened and why I felt so strongly in making sure that I rose on a point of personal privilege that day. As was noted in your reports, Mr. Speaker, I did arrive in time to be able to come to the Hill and, as expected, I waited for the transport to arrive. The frustrating part about it was that the transport was right there and I could see it waiting to come through security in order to bring us to the Hill. I made small talk with people at the bus shelter, including my colleague, the member of Parliament for Beauce. We waited patiently as the media bus proceeded to the Hill.

After a long period of waiting, when we realized that time was passing and the security bollard was not opening, my colleague from Beauce went over to inquire as to why the buses were not being released. The reason given was that security was waiting for the empty motorcade of the Prime Minister to vacate the precinct before we were allowed to go to the House to vote.

As I said, we could see the bus from where we were. We could see four or five officers who were in the area. If they had people on the bus who were members of Parliament, I was unaware, but now I understand they did. Indeed they would have seen us waiting at the bus shelter. They would have known that those waiting were members of Parliament, yet they did not know whether there were other members who were scattered among the different stops along the way to be brought to the House. Every expectation I had was that the bus would approach, that we would get on it, and we would be able to proceed to the House in order to vote.

One thing I do know about the scheduling of buses during a vote is that all efforts are taken to ensure that the system of timing is such so that members at the last minute, sometimes with one or two minutes to go, are not left stranded at their offices in any of the buildings around the precinct. As a result, careful thought is given to

making sure that those last-minute buses in the six, five, and four minutes left in the ringing of the bells make it to the House in time so that members can discharge their parliamentary obligations and duties on behalf of Canadians. However, that did not happen in that case. In fact, I am very distressed to understand that it was not a single bus or even two buses, that it was three buses that were held up for nine minutes preventing members from going to vote. The reason we were prevented was that the supremacy of one was paramount over the supremacy of the members of Parliament going to vote. The supremacy was in one person, and that was the Prime Minister.

Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau once famously said that 50 yards off the Hill, MPs are nobodies. Unfortunately, that type of arrogance seems to have bled into his son, the current Prime Minister, in terms of how he approaches issues. It is an incredibly arrogant statement and it is one that we reflect on a lot when we discharge our duties, because as members of Parliament we do not feel that way at all. It is unfortunate that the singular importance of that day during the budget had to do with whether or not the empty motorcade of the Prime Minister came off the Hill as opposed to members of Parliament coming into the House of Commons to vote. Indeed, it trumped what was, as you said, Mr. Speaker, our abilities to discharge our parliamentary responsibilities to Canadians.

We need to understand two things. First, was this done by actual order? If it was, who made the order and how was that order made, because it was a serious matter, one that you have expressed, Mr. Speaker. The second is whether this is something of an interpretation of the people who serve on the Hill that one group or one individual is far more important than the other. I do think that this is very indicative and very problematic.

Currently we have a discussion happening in PROC, the procedure and House affairs committee, with respect to the Prime Minister's and the government's desire to ensure that the members of Parliament's duties, privileges, and responsibilities are curtailed. Lots is said and lots is written about the importance of tradition and rules and what we do here in this House and the precedents that are set. It is incredibly important that we stop once in a while to be assured and to ensure that what we are doing here is respected.

● (1035)

The fact is that a number of MPs were prohibited from voting on a day when the budget was being presented in the House of Commons. The fact is the Prime Minister has, through his ministers, put forth a document that seriously curtails the ability of MPs to fulfill their duties. I do not think that this is an isolated incident, and I do worry that the tone of the government being set is such that MPs are no longer important either in this place or in what we have to say in opposition.

Privilege

Mr. Speaker, I hope and I support that this matter be referred to the appropriate committee so that the committee can undertake a study to determine through your two reports that I hope will be tabled, exactly what happened, who proceeded in making the decision to stop the MPs from getting on the Hill, and whether or not there was an implicit order or whether or not there was just tone being followed with respect to this matter. I am sure that my colleague, the member for Beauce, will also speak to the issue and the importance of it to his parliamentary privilege.

I greatly appreciate the time that has been put into ensuring that this was duly studied and appropriately thought through and that the time and effort of those who did the investigation did it in a timely fashion so that we could get to the facts of the matter. However, the facts are now known and what we need to understand more importantly now is the intention and the tone under which this Parliament seems to be operating that leads to the conclusion that the Prime Minister is paramount and supreme over the rest of us sitting here taking our seats in the House of Commons. Obviously, I reject that notion. I think that all members of Parliament in this place are incredibly important in how they represent their communities and their views, be they on the government backbench or in opposition.

I believe we should take pause to not just bat away complaints of the opposition on matters that are extremely important such as long-standing rules, long-standing conventions, agreements that we want to change things in this place, that we do so in concurrence with one another as opposed to having one side determine which path we are going to be following well into the future in terms of rules in the House.

I understand that the committee I am seeking this matter be referred to is undergoing a bit of a filibuster. I applaud my colleagues who are doing that, because they are making the point there that I am making here. It is unacceptable for a government to contemplate and think it is supreme above each and every member of Parliament that sits here, and if that arrogance is what is infiltrating the decision-making in this place by those who are serving us, then we need to throw some light on it and ensure that it does not continue, because it is completely unacceptable.

Unfortunately, my colleague from Beauce and I were both caught up in the moment where we were not allowed to be able to vote in the House. Some would say that is just a small infraction, but I would submit it is not. It is absolutely grave. We had our intention. We wanted to come to the Hill. We wanted to exercise our franchise on behalf of our constituents, and we were unable to do so because some individual, some person, we do not know yet, decided that was not going to happen because the Prime Minister's motorcade, which was empty, and the convenience of having it in one place or another took precedence over the duties and the responsibilities of a duly elected member of Parliament.

It is absolutely shameful. The committee deserves to study it, and we deserve to have a report back.

• (1040)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I must say I am disappointed in the person who is a leadership candidate for the Conservative Party to try to take such an

important issue of a question of privilege and try to make it political in the sense that she has chosen to try to blame the Prime Minister's motorcade.

Mr. Speaker, if the member was listening to your ruling, you were very clear in terms of why it has been ruled as *prima facie*, why it is that the motion was moved. It had nothing to do with the Prime Minister, not to mention other comments that the member has put on the record.

I would ask the would-be leader of the Conservative Party, does she not recognize that privilege is a very serious issue inside this chamber, that one does not have to be a member of the opposition to recognize it? Even we within government recognize it and treat it very seriously.

I sat on PROC, the procedure and House affairs committee, where we had to deal with this very serious issue in the past. We on this side of the House recognize it for what it is and it is a very serious issue. We do not believe that attempting to politicize it, as the member across the way has done, is in the best interests of moving forward.

Why does she choose to blame the Prime Minister's motorcade when within the Speaker's ruling there is no reference to it? It is about the media bus.

• (1045)

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Speaker, I have not had the privilege of reading the two documents to which you referred, so I do not know whether or not it is in there. However, I can tell the member that my colleague from Beauce did approach and ask why we were being impeded. The fact of the matter, not the interpretation, is that the member was told by the security service that we were being impeded because of the Prime Minister's motorcade.

Is the member calling the member of Parliament for Beauce a liar? Is this what he is trying to say on the floor of the House of Commons? If he is, I invite you to go outside and say exactly that same thing, and we are going to see—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. I just want to remind the member to address her comments to the Chair.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley.

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Madam Speaker, I suppose part of this requires some translation, if I can use that word, for Canadians watching, as to why this could be so important to members of Parliament trying to access the Hill and cast their vote on behalf of their constituents. This scenario did not have any massive ramifications on the government standing or falling or a budget passing or not, but the principle is the question of rights of members of Parliament and the rights of our constituents to have their voices heard on matters of the day.

Privilege

The question is regarding what caused this problem. This is a difficult balance, as my friend alluded to in her comments, between access not just for members of Parliament but for the public as well, and the security that we must maintain in this place. My colleague from Milton was right to give credit to the security service and the staff for doing the job that they do.

We just watched an attempt by a Liberal member to say that it was this and not that, when we have clear evidence given by the member for Beauce as to why this impeding happened. Is the proper forum for dialogue on this not at a committee? That is where we can bring forward the security services. We can hear from the member for Beauce and the member for Milton and put the facts on the table to understand what the problem is. One could imagine a scenario in the future where a certain prime minister would not want a certain group of members of Parliament to vote and simply makes sure the motorcade hits at a certain time so that the gates are closed. Is a committee not the best place for this conversation to take place?

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley for the interpretation of what I was trying to say.

As was indicated in my original intervention on March 22, wherein I gave the reason that we were impeded from the Hill as the first point of evidence, that indeed it was the Prime Minister's motorcade, the empty one, having precedence over our approach to the Hill. It is a very flimsy excuse and as such one would worry going forward as to what kinds of excuses could be given in order to ensure certain members of Parliament of any stripe did not come onto the Hill or fulfill their duties as a member.

The reason I brought up the quote from former prime minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau is that it goes to the point of our being viewed as nothing. The reality is we are somebody when we sit in the House, and we are somebody when we represent our constituents in our home ridings, and we should be treated as such. We should not have the precedent of some individual making an erroneous call that an empty motorcade of the Prime Minister is actually paramount and supreme over the voting obligations of members of Parliament.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Maxime Bernier (Beauce, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to endorse everything my colleague from Milton said. She is absolutely right. I was with her when I was forced to wait an unreasonably long period of time because we were denied access to Parliament Hill and prevented from exercising our democratic right to vote on a bill and represent our constituents well. It was important to me to be here.

The facts outlined in the Speaker's ruling are absolutely true. We were forced to wait nine minutes. I went to see a security officer to ask what was going on because the clock was ticking and we wanted to be in the House of Commons to exercise our right to vote.

The first officer was not well informed and asked for information. Initially, we were told that we had to wait for the Prime Minister's motorcade, which was empty. Others told us that it was because of the media bus. There was some confusion at the security gate, and because it was taking too long, we decided to proceed quickly on foot to the House of Commons to exercise our right to vote.

As everyone knows, we were not able to exercise our right to vote, so I am very pleased with the Chair's ruling, which confirms the comments of my colleague from Milton and my own. This is important not only to us, but to all members of the House. Parliamentary privilege exists so that we can represent our constituents, our reason for being here, and vote.

I am not proud of what has been happening in the House for the past few weeks; certain parliamentary traditions and customs are not being respected. The Prime Minister is not always present during question period, and yet being able to ask the Prime Minister questions is another aspect of parliamentary privilege.

This shows a degree of arrogance that is inconsistent with what the Prime Minister said during the election campaign. He said he wanted to bring a new tone to the House of Commons, but this new tone has not been positive, as we are experiencing today.

One only needs to look at what is happening in our parliamentary committees, where the government wants to limit my colleagues' right to speak. This does not respect the British parliamentary tradition. I hope we can come back to this and look at what is happening here in Parliament.

Why are parliamentary privilege and parliamentary traditions being flouted? We need to have this debate at committee. This is important to me and my colleagues in the official opposition, as I imagine it is for the members of all opposition parties. Madam Speaker, I am pleased to have this opportunity to speak to this matter.

I would now like to move an amendment to the proposal brought forward by my colleague from Milton. I move, seconded by the member for Oxford:

That the motion be amended by adding the following: "and that the committee make this matter a priority over all other business including its review of the Standing Orders and Procedure of the House and its Committees."

• (1050)

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am somewhat curious about the Conservative Party's approach to dealing with the serious issue of privilege. We have always believed, whether it was in opposition or in government, that members need to have unfettered access to the House of Commons. We recognize the value and importance of the vote and of participating in debate. We see that, and I will get the opportunity to go over exactly what the Speaker said.

What we know the Speaker did not say was that it had anything at all to do with a prime ministerial motorcade, yet the opposition wants to focus the debate on the Prime Minister. They seem to be more focused on that than on the actual privilege.

I am sure at least one of the members listened attentively to the ruling the Speaker made, and throughout the ruling no reference was made to the Prime Minister. The reference was to the media bus, and that is what the question of privilege is all about.

Privilege

Did the member across the way listen to what the Speaker's ruling was on the question of privilege? If he did, could he please provide any comment whatsoever with respect to the relevancy of the media bus?

•(1055)

[*Translation*]

Hon. Maxime Bernier: Madam Speaker, earlier I explained what my colleague from Milton and I experienced. It was quite clear.

Indeed, I am the one who inquired about why our parliamentary privileges were breached. At the time there were mixed messages as to why this happened, but never any clear reason. At the time we were told that some of the Prime Minister's vehicles were empty and that we had to wait. There was also talk of the media bus.

To us, the most important thing is that this privilege was breached. It has been confirmed that this is not the first time this happened to us. Parliamentary conventions of other hon. members are currently being ignored. Let us look at what is happening in committees because it is important for hon. members to be able to express themselves. That is what I want to see.

I am pleased that the Chair has acknowledged our right to our privileges and transferred this request to the relevant committees so that we may have a detailed analysis.

[*English*]

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Madam Speaker, this is in reference to my Liberal friend. I am reading the Speaker's ruling right now, and there is a recounting of what happened, but at no point did the Speaker make that suggestion. I will read the quote from him: "The media bus, under Parliamentary Protective Service escort, immediately proceeded to Centre Block. Seconds later, after the media bus had proceeded, a House of Commons shuttle bus arrived at the vehicle screening facility but was not allowed to proceed to Centre Block."

The Speaker does not say it was because of the media bus. We also have testimony from the member for Beauce, who asked the security services, and I tend to believe him. Maybe my Liberal colleague is questioning the veracity of what my friend for Beauce is saying, but I will believe him until it is proven otherwise. I have no reason to doubt that he asked the question and was given the answer from our security services, whom I also believe.

Again, the Liberal members can choose not to believe the security services, but the Speaker at no point in his ruling, and I have read it three times now, says that the media bus was the source of the problem. All he said in the ruling was that the media bus went through and that subsequently three buses were stopped. The member for Beauce then asked the security representative there why, and he was told about the Prime Minister's empty motorcade.

This is why we need to bring this issue to the procedure and House affairs committee. It is so that we can find out what the truth is, rather than hear speculation from the Liberal Party or a suggestion from the Liberals that one of the members of Parliament is lying.

I would like the member for Beauce to recount that specific part of the story, which seems important to me and important for us to investigate.

Hon. Maxime Bernier: Madam Speaker, I think my colleague is right. He did a very good translation of what I just said. I said that in French, and it is the same thing in English.

I was there. I was waiting and I asked and was told that there was an empty car, that we had to wait because of the motorcade of the Prime Minister, which was empty at that time. For me, that is what happened.

I am very pleased that the same facts were in the Speaker's decision. I agree with the Speaker, and that is why we must have that debate. It is too bad that we must have that debate in the committee, because the facts are the facts and we must go along with that.

I am very upset about the situation.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, as I indicated in my questions, we do take the issue of privilege and access to the House very seriously, as I believe all members of this House should, and we recognize how important it is that we have unfettered access to the floor of the House of Commons.

The Prime Minister has consistently said to his members of Parliament, and has suggested to all members of Parliament, that it always works much better if we represent our constituents' interests here in Ottawa, as opposed to Ottawa's interests in the constituencies. This is something our current Prime Minister truly believes.

In order to represent our constituents' interests here in Ottawa, we need to have that unfettered access. That is something I, as a parliamentarian for many years, take very seriously. That is why I was offended by the members' comments in regard to changing the topic. We should be taking the issue more seriously. I will provide more comments with respect to the previous presentations shortly.

I want to emphasize that we perform many roles inside this chamber and in committee rooms. I would argue that our standing committees have the potential to be the real backbone of future developments of ideas for members of Parliament to be engaged with. The House is an opportunity for individuals to be equally engaged in all sorts of different policy areas. It is absolutely critical that MPs be able to attend our institution here, including all committee rooms on the Hill and on the precinct site, which goes beyond just the Hill. We do have committees that are off the Hill.

It is of the utmost importance that we have access, especially when it comes time to vote. I have been involved previously when similar questions of privilege were raised. When that occurred, I do not believe members at the procedure and House affairs committee tried to say that the government of the day was trying to block members from being able to participate.

After listening to some of the comments coming from across the way, it needs to be made very clear to all members of this House that there is not one member of the House who would be in support of another member not having unfettered access to House. To try to imply something different is just wrong. That is not the case. I know that at least it is not the case within the Liberal caucus, and I would suggest that it applies to all caucuses.

Privilege

We all, collectively, understand and appreciate the importance of what members of Parliament need to do and are obligated to do. That mandate comes from the constituents who put us here. I do take this issue very seriously.

I have listened to the statements and asked questions of the two Conservative speakers. I am of the opinion that they do not understand the ruling made by the Speaker. What I would like to do is reinforce that. Nowhere in the Speaker's ruling was there any reference, at all, in regard to the Prime Minister or the Prime Minister's motorcade. In fact, it would seem to me that some members are trying to tie other issues into this very important issue of privilege.

I would like to reinforce exactly what the Speaker said. I am going to quote for members who maybe were not listening quite attentively to what the Speaker was saying. They will now have the opportunity to hear it, because I am going to repeat, word for word, in good part, what the Speaker said.

● (1100)

The Speaker stated, "In fact, I have received two reports of the incident. The first, from the House of Commons Corporate Security Officer and Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms, provides an excellent minute by minute summary of events and is supplemented by witness statements. The second report was received from the acting director of the Parliamentary Protective Service."

I will pause there. I would like to think that no members in the House would actually question the consultation made by the Speaker and what he heard from the specific groups that helped him with the decision he shared with us just an hour ago.

His ruling further stated, "Based on those reports, here is what appears to have happened on March 22. At approximately 3:47 p.m., the bollards at the vehicle screening facility were lowered to allow for the arrival of a bus transporting journalists to Centre Block for the presentation of the budget. The media bus, under Parliamentary Protective Service escort, immediately proceeded to Centre Block. Seconds later, after the media bus had proceeded, a House of Commons shuttle bus arrived at the vehicle screening facility, but was not allowed to proceed to Centre Block. In the ensuing minutes, two more shuttle buses arrived at the vehicle screening facility and were similarly delayed. I am informed that members were on at least some of these buses. During these delays, which lasted a total of nine minutes, two members, the member for Milton and the member for Beauce, were waiting at the bus shelter near the vehicle screening facility. At approximately 3:54 p.m., the member for Beauce entered the vehicle screening facility and made inquiries of parliamentary protective staff about the delays and then decided, at approximately 3:55 p.m.", which is one minute later, "to leave the bus shelter and walk up the hill. As members will know, it is at around this time that a vote was commencing in the House."

The Speaker went on to explain, through *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, second edition, page 110, as follows:

Incidents involving physical obstruction—such as traffic barriers, security cordons and union picket lines either impeding Members' access to the Parliamentary Precinct or blocking their free movement within the precinct...have been found to be *prima facie* cases of privilege.

Members across the way who would have heard that would have also heard that there was no reference whatsoever to the Prime Minister's motorcade. What they would know from the ruling of the Speaker was that it was all about a media bus and an escort. That is, ultimately, what was implied in the Speaker's ruling that justified it as a *prima facie* case.

I listened to the member for Milton's response to that. This is what I love about *Hansard*. Members across the way can read for themselves what was said by the member. If we ask ourselves if the member relayed any sort of confidence in what the Speaker put on the record minutes before she stood, I would argue no. Her focus seemed to be politicizing the issue by talking about a former prime minister and then trying to apply it to the current Prime Minister.

● (1105)

Let us look at the word "arrogance", and how the member across the way used it. Then she talked about other things that were taking place in the House of which members should be aware. I have thoughts on those issues too, and I would like to share some of them.

With respect to the current Prime Minister, I believe he has been one of the most accountable, transparent prime ministers we have seen in the House in decades. Members across the way laugh and heckle, but in my tenure as an MLA, I very closely watched the prime ministers, their attitudes, and how they interacted with the public. Never before have I seen prime ministers tour town hall style at open mics, where there were no taped or advance questions given to them, and actually answer questions.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

● (1110)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order, please. I want to remind members that all members in the House deserve respect when making their comments. Therefore, I would hope that respect will be afforded to each of the members.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I appreciate that intervention. The point is that we have a Prime Minister who, over the last year and a half, has demonstrated to Canadians first-hand that there is a higher sense of accountability in Ottawa, and not only within the Prime Minister's Office. A couple of weeks back, the Minister of National Defence went to Winnipeg North to meet with members of our Ukrainian community, to talk about what was happening in Ukraine and Canada. As the member across the way—

Mr. Dan Albas: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I am truly sorry to interrupt the member opposite. However, he has really gone off into the north here. We are talking about a simple motion and an amendment. I do not find any of his comments with respect to the travels of the Minister of National Defence—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): That is not a point of order.

Mr. Dan Albas: Madam Speaker, it goes to relevance, which is a point of order.

Privilege

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): On relevance, as the member knows, there is some leeway. The member is actually getting to the point, I am sure. However, as the member knows, there is some leeway in the debates, and I would again ask the members to afford that respect and not heckle or react badly.

Mr. Dan Albas: Madam Speaker, just to be abundantly clear, I was not heckling the member; I was just asking him to—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I am just saying that there has been some heckling, and I hope members will ensure they refrain from doing that.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, it is interesting that the member would stand on a point of order on relevance when I did not see him stand on a point of order on relevance when his colleague talked about the Prime Minister and his attitudes. The Conservative Party needs to understand that if one member starts talking about an area and is trying to make a case that another member does have the opportunity to address the points his colleague has raised. That is what is happening. If we have individuals from the Conservative opposition being critical and making reference to a point of order, then start talking about Standing Orders and so forth—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I would just remind the parliamentary secretary that I have already ruled on that. The debate is not on the point of order that was just made; rather the debate is on the motion.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, when we look at what the member's presentation was all about, did we hear anything with regard to the media bus, which the Speaker referenced? Ultimately, the opposition members are sending a mixed message. On the one hand, they are trying to emphasize that they have a matter of privilege. I am very sympathetic to what the members have referenced in moving the motion. However, I question why the members across the way took as much time as they did. Much in their speeches was not about the privilege itself, but about other things that were not related to the privilege.

That is why it is important, and why I started to address some of those aspects. In good part, it needs to be done. The amendment to the motion asks to send this to the procedures and House affairs committee, which is the committee it should go to, and that it should be given priority. As I indicated, I have sat on PROC before. A nice thing about a standing committee is that it has the opportunity to set its own agenda. There is nothing to prevent PROC, for example, from meeting more than the two days a week for two hours a day. In fact, that is what is happening today. As we speak, PROC is meeting.

Therefore, the member's amendment to the motion really is not necessary. When I was a member of PROC, we all understood the importance of a motion that passed from the House dealing with privilege and the responsibility of that. If in fact the motion does pass, I would like to think the committee will be afforded the opportunity to set aside the time to do one or more things if it chooses to do so. This would be determined by the membership of the committee.

Just based on the two speeches before mine, my concern is that even if it does pass in the House, what will be the focus of the debate going into the procedures and House affairs committee? Is it really

and truly going to be about the privilege on which the Speaker has ruled, or is it going to become an expansion of a wide variety of other issues about which the Conservative Party, in some ways working with the New Democratic Party, is going to want to talk?

That is why I believe, as government, we need to take the issue very seriously. I encourage all members to take the issue very seriously. If we believe at the core of the question of privilege, as presented by the Speaker, is about unfettered access to the Parliament buildings, then that is what it should be about.

I am hoping that by standing and speaking to the motion, members across the way will recognize that if in fact they genuinely believe, as they want me and others to believe, that this is about the privilege raised, then the comments that were made by the previous two speakers were not necessarily warranted. That was where the focus appeared to be.

• (1115)

That is why it is good to repeat the fact that we have a very serious issue before the chamber. I will continue to argue that what is in the best interest of this institution is that we recognize the importance of unfettered access. We are not just talking about votes. We are talking about debate, committee rooms, the chamber, and committee rooms outside the parliamentary precinct. That is what the focus of the debate should be.

I started off by saying that I was disappointed, and the reason I am disappointed is that the two previous speeches set the tone in the wrong direction. I would invite members opposite to refocus. What is important here is not the political shots but rather—

• (1120)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Questions and comments, the hon. member for Chilliwack—Hope.

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member talked repeatedly about how serious this is and that we need to take this matter seriously, at the end of the day. He said that when he was in opposition, under a Conservative majority government, and sat on the procedure and House affairs committee, they all understood that this sort of issue and the issue of a member's privilege would take precedence at the procedure and House affairs committee. That is when Joe Preston was the chair of that committee.

Now we have seen a different style. We have seen that it is actually the Prime Minister's Office that is setting the agenda for the procedure and House affairs committee with this motion to strip members of the opposition of their rights in this place. Therefore, it is no longer the committee that is setting the agenda. It is the Prime Minister's Office.

If the member wants this matter to be taken seriously, it is this House that will need to take up its role and instruct the committee that because this matter is so serious, it needs to be given precedence over all other matters the Prime Minister's Office wants that committee to discuss.

Will the member agree with me that the way we can show, as a House, that we want this matter to be taken seriously is to instruct the procedure and House affairs committee to put this at the very top of the agenda at the very earliest opportunity?

Privilege

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, my last appeal was to get members, of the Conservative caucus in particular, to focus on the issue of the privilege itself. That has nothing to do with the Prime Minister's Office. Why do the Conservatives continue to want to bring up the Prime Minister's Office? It has absolutely nothing to do with it, and the members know that full well.

The Prime Minister was here for the day. The motorcade might have been parked there all day. I do not know. Why do the members of the Conservative Party continue to try to bring up the Prime Minister's Office? I say, shame on them. The issue is access of privilege, and the Conservatives should be focused on that issue. To try to loop in the Prime Minister's Office is disingenuous. If the Conservatives are serious about the issue and want to debate the issue, they should stay focused on the privilege.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Madam Speaker, as a new member of Parliament in this place, with a year and a half of experience, certainly not as much as the member opposite, I remember very clearly the day I was handed my parliamentary ID. I have read the back of it many times. It states:

Under the law of parliamentary privilege, the bearer has free and open access at all times, without obstruction or interference, to the precincts of the Houses of Parliament to which the bearer is a member.

I have read this many times, and I understand the gravity. We are, each one of us in this House, more than just individual members of Parliament. We are representatives of every single region of Canada, and through us, hundreds of thousands, indeed millions, of Canadians have their voice in this place.

It is amazing that we can all be reading the same Speaker's report and have such different interpretations of it. No one on this side of the House is questioning the Speaker's ruling. The Speaker laid down the facts on the time frames that happened. He did not go into the reasons for the delay, but he did explain to this House that there was a delay. This House had the opportunity to listen to the member for Beauce and the member for Milton give their reasons as to why they thought the delay happened. They explained that to this House. The member for Beauce quite clearly went up to Parliamentary Protective Services and asked the reason for the delay. He was told that it was because of the Prime Minister's motorcade.

My question for the member opposite is this. Is the member standing in this House and accusing the member for Milton and the member for Beauce, on the record, of standing in this House and misleading this House and giving false reasoning? I would like to know his answer.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the first comments made by the member, because it is indeed a privilege to be here to represent our constituencies, and it is one of the reasons I argued for unfettered access to the parliamentary precinct. I do not think anyone would question that.

With respect to the specific question the member asked, at times I think members might have selective hearing. If he listened to the member for Beauce, this is what he said in response to a question. He said there was no specific reason given by personnel at the gate. They made reference to the Prime Minister's motorcade, but they also made reference to the media bus. Why has that point been lost?

Why does the opposition give the motorcade as the reason? Why do members want to give that impression? I am suspicious of that.

I would like to see the focus of the debate, no matter how long we have it today, whether it is five minutes or five hours, be what the member started his speech with, which is why it is so important that we have unfettered access to this facility.

● (1125)

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member opposite said that this is a very serious issue, that we have to have parliamentary access and that we could be talking about this for five hours in the House. Would it be better to talk for five hours in the House or to have the procedure and house affairs committee, which is sitting right now, take some action to figure out, if these vehicles were in the way, what we are going to do to prevent that? Could the member comment?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I would like to hear what other members might have to say on this issue in the House. I have tried to gauge where I should be going. I believe in unfettered access to the parliamentary precinct, but I am very concerned about why members opposite, the two Conservative speakers in particular, said what they said. It did not seem to me to be just about unfettered access. It seemed to be a little more politically driven, and that concerns me.

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Madam Speaker, one of the things I think the procedure and house affairs committee would be able to look at is the fact that with the construction, there seem to be priorities for vehicles approaching the House. I have raised this before. I am curious about whether the parliamentary secretary has actually engaged with other ministers about that.

When we try to enter and exit the main entrance for parliamentarians, we often have ministers' vehicles idling and blocking not only pedestrian traffic but the buses. In fact, that happens on a regular basis when we enter and exit the premises. We often find some of the ministers' vehicles parked along the pedestrian access that is granted because of the construction. There are not only members of Parliament there. There are members of the public and tourists and so forth. It would be interesting to find out what is going on with regard to those things.

I would ask the parliamentary secretary, since it has been raised before, if there have been discussions among cabinet ministers and the Prime Minister about the ministers' vehicles not only idling for long periods of time but blocking access by pedestrians, members of Parliament, and buses, because they choose not to leave that zone of activity.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, all of us need to be concerned about the construction that has been taking place. Virtually since I was elected, West Block has been under reconstruction, and as a result, it has put a great deal more pressure on the issue of access, but all in all, I think it has worked out quite well.

It is not just ministerial vehicles. There are other vehicles that also come onto Parliament Hill. Whether it is construction vehicles or taxis, all sorts of traffic comes up onto the Hill. It is a concern, and what is most important, is unfettered access.

Privilege

If we go back, prior to the construction, there might have been one complaint in eight or nine years. Just a couple of years ago, we probably had two or three questions of privilege raised. The frequency has increased, and that is something we should all be concerned about.

● (1130)

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with my good friend, the member of Parliament for Elmwood—Transcona.

This is déjà vu all over again. We have had this issue more than a few times in my brief time in the House of Commons. An event takes place, members of Parliament are unable to access the Hill, we redress it through the Speaker, and always, from my experience, we take it to the procedure and House affairs committee.

The “he said, she said” that is going on right now with the member for Winnipeg North is unhelpful in actually exploring what we need to understand to make sure this does not happen again.

For folks who do not understand, or perhaps appreciate, why this is so important, the ability of members of Parliament to actually gain access to the House of Commons to cast their votes on behalf of our constituents is a right and a privilege that extends back to the creation of Parliament itself. In olden times, there were kings and queens who did not like what the commoners had to say. They did not particularly want a certain thing to pass, and they would physically bar members of Parliament from coming in, speaking, and voting.

We extend that forward. We appreciate and recognize the power of any majority government and the power of a Prime Minister. At no time could we ever allow one inch to be given over to the idea that the Prime Minister, or anyone connected to the Prime Minister, could prevent, block, or inhibit a member of Parliament from gaining access to a vote.

One can easily remember the scenario in which we had a minority Parliament, and we had many confidence votes on which the government could fall or stand. I can remember a former colleague, who has now since passed, casting a deciding vote as to whether the government would continue on in its function and duty or whether the country would return to an election. That was within the last decade. That was not that long ago.

One understands the importance of what we are talking about here today. It is paramount to the basic role and duties we have as members of Parliament.

Let us take care of one thing right away. It is the Liberals who seem to be standing in the way of taking this debate to its proper place. We are meant to be talking about the budget and some other important things in the House of Commons that concern all Canadians, yet this has come up from a Speaker's ruling we had earlier today, which takes precedence over everything else that goes on in the House of Commons. However, to properly understand and analyze what it is that happened and how to make sure it never happens again, the floor of the House of Commons is not necessarily the best place. We cannot call witnesses forward here today. We are not able to request interviews with the security officials or with my colleagues who first raised this issue. We have the debate as it takes

place under our given rules. Clearly, the best place to take it is the committee, where the committee can explore and understand and bring the witnesses it needs and then, finally, support the Speaker's ruling as to what actually happened and how to make sure it never happens again.

The Liberals have decided not to accept that amendment so far. So far, they have said no, let us just keep talking about it in the House of Commons. The Liberal representative so far has also tried to infer from the Speaker's ruling that the Speaker has determined what actually happened and that it was the media bus that caused the problems.

I too have read the Speaker's ruling several times. I have read it in great detail, and in no place does the Speaker say that. All the Speaker does is recount the events of the day. There was one bus that had a bunch of media on it. It went through the gate. There were several buses behind it that contained members of Parliament and that were picking up other MPs. They were prevented. All we have is the testimony, so far, and I will call it testimony, from my friend from Beauce, who said that he went to the security official who has there and asked what the problem was, what the hold up was. He said they needed to get to the House to vote. He was told, and I believe him, because I have no reason not to, that the Prime Minister's motorcade, which was empty, was in the way and that the security protocols at that time said nobody was allowed to move.

I have been in that scenario in which the Prime Minister's motorcade, all MPs have seen this, is coming through the parliamentary precinct. It is long, with big, black SUVs, and on it goes and everything stops around it, as is right, because we need to have security around the Prime Minister. No one denies that. However, in this instance, the motorcade was empty. MPs were trying to get to a vote in the House of Commons and hear the debate on the budget. These are important things. If that was the case, if MPs were denied on that excuse, then we have a problem, because that excuse could arise at almost any time the Prime Minister's motorcade wanted to just park somewhere and block the gates of Parliament, or a gate of Parliament that is often used. There is one we predominantly use if we are taking a bus up onto the Hill.

Clearly, if that is what we have in front of us, that is serious. That matters. That could, in future, and we are not suggesting it now, be an abuse of power to prevent MPs from coming in.

● (1135)

That could happen, if that is what took place. That is what we have. At no point in his ruling earlier this morning did the Speaker say the problem was the media bus, to correct my friend from Winnipeg North, as loud as he would like to say it and as often as he would like to repeat it. That is not what is in the Speaker's ruling. He is entitled to his opinions, but not his own facts.

These are the facts. We have the testimony from the member for Beauce who had asked the security official. We have the Speaker's ruling in front of us, which said that all that happened is these buses lined up and could not get in.

Privilege

When it comes to the Liberals, as Shakespeare would say, methinks they doth protest too much. They are asking us how we dare accuse the Prime Minister of trying to ramrod something through, how we dare accuse the Prime Minister of trying to bully Parliament or prevent MPs from speaking on behalf of their constituents.

Wait. What is going on at the procedure and House affairs committee right now? Right, there is a Liberal motion at committee that speaks to what is exactly relevant today, which is the ability of members of Parliament to have the privilege that is given to us, not by the government, not by the Prime Minister's office, but by our constituents, the privilege of access to the Hill.

This is relevant for my friend from Winnipeg, who likes to say that there is too much heckling in the House of Commons, yet sometimes, from time to time, he just cannot seem to resist it himself. He needs to heckle and get into the debate, and then minutes later will rise to his feet or speak to the media and say that what is wrong with our democracy is that there is too much heckling. Then he returns to the House of Commons to continue his practice of heckling members of Parliament while we are trying to speak.

The question today is this. Is there some sort of pattern developing within the government? I think that is a relevant question. We see the Liberals trying to take the rules of the House of Commons and force down the throats of the opposition that the government of the day should have unfettered power to shut down debate, that it should have new prorogation rules, that it should have the Prime Minister only come in on Wednesdays to answer questions, and that it does not need the support of opposition parties to change the rules of the House of Commons.

We are now asking a question about access to the House of Commons, and how that access was denied. These are good questions to ask, which should be of grave concern to all parliamentarians. Liberals might enter into some delusional world in which they say that they are the government now and will be the government forever. They may think they can change the rules of Parliament to favour the government, because that will never come back to bite them. They think they can make it so that a prime minister's motorcade can block MPs from gaining access to voting on behalf of their constituents, because they are the government right now and maybe it works for them.

I remind my Liberal colleagues of recent history when it was not them in government, and that our role as we pass across this stage is to make sure that we leave the place better than we found it, to make sure that we can do the jobs that people send us here to do. It is nothing more complicated or more simple than that.

However, we see the tendency in the government to say that rules only apply to other people, but that it is special because it is Liberal. The Liberals feel they can have special rules that help Liberals. As the House leader for the Liberals said on the floor of the House of Commons, when we asked about the Prime Minister taking special advantages, he is the Prime Minister after all. Oh goodness, he is the Prime Minister after all.

When the Prime Minister stands in this place, he is just another member of Parliament, which is what we all are. We have the

Westminster style of governance. We do not vote in prime ministers. We vote in members of Parliament. News flash to the current government members: as much Kool-Aid as they have drunk, the actual reality of how our system works is that we all have the right to access this place, the right to speak freely on behalf of the people we represent to the best of our abilities, and the right to challenge the government when it makes bad decisions, as we are doing at the procedure and House affairs committee right now.

Why, in heaven's name, is there some discussion? It is real and it is important. The Speaker has ruled that we have a prima facie case of privilege that members of Parliament, two in this case at least, had their rights of access denied, which is as serious as it gets in an open and free democracy. When members are blocked from voting, this is a question worth exploring and understanding so that it does not happen again. We have done it several times now.

The best place for this to take place, the best place for us to investigate what actually happened, to hear from security, to hear from the members who were actually present is in a House of Commons committee. The committee that handles that is the procedure and House affairs committee.

Why would Liberals want to block that particular investigation? One has to ask the question why. Are they worried about an answer that may come out of it? I do not know. Let us just do the right thing. Let us make sure that the guaranteed rights to access this place are guaranteed for all members of Parliament, and that this place functions as it should once in a while.

• (1140)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, my question is fairly straightforward in the sense that the member heard the opening remarks by the two Conservative speakers on the issue.

There was some concern in regard to why there is so much focus and attention on something that is not included in the Speaker's ruling. The motorcade that is often referred to from the opposition benches was here all day. The Prime Minister was not in the motorcade. However, it seems there is this desire to bring in the Prime Minister or the Prime Minister's Office.

Does the member believe that in itself is relevant to the degree that the focus is on it? I am curious as to what the member believes.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Madam Speaker, the point is that I do not know and neither does that member. That is the point. The point is that we have heard in the Speaker's ruling that no conclusions have been drawn, and that member knows this. The Speaker is simply recounting part of what happened.

Privilege

We also have the recounting of a colleague of ours, who has told us in good faith what he was told by the security official he asked, that the reason for the delay was the Prime Minister's motorcade. It has been said several times. The Prime Minister was here in the House of Commons, not in the motorcade. No one is saying he was sitting in the back of the limo telling the driver to block the bus. The fact is that we do not know, and the only way we are going to find out is if we get the full reports, to which the Speaker has had access, at the procedure and House affairs committee, the committee on which my colleague often sits. That is the best place to explore this.

I assume the next time the Liberals make an intervention they will say that there are still some outstanding and important questions, and they do not like the insinuation that is coming from the Conservatives. The best way to clear this up, as the Prime Minister has often said, is sunlight. That is the best disinfectant, says the Prime Minister of Canada. Okay, then let us follow that advice and bring this matter to the procedure and House affairs committee so we can find out what actually happened, because neither that member nor I know.

We have had important and, I believe, credible testimony from a colleague, and until the point when one of my Liberal colleagues is willing to stand up and say "Liar, liar" to a member of Parliament, then we have to take it as we do in this place, that all members are speaking truthfully.

Let them testify at the procedure and House affairs committee. Let us hear from the security officials. Let us resolve this and make sure it never happens again.

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Madam Speaker, it seems the government, particularly the Parliamentary Secretary to the House leader, is focused on this having been made up. The Speaker said, "In fact, I have received two reports of the incident." They may be internal reports to the Speaker, specifically from the House of Commons Corporate Security Officer and Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms. We also have reports by two hon. members of this place who have added in their information.

Whether it be a construction vehicle, government vehicle, public works vehicle, Parliament vehicle—until late October 2014, we had different security services, all with different mandates—the fact is that, when these issues come up, we need to be able to identify them, especially when members of Parliament miss votes because of interference.

Does my fellow British Columbian believe we need to get this to PROC so it can examine whether it was the Prime Minister's motorcade? Whether he was in it or not does not matter. What matters is that members missed the vote. We need to have a closer look at the reports of the members of Parliament in question and also the reports of the security staff and perhaps even the security personnel who made the call. Would that not help to clear all of this up?

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Madam Speaker, I do not think it has been said enough throughout the debate that the job that the security forces have around the House of Commons is an incredibly difficult one. They have to be able to balance access for members of

Parliament and the public along with obvious security needs, to keep this place safe for all MPs and staff and the public who visit here.

In terms of the member's specific question, well of course this has to take place if Conservatives and New Democrats all come to the logical conclusion; and I am not sure how the Bloc or the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands feel about it. A committee is where these things always go. When the Speaker says there is a problem like this, the place it goes to next, in my experience, is the procedure and House affairs committee. Maybe someone can correct me, but I have never seen a problem like this go anywhere else, because that is where it belongs. PROC manages the affairs of the House of Commons. That is what that committee is for. If there is an affair of the House of Commons that we have to find out about, it would go to PROC, which is the only place where we will get to the bottom of this. I do not know why the Liberals are standing in the way of finding out what actually happened that day, but we will find out.

• (1145)

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise and speak to an issue that concerns one of the most important rights of members of the House of Commons, which is to have unfettered access to this place at any time, and particularly when there are votes happening.

A question of privilege has been raised. Members have said they were not able to make it to a vote because they were obstructed. The Speaker has said he does think there is a prima facie case. The appropriate thing to do, and what is typically done, is that it goes to the procedures and House affairs committee. My understanding is that, typically, the committee takes that matter up forthwith and makes a determination.

My colleague from Skeena—Bulkley Valley is quite right to say that it is at committee that this matter should be properly studied, because the committee has the ability to call witnesses and to delve deeper into the details of the issue.

There is some contention as to whether or not it was the media bus that was responsible for the shuttle buses being delayed and therefore members not being able to make it to the House on time for a vote, or whether it was the Prime Minister's motorcade. The Speaker's ruling does not say one way or the other which one it was. That is why it would be good to find out.

The way to find out is to call on the people who were involved, in order to get an accurate representation of what happened. That way we would know. If it is something to do with the Prime Minister's motorcade, then maybe the procedures around what happens with respect to the Prime Minister's motorcade, and other vehicles on the Hill when the motorcade is present, could be modified to ensure it does not fetter members' access to the House of Commons. That is fully possible.

Privilege

I have been on a bus that was sitting behind the Prime Minister's motorcade by Centre Block. I was only going back to my office at the Confederation building, but I was told by the driver that the rules are they are not allowed to pass the Prime Minister's motorcade. Maybe some bus drivers decide to do that anyway because they are trying to please members of the House, and we appreciate all their good work, but in that particular instance, I was told by that driver that he would not pass the Prime Minister's motorcade because he was under instructions not to do so.

Therefore, in my experience, there is an issue about how the Prime Minister's motorcade interacts with other vehicles on the Hill. If protocols around that are not handled correctly, there is the potential to fetter or obstruct the access of members to the Hill. I am sure all members, including government members, do not want that to be the case, so what we need to do is a detailed examination to make sure that the protocols around that are appropriate and do not get in the way of members getting to the House. The motion before us simply refers this to PROC to get that more detailed answer.

We have heard from members on the government side; well, one member actually. We always know when members of the government are not really comfortable with their own position because it is only the member for Winnipeg North who gets up on his feet. No one else is willing to speak to those issues. We kind of know when the government feels that perhaps it is not on the right side of the issue, because the only one with the gall to get up and speak to it is the member for Winnipeg North. That has been in evidence today.

He said a few things, and I just want to zero in on some of them, because I find them troubling in a couple of different ways. One thing he said was that the amendment to this motion, which simply says that PROC will treat this issue with priority, is not a very good amendment because PROC does that anyway. That is what he said in his speech. I find that passing strange because the Liberals' contention at PROC on another issue right now is that they want certain changes, including a prime minister's question period. They have said these are good reforms and we need to get them through so we can do these things. The funny thing is that we do not need to change the Standing Orders to do that. In fact, we saw that yesterday when the Prime Minister undertook to answer almost every question in question period, although not every question. There were no changes to the Standing Orders required in order to do that, and yet they say they want to change the Standing Orders. If changes to motions and rules are redundant simply because one can do it anyway, then they should not be asking for a change to the Standing Orders in order to do prime minister's questions.

• (1150)

I fear that the member, perhaps unintentionally, and I am being generous because we are in the House of Commons, is being inconsistent, and I would not deign to say disingenuous, when he makes that particular argument.

He also said that he had reservations about sending it to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs because of the quality of the debate so far in the House and he was concerned the debate in the PROC committee would be a waste of time. It is

completely wrong for members in this place to prejudge the deliberations and decisions at committees.

If he wants to be an advocate in this place, as he sometimes says he is, for the independence of committees, then he has some nerve to suggest that we might consider not referring a matter that is totally appropriate to refer to a particular committee because he already has some prejudicial notions about what members at the committee might say or do during those deliberations, or what the committee might decide. That line of argument shows a serious disrespect for committees and it is important to not let that go unanswered.

I wanted to take some time in my remarks to address those comments made by the member for Winnipeg North. He often makes reference to his long parliamentary career, over 25 years, but if he had spent more time listening over those 25 years as opposed to talking, he would not have made the arguments he made earlier in this place. I really do think it is just wrong to make decisions about whether to refer something to committee based on speculation about what some members may or may not say at committee. When we spell it out like that, it is obvious that it is ridiculous and disrespectful to make decisions based on that kind of speculation.

That is what we want to do. We want to do what is the usual thing to do with a serious matter of privilege. I do not think one has to be a long-time parliamentarian to appreciate the problem with the idea of interfering with members' access to the chamber, particularly when there are votes. I am not saying that has been abused in this case. It was likely not intentional. One of the reasons for sending it to committee for a detailed analysis is for the committee to be able to speak to those involved and clear the air so that there are no worries or concerns that the blocking of members' access to the House was intentional.

That is what we want to do. We want to take this matter to committee, because if it does start that blocking members' access to the House of Commons is allowed, it is clear to see how a government that may not have the best of intentions—and I am not saying that is the case with the current government or governments of the past, but some hypothetical future government.

We cannot allow it to be acceptable that potentially, and we don't know, protocols around the Prime Minister's motorcade are allowed to interfere with members' access to the House, or whether it is protocols around the media bus, or whatever it is that got in the way of these particular members reporting on time for the vote, because let us face it. We have seen procedural shenanigans around here. If we allow shenanigans to interfere with members' right of access to the House of Commons, an unscrupulous government may start to see it as a legitimate procedural tactic as to where to put media buses or a prime minister's motorcade, because it is a close vote.

I will remind members on the other side of the House, as they may not know or have forgotten, that not all parliaments are majority parliaments. It is also not in all cases, even in majority governments, that the government wins the vote. In fact, I recall a vote held last spring on Bill C-10 that was a tie vote and the Speaker had to break the tie. It is only because the vote was on the report stage of that bill that it proceeded. That is how the Speaker is traditionally required to vote in order to continue debate. Had the vote been on third reading stage, that bill would have been defeated.

Privilege

Imagine if we were debating this question of privilege with respect to that vote and not what we are discussing. We can imagine that tensions would be a lot higher. It is no less an offence to block members from one vote, even though it may be known that a majority is likely going to win the vote, than it is on a tie vote, but it is harder to have the conversation around a close vote, because tensions are that much higher.

• (1155)

Therefore, it is important that we have the discussion now and we not wait for it to be a monumental vote, because at that point the issues of substance and procedure will become so entangled that we will not be able to make an appropriate decision.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I could not help but notice that the member across the way made reference to the Prime Minister's hour, something which the Prime Minister talked a great deal about going into the election. It was part of the whole modernization of Canada's Parliament, and we have been inviting members to be a part of that discussion. I appreciate the member's raising the issue at this point, but I wonder if he could further expand on why he felt it was important to raise exactly what is part of the Liberal platform, and that is the need to have a question period for the Prime Minister so that whether a member is asking the 25th question or the fifth question, the member would have the opportunity to get an answer directly from the Prime Minister.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Madam Speaker, I want to sincerely thank the member for Winnipeg North for proving my point, that he is the only member on the government side who is willing to get up and speak to this issue.

[*Translation*]

Mme Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Salaberry—Suroît, NPD): Madam Speaker, I would like to ask my colleague whether the government, by refusing to have this debate at the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, is once again being partisan.

In this place, we do not have access to all the information about what really happened when the members for Beauce and Milton were prevented from arriving on time for the vote on the budget. We want to have access to witnesses, which is not possible here. We want to find solutions in order to prevent this from happening to other MPs, whether they are members of the Liberal Party or of any other party.

The Prime Minister's motorcade has the right to drive on the Hill and to ensure his security. However, when his cars are empty, as was possibly the case on March 22, is there a way to let the members' bus go around it?

There are a number of elements to be studied and we do not have all the answers here. It is very important that the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs look into this issue and that the Liberals stop resisting this type of study.

M. Daniel Blaikie: Madam Speaker, I thank the member for her question.

Given the debate that is taking place in the House today, it is obvious that there is still no consensus on the facts. There are still questions that need to be asked and answers that need to be given about what happened and how to avoid this type of situation in the future.

Once we know what happened, we will have to ask ourselves how we can prevent this from happening again. Obviously, that work should be done in committee because we will need to hear from witnesses and examine the issue, things that we do not have time to do in the House today, without any preparation. Tradition dictates that such issues be examined in committee.

I must admit that the fact that the government does not want to do things as they have always been done, or in other words, that it does not want to ask the committee to examine this issue, shows some partisanship. I do not know why the government does not want to proceed in this manner. The member for Winnipeg North said that the amendment seeking to make this issue a priority is unnecessary, but I beg to differ because there is a problem of good faith here with regard to procedure. I therefore think that it would be completely appropriate to give the committee that instruction.

• (1200)

[*English*]

Hon. Diane Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk, CPC): Madam Speaker, my colleague from Winnipeg said that he did not understand why the parliamentary secretary does not appear to be in favour of supporting this motion. I wonder if the member could speculate on the reasons the parliamentary secretary and indeed members of the Liberal government are saying that this is a very important issue, which we all agree it is, but the Liberals are not prepared to put some action behind those words.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Madam Speaker, it is a funny situation to have government members, well really one government member say on behalf of the government, I suppose, that this is a very important issue and then say that the government does not want to have it studied. Presumably if there are outstanding questions and it is an important issue, we would want to get answers to those questions. Although I am not one to speculate wildly, one is tempted to infer that the government does not want the answers or it would be interested in the study.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Greg Fergus (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.): Madam Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to take part in this debate on a question of privilege, a debate that is very important.

I had intended to speak directly to the substance of the debate, but I feel compelled to respond to the insinuations, these little things that the hon. member for Elmwood—Transcona said. He said several things.

First, he said that he was very concerned about the debate, but he added that members were not participating in it, especially Liberal government members. Now I am here, and I was waiting my turn to have the chance that the Speaker would give me the floor to take part in this debate. Making false accusations and misleading our honourable members is a bad way of behaving in the House. I hope that the hon. member will have the courage to apologize, because it is not true.

I know the hon. member for Elmwood—Transcona. We were in the same cohort of MPs in 2015. We have spoken to one another many times. I think he is an honourable man. Unfortunately, I think this debate does not reflect his abilities or generosity.

Second, the hon. member argued that there is some doubt about what happened on March 22. I will quote the Speaker of the House when he rendered his decision:

In fact, I have received two reports of the incident. The first, from the House of Commons Corporate Security Officer and Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms, provides an excellent minute-by-minute summary of events and is supplemented by witness statements. The second was received from the acting director of the Parliamentary Protective Service.

I cannot imagine that the hon. member is making false accusations against the Speaker because it was crystal clear that there were two reports: a minute-by-minute report of what happened and a very thorough report, which he very respectfully shared with the House of Commons and all its members.

Mr. Speaker, I must mention one thing. Once again, I am a new MP, even after 18 months in the House, and I forgot to say that I would like to share my time with the hon. member for Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe.

● (1205)

[English]

Questions of privilege are very important, so I would like to thank my hon. colleague from the NDP who indicated how important it is for members to have access to this place. He quoted what is on the back of his parliamentary ID:

Under the law of parliamentary privilege, the bearer has free and open access at all times, without obstruction or interference, to the precincts of the Houses of Parliament to which the bearer is a member.

This is important because it goes back in the history of the House to the mother of all parliaments in Westminster back in the 16th century, in terms of making sure that members of the Commons always have the privilege, the right, to be here and to take their place in this place to represent their people, to enact laws, to participate in debates, and so on.

That is a fundamental, important role of members of Parliament. We should not be impeded in doing that.

What we saw in this situation was described by the Speaker in his ruling earlier today: “Based on these reports, here is what appears to have happened on March 22nd. At approximately 3:47 p.m., the bollards at or by the vehicle screening facility were lowered to allow for the arrival of a bus transporting journalists to Centre Block for the presentation of the budget. The media bus, under Parliamentary Protective Service escort, immediately proceeded to Centre Block. Seconds later, after the media bus had proceeded, a House of Commons shuttle bus arrived at the vehicle screening facility but was not allowed to proceed to Centre Block. In the ensuing minutes, two more shuttle buses arrived at the vehicle screening facility and were similarly delayed. I am informed that members were on at least some of these buses.”

The Speaker went on to say, “During these delays, which lasted a total of nine minutes, two members, the member for Milton and the member for Beauce, were waiting at the bus shelter near the vehicle

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screening facility. At approximately 3:54 p.m., the member for Beauce entered the vehicle screening facility and made inquiries of parliamentary protective staff about the delays and then decided at approximately 3:55 p.m. to leave the bus shelter and walk up the Hill.”

[Translation]

It is perfectly clear that access to Parliament Hill and the buses transporting MPs to the House were delayed because there was a media bus. It had nothing to do with the Prime Minister's motorcade. The Speaker was very clear on that point.

However, there are allegations and rumours about it being the Prime Minister's fault. I think people should be very careful about what they say in the House of Commons. Not only are our remarks heard by our House colleagues and Canadians tuning into CPAC across the country, but they are also printed in the official report of the House of Commons. Those official reports will live on as long as Canada's Parliament.

Personally, I believe it is our privilege to participate in these debates and to have a seat in the House of Commons and it is our responsibility to choose our words carefully. There is no need to add fuel to the fire when it comes to questions of privilege. We need to be careful about what we say and do.

I feel that the Speaker's ruling was very clear about the problem having nothing to do with the Prime Minister's security. It had to do with the bus transporting journalists to the House of Commons.

We all know that under the Standing Orders, when a question of privilege is raised it must be taken into consideration immediately. That is why we are all participating in this debate today.

● (1210)

I would ask my colleagues to refrain from making false accusations and spreading rumours, and instead talk about facts that are accurate, facts that were stated by the Speaker of the House in his ruling this morning.

I am pleased to have had the chance to speak in the House of Commons.

[English]

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I certainly appreciate the intervention by my friend across the way today. I find him always to be very upright, and he kept very much to the issue that is before the House in the motion. I appreciate that.

The member finished his speech by talking about the importance of facts, and I totally agree with him. We have to have some commonality of facts, but again, the Speaker has only given a prima facie ruling. I go back to page 2 of the Speaker's ruling, where the Speaker says, “In fact, I have received two reports of the incident”, and then outlines what the incident was. Then further on he says, “based on those reports”.

Reports are important, but they are only initial reports. Oftentimes, for brevity in this place, certain items may not be raised in such a way as to show their importance.

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Would the member agree that it is important for our members of Parliament who are on the committee, our peers, to be able to examine the issue further, define all the relevant facts, and ask questions of the authorities and of witnesses? As was stated previously by the Speaker, interfering with a member of Parliament and their privileges of parliamentary access can be a cause to be found in contempt of the House. That is a very serious charge.

Mr. Greg Fergus: Mr. Speaker, far be it from me to say, but first of all let me thank the member from British Columbia for his intervention and for reading a part of what the Speaker said in his ruling earlier today.

I would like to provide the full context of what the Speaker said on the same page 2. I have the English version; I know I said it in French earlier on, but I will read it in English.

He said, "In fact I have received two reports of the incident. The first, from the House of Commons Corporate Security Officer and Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms"—and this is the important part for the hon. member—"provides an excellent minute-by-minute summary of events and is supplemented by witness statements."

I do not think it could be any clearer. I would hate to think that we would want to accuse the Speaker of not providing an accurate and a clear summary to his colleagues, the members of Parliament. I do not think that is—

• (1215)

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments, the hon. member for Elmwood—Transcona.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I know the hon. member for Hull—Aylmer felt compelled to respond to some of what I had to say, and I would like to respond in turn.

I think he is sometimes a little quick to throw the red card with respect to my comments, but I am quite confident that the record will bear me out. If we look at the amount of time available to Liberal members in this House and look at how much of it is taken by the member for Winnipeg North on this debate and many other debates, we will find my claim is accurate. I do not usually apologize for making true claims, so I will not in this case either.

It was the hon. member who was concerned about innuendo, and I see some of that going on. The idea that members who think there should be a study by PROC are somehow undermining the judgment of the Speaker or declaring a lack of confidence in the Speaker could not be further from the truth. Mr. Speaker, I want to make that clear to you. That is certainly not what is going on.

The member for Beauce has stated in this House that it was reported to him that the reason for the delay was the Prime Minister's motorcade. Is the hon. member suggesting that he is not willing to take those remarks at face value? I ask because I think we have a legitimate difference in trying to understand what happened. We have hon. members who have said different things happened. The appropriate thing to do is study it. Is he calling the member for Beauce someone who is misleading the House?

Mr. Greg Fergus: Mr. Speaker, in turn, I could ask my hon. colleague from Manitoba whether or not he is calling into question the impartiality of the Speaker. He brought up the part of the ruling

in which the Speaker says that in fact he had received two reports of the incident. To say that he said—

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Not at all. Not at all. No one has said that. Shame on you for your condescending attitude, and then you pull out that. Shame on you—

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

There was too much noise in the chamber. I realize that most of this was at the far end of the chamber, but even up at this end I was unable to hear the hon. member for Hull—Aylmer. Hon. members will have the opportunity to address these matters in the course of the debate, I am sure.

We will go back to the hon. member for Hull—Aylmer. We are out of time, so I will ask him to wrap up quickly, and we will get on to resuming debate.

Mr. Greg Fergus: Mr. Speaker, I certainly apologize for not recognizing that you had stood up. I was not aware that you had stood up at the time and I continued talking.

To summarize very quickly, I am basing my answer to the question from the hon. member for Elmwood—Transcona on the ruling that was provided by the Speaker. I am assuming that the Speaker had given us an accurate reading. Judging from what I heard from the hon. member when he was interrupting me while I had the floor, he would not call into question the Speaker's ruling either. I think the Speaker's ruling speaks for itself.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as a new member, it is always an honour and a privilege to rise in the House to take part in a debate. Today's debate is very important.

I was here when the Speaker handed down his very important ruling on the question of privilege raised on March 22. It is a day we remember well because that was the day that our budget was presented.

The question raised by the hon. member for Milton had to do with obstructed access to the Parliamentary precinct. I think that we can all confirm that as members of Parliament, access to this establishment is a privilege, but also our right so that we may continue to do our very important work of representing the people of our ridings.

It is very important today to ensure that we are accurately depicting the facts that the Speaker raised this morning. I have been here since this morning and I have heard a number of comments about our Prime Minister, his limousines, and all sorts of things that, in the end, have nothing to do with the Speaker's ruling.

It is really important to recap the situation because the facts are crucial and we want to ensure that they are not watered down. The first thing that the Speaker said was that he was prepared to rule on this issue today. He said:

In raising this matter, the member for Milton indicated that she was prevented from attending a vote in the House of Commons and, thus, impeded in the performance of her parliamentary duties when her access to the parliamentary precinct through her normal transport was temporarily blocked. The member for Beauce confirmed that he was subjected to the same delay.

All of the members of the House are well aware of their right to access and other rights, and they are obviously taking this situation very seriously. When the Speaker gave his ruling, he confirmed that it was part of his role to look into this and that he took that role very seriously. He went on to say that, as Speaker, it is his duty to ensure that the privileges of the House and the individual privileges of members are protected, including that of freedom from obstruction, for it is that privilege that gives us unfettered access to the parliamentary precinct. I think that we all agree with the facts presented by the Speaker this morning.

The Speaker further stated that he received two reports during his investigation. The first was from the Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms and the Corporate Security Officer, and it provided an excellent minute-by-minute summary of events and was supplemented by witness statements.

The second report was from the Acting Director of the Parliamentary Protective Service. The Speaker's comments and his decision are based on this information and these facts. The speaker summarized these reports as follows:

Based on these [two] reports, here is what appears to have happened on March 22. At approximately 3:47 p.m., the bollards at the, or by the vehicle screening facility were lowered to allow for the arrival of a bus transporting journalists to Centre Block for the presentation of the budget. The media bus, under Parliamentary Protective Service escort, immediately proceeded to Centre Block. Seconds later, after the media bus had proceeded, a House of Commons shuttle bus arrived at the vehicle screening facility but was not allowed to proceed to Centre Block. In the ensuing minutes, two more shuttle buses arrived at the vehicle screening facility and were similarly delayed. I am informed that members were on at least some of these buses. During these delays, which lasted a total of nine minutes, two members, the member for Milton and the member for Beauce, were waiting at the bus shelter near the vehicle screening facility. At approximately 3:54 p.m., the member for Beauce entered the vehicle screening facility and made enquiries of parliamentary protective staff about the delays and then decided at approximately 3:55 p.m. to leave the bus shelter and walk up the Hill. As members will know, it is at around this time that a vote was commencing in the House.

● (1220)

Still, we can remember that March 22 was budget day, that there was a large media presence and that a lot was going on. When we read the description of the facts as reported, we understand what was happening that day.

In his decision, the Speaker said that he had done some research and provided more citations. He pointed out many things, including the following:

The importance of the matter of members' access to the precinct, particularly when there are votes for members to attend, cannot be overstated. It bears repeating that even a temporary denial of access, whether there is a vote or not, cannot be tolerated. The Parliamentary Protective Service needs to better familiarize itself with the operations of the House so that its posture reflects and gives priority to the needs of the House, its committees, and its members at all times, and it needs to ensure Parliamentary Protective Service staff are always alert to changing circumstances in this regard.

Therefore, it is very important to ensure that members have access to the grounds; no one is minimizing the importance of that. We always want to make sure that no MP is blocked from accessing Parliament. To continue:

This has come up before. In 2004, the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs wrote the following in its 21st report:

The denial of access to Members of the House—even if temporary—is unacceptable, and constitutes a contempt of the House. Members must not be impeded or interfered with while on their way to the Chamber, or when going about their parliamentary business. To permit this would interfere with the operation of the

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House of Commons, and undermine the pre-eminent right of the House to the service of its Members.

I have read through this morning's ruling several times, and nowhere does it mention limousines impeding access to the Hill. There is nothing in the ruling about that, so it seems odd to me that people would make such comments today.

As members of Parliament, we believe that access to the House is an extremely important privilege. Nobody is denying that.

● (1225)

[*English*]

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the parliamentary secretary for re-emphasizing the importance of people having the parliamentary privilege to come and vote. However, the crux of the matter is that two members of Parliament were prevented from voting. As we know, votes in the House can sometimes be close.

We will be having votes as early as next week, so there is some urgency to this issue. Therefore, would the member not agree that this should go immediately to PROC and take precedence over what is a longer conversation about the modernization of Parliament?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his remarks and his question.

It is important for us to have this debate in the House today so that we can have the conversation and acknowledge the importance of this privilege. This is a great opportunity for all of the members here today to exchange ideas and keep the conversation going.

Ms. Karine Trudel (Jonquière, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have listened intently to all the exchanges taking place here in the House.

I ran for election, was elected and am proud to represent everyone in my riding of Jonquière. I have the honour of being here, in the House, every day to speak to bills, take part in debates and vote. Those are our main duties in the House, and democracy is important to me.

However, we are finding that our rights are increasingly violated. The right to speak, particularly in committee, and the right of the opposition to take note of what the government is not doing and what it should do is part of our duties, but the right to vote in circumstances such as the budget, where it is important to be present in the House, is of paramount importance.

Therefore, I wonder why the government members, who are absent or do not speak—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): I would like to remind the hon. member that members do not have the right to refer to the absence of members from the House.

The hon. member can continue.

Ms. Karine Trudel: I apologize, Mr. Speaker, I got carried away. It is a subject that is creating a lot of emotion right now. Indeed, we see the government's stubbornness in not wanting to discuss the problem in committee, in not wanting to shed light on the matter and in not wanting to find a solution. We do not want it to happen again.

Privilege

I would like to ask my colleague a question. Why does the government insist on not talking about the situation in committee, so that we could have all the necessary documents in place to shed some light on the current situation?

• (1230)

[English]

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor: Mr. Speaker, very much like my colleague, it is truly an honour and a privilege to rise every day in the House to do the good work that we do as parliamentarians on all sides of the House. It is a privilege to represent my constituents when I come here, to be their strong voice in Ottawa and ensure their voices are heard. Therefore, I agree with the member on that point.

It is really important for us to have this debate today. A few members indicated that they wanted to hear more from the Liberal Party regarding the debate. It is a healthy debate to have to see if this should, in fact, be sent to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs. We can have a healthy exchange and then make the decision as to whether it should go to the PROC committee.

Hon. Kevin Sorenson (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened to the Liberal speeches today, which tended to focus on the one line of the Speaker's ruling that said the cameras showed the media bus went through, basically an itinerary of what happened. I am glad we have that report. However, when the member for Beauce went to the place where the security people were gathered, they were on their radios talking to other people. He was told that the reason the buses were not allowed through, even though the media buses went through, was the Prime Minister's entourage of vehicles was getting ready to leave. Then they waited and waited.

That is why this needs to go to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs. We do not disagree with the Speaker's comments, but we also understand that when there is a difference of opinion and security tells us that, we need to get into a little deeper study, and that is what the PROC committee does. That is the role of the committee.

As the member for Sarnia—Lambton suggested, votes take place here all the time. It is vital we make certain this type of action does not happen again. To me, the vehicles of the Prime Minister is not the problem of the Prime Minister's or the Liberals; it is those who would not allow the buses through so members could vote.

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor: Mr. Speaker, I find it a bit strange when I hear members referring to what was in the report. It seems that the members opposite are always focusing on the Prime Minister's vehicles and not the media bus. Therefore, I am a bit confused as to why it is always that topic that comes up.

Again, it is truly important that members here today have a healthy debate in order to determine if the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs should, in fact, study this issue.

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it certainly is an honour and a privilege to stand to join the debate today. It is not exactly what I think most of us originally anticipated. Actually, I believed we would be talking about Bill C-25, a bill to modernize certain aspects of Canadian corporations, co-operatives, and the like. All the same, I am very proud to stand on behalf of the citizens of Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola.

I have had some experience making a case to the Speaker of this chamber, asking for those views to be considered and receiving a response. Certainly, in the case of an Order Paper question, which I did not believe was answered factually or truthfully, I raised that directly with a Speaker. The Speaker came back and said that he had done a full examination of the issue. I felt it was a fair process. I felt heard, was happy to have had the opportunity, and was ready to move a motion. This was much the same as we saw this morning with the member for Milton, followed by an amendment from the member for Beauce, about their concerns with respect to the incident that happened on March 22.

Before I really get into my comments on this issue, I would like to address some of the concerns that were raised earlier, particularly by the member for Hull—Aylmer. He is perfectly capable of making those statements, as is the member for Elmwood—Transcona. It is important in a democracy that people can make their views known, and to have their constituents, as well as us, hear those words and be influenced by them.

However, before I begin to make any comments with respect to the motion or the amendment today, my comments do not undercut anyone involved. As a member of Parliament, sometimes we have to ask questions that may make others feel uncomfortable. Sometimes, as members of Parliament, we have to ask questions that may seem a little out of the box and may get a response from other people who are not necessarily happy with them.

I have complete faith in our security systems and the people who operate them. They are working within a system that is meant to protect us, not just our security but obviously to ensure Parliament can have those critical debates. However, like any system, sometimes hiccups happen. Sometimes it is a lack of training. Sometimes it is just a flood of events.

Speaking of a flood of events, I remember when the former member of Parliament from Atlantic Canada, Mr. Peter Stoffer, who is a fine and very genial individual, raised a concern in this place. We had a visiting dignitary, and he felt the security was disproportionate to the need and he was stopped. I believe he stood right behind where I sit today. He was given the chance to raise the concern. Regardless of whether the privilege was found to be in order and a prima facie case was found by the Speaker, by him standing up and raising it, it not only caused a discussion within this place but also a discussion among the officials who ran the systems to ensure members of Parliament were not impeded in the active consideration of and discharge of their duties.

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That member made those concerns known, and I will give my personal opinion with respect to it. I was thinking that when we had a visiting dignitary, such as a president from another country, we expected there to be issues. Therefore, people should basically decide to make changes to their schedule to ensure things would go well. Personally, that is what I do. However, having now sat on the opposition side, I saw cases in the House where, and not yourself as the Chair, Mr. Speaker, the bearer of the title of Speaker in all things spoke to us and found prima facie cases of where members of Parliament were manhandled.

• (1235)

Since then, I have brought forward my own question of privilege. Therefore, my awareness of these things has increased. While a Speaker may not agree with Mr. Stoffer when he sat here as a member, or a Speaker did not agree with me, it made me feel my voice was heard and that we had a chance to deliberate and to think on our duties, and that is an important part of this conversation.

Again, I walk into this place with a great deal of respect. I also wear my ID wherever I go. The simple reason is that I want to make the job for those people who handle our security as efficient as possible. Despite all that, when we have members of Parliament who are unable to come to do the one thing that no one else can do, which is to stand in our places and vote yea or nay, or to abstain, then the voices of the people back home do not count.

Therefore, regardless of party, I would hope the members of the government and all members would agree we should stop, pause, and take note of it. Some members may take note of a particular motorcade was given as an explanation to the member for Beauce. Some may focus on a media bus. Some may focus on the fact that the prima facie case brought by the Speaker is enough for this place. We heard the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance say that more could be said. I am here to join that and to ensure we get as many views as possible and that when, as I really hope, this goes to PROC, my peers from parties on both sides of the House will be able to make representations, to hear witnesses.

Again, as a previous Speaker declared, and I am quoting from page 4 of the ruling, “The denial of access to Members of the House—even if temporary—is unacceptable and constitutes a contempt of the House.” A contempt of the House is a very serious thing. That is why we have committees, to bring people in to have an honest accounting from the different agencies. I asked questions specifically, saying that on page 2 the Speaker specifically laid out, “In fact, I have received two reports of the incident...Based on those reports”.

Again, we have a ruling that had an overall look at it, got some initial reports in, and said that there was a prima facie case. That is not being disrespectful of the Speaker. I would suggest it is asking if there could be more than just in a four-page summary. Absolutely I believe there could be, and that is why PROC can be there. It is not up to the Speaker to get into the intricate details. It is up to his or her peers and members of Parliament at the procedural and House affairs committee to examine these. It is the Speaker's job to say that there is a prima facie case. That is how our rules work, and they work very well.

The process we have set up is a good one. As many members have remarked, so many things happen on this precinct and the people

working in it all want the same things. However, when these issues come up, where the member for Milton has said that she was unable to vote, we should take that very seriously.

How seriously should we take it? We should take it very seriously. In the centre of this room on the table is the mace. The mace represents your authority, Mr. Speaker, but it also represents the protection of your authority that is garnered through all our members. When it is here, it means the protection is here and that you are going to help us to coordinate our business.

• (1240)

That is because in some parts of our collective history some Speakers were not respected, and I am going back again to Great Britain hundreds of years ago. When Speakers would go to a monarch and say “Here's what the people have said about taxation”, they risked being beheaded or imprisoned, simply because the monarch of the day did not want to hear what the House of Commons, as it was back then, had to say.

I would just point out that we need to have safety for individual members as well as the proper processes that we trust our Speaker with to ensure those things are respected.

We have three forms of government: the executive, obviously embodied in the Prime Minister and his cabinet; the legislative function, which we are; and the judiciary.

I will read off the back under my card, which states, “Under the law of parliamentary privilege, the bearer has free and open access at all times without obstruction or interference to the precincts of the Houses of Parliament which the bearer is a member.” The reason why I raise this is the law. This is not just a simple privilege. This is actually law. We have the ability to say in this place that we will manage our own affairs. When members are somehow stopped through a process not of their own making, that is unreasonable, unreasonable meaning that the system or the people operating it stop them from fulfilling their functions, then it bears close examination. That is what the committee process is set up for, and I really hope government members will support that process.

There was an amendment proposed by the member for Beauce, and I will read in French:

• (1245)

[*Translation*]

That the motion be amended by adding the following: “and that the committee make this matter a priority over all other business including its review of the Standing Orders and Procedure of the House and its Committees.”

*Privilege**[English]*

As we all know, that particular committee is seized with the issue of our rights. It is seized by the issue of how this place conducts itself. Some members on the government side do not want to hear those voices. They are not happy that the committee is seized with an issue of their own making. They are not happy that parliamentarians from various parties are standing up for those rights, not just our inherited rights but the rights that this place needs to maintain in order for those who come after us to enjoy. If those rights are not taken seriously in any place, whether it be in this House, the other chamber, or in our parliamentary committees, we have a problem.

The Liberal government says that it is all about discussion. Let us discuss members not being able to vote, things that are happening now that should not be happening. We understand that when things out of anyone's control happen, forgiveness is often given, explanations though should always be made.

Our primary responsibility is to scrutinize the spending of government, to authorize the spending of government. Supply is very important. When those concerns come up, we need to be able to deftly examine the issue and hear from the individuals responsible as well as their managers to give a proper accounting of what happened, what went wrong, what could be improved, and how this could be avoided in the future. Anything less is not taking those rights seriously.

We have heard Liberal government members say that they take this seriously. Good, let us take care of it now. Let us get this to PROC. Let us give the committee the ability to see the infringements of our rights and be able to right them. Maybe during that time some position of authority of the executive will have quiet conversations saying that they have been hearing from caucus members and opposition members, and that maybe the Liberals should change their minds on how they approach things.

Just like with Motion No. 6, maybe a little space on PROC to examine this issue would allow for some of those crucial conversations between those in authority, those who obviously have pushed to have their modernizing Parliament agenda at that committee. Maybe, like Motion No. 6, the Liberals will withdraw it, because they know that people on this side of the House are going to stand up, whether it be that inadvertently our rights were denied or whether this is a plan orchestrated to make life easier for those in power.

I believe that if we send this to PROC, perhaps those things might happen. I write to my constituents about those things, that there is a proposal to have us stop sitting on Fridays, that there is a proposal to pre-program motions so the government does not even need to move time allocation and just accepts it as being a default status quo, which is wrong. It is just as wrong as it is when members rise and say they were denied their rights to discharge.

Again, I believe that members of Parliament must be responsible. Obviously there are things that happen in day-to-day life where inadvertently those rights may be pushed, but members still have a right to come here, as Mr. Stoffer did, and to raise those concerns, and for those in positions of authority to hear the feedback from a member to make sure these things are being dealt with, that people

are trained and knowledgeable about the very special institution we have.

I have no doubt that many members of the security service out there know more about the Criminal Code than I do, and I sat on the justice committee. I have no doubt. By the same token, they should also be versed in at least the basics of parliamentary procedure and our law, which again stands firm. We have the ability to make laws for how we conduct ourselves in this place. It is something that was hard fought for and maintained by your predecessors, Mr. Speaker, and through the Sergeant-at-Arms and his predecessors.

That is what I contend. I contend that this ruling is fair. I believe that had this ruling happened previously, the immediate result would have been that this would have gone to PROC right away so that the government could actually start moving forward and bring in its bills instead of getting lost in these things. However, it is interesting that we see a filibuster at the procedure and House affairs committee that the government does not want to interrupt with what the member for Milton and the member for Beauce have both said is an obvious issue that needs to be dealt with.

I just want again to thank the Speaker and his staff who definitely listen, who act quietly to ascertain the facts, to hear all of our voices, whether they be with the government or not, to ensure that this place always has a space to make sure that we are able to do our jobs. I humbly submit that if we support both the amendment and the motion, this will show faith in our parliamentary system and allow us to move forward. I plead with the government to have that conversation among its members asking if the way it is proceeding is good not just for the country but for this place, and whether this will, as the Rotarians like to say, build better friendships and a more fair use of our time.

• (1250)

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

Mr. Speaker, just prior to the member for Milton moving the motion, this is something that she said and keep in mind this is after the Speaker made the ruling. She said, "the reason we were prevented was that the supremacy of one was paramount over the supremacy of the members of Parliament going to vote. The supremacy was in one person and that was the Prime Minister."

If we listen to the ruling of the Speaker, as I know the member did, the member knows full well that statement was made in poor judgment and that is being generous at the very least. Some might even argue that an apology would be warranted. If the member were listening to what the Speaker's ruling said, it was a fairly specific quote. One could easily draw the conclusion that the member was more interested in focusing on something outside of the privilege just by reading that quote and the words that followed which were even more condemning of the Prime Minister.

Privilege

• (1255)

Mr. Dan Albas: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the comments by the member opposite; however, I would point out that any hon. member has the right to stand and share his or her views, to be heard, and for other members to make up their own minds based on what they have heard not just from the member who made the point, but also from others. If apologies should be made, it should be after a process of finding out what exactly went on because it may end up being the member who just spoke who might want to apologize to the member for Milton, but we will not know until there is a thorough examination of the facts, something eminently possible which hopefully will get the support of the government to occur.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my fellow British Columbian for his thoughtful discourse on the importance of this place, its rules, and its institutions because this is the people's House. Parliament serves three very important functions. We are here to represent the Canadian people, to pass good laws, but also to hold the executive to account.

To put this in the context of what is happening at the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, the Liberals say they have the mandate to unilaterally change the rules of this place, and yet the Conservatives, the NDP, the Bloc Québécois, and the Green Party collectively represent 60% of the electorate. The Liberals are trying to do this without our consent. I find it very interesting that the Liberals are suddenly so concerned about the time management at the procedure and House affairs committee that this motion cannot be put before the committee because the committee has more pressing business.

The train wreck at the procedure and House affairs committee is completely of the Liberal government's doing. The Liberals need to clearly understand the opposition is not budging on this. We stand united. We will go to the wall. We will bring banker's boxes full of material to keep speaking until the Liberals see the light.

I would like to hear the hon. member's comments about the fact that the context of this mess is really of the Liberal government's own making and that it needs to be aware of the arrogance because that is the Achilles heel of every Liberal government.

Mr. Dan Albas: Mr. Speaker, I must admit when the government first proposed Motion No. 6, obviously it was of the Liberals' own making. With modernizing Parliament, they have decided to go by other means, by using a member who is on the PROC committee, and while they may deny that is what has happened, we actually heard in this place the government House leader say that she directed the committee.

It is wrong on a whole host of levels. One thing the member is completely right about is it was a situation of the making of the Liberals. Yes, opposition parties are standing with one voice as we represent the country the same as the Liberal members do. The Liberals should remember that at some point you will be on this side and I hope it is soon, but you may find what you have designed for the next generation of members of Parliament may not align with what you thought now.

I would ask Liberal members to have those conversations with their ministers and to encourage them to abandon this tack.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Before I go to questions and comments, I just want to clarify that I am sure the hon. member meant the government and not me as the Speaker when he said "you".

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Sarnia—Lambton.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am especially glad my colleague talked about the mace and the history and symbolism of it, because that might be the only new information brought to the table. I have sat here for hours listening to people rehash what happened, with zero move to take any action to prevent this from happening.

We have all agreed it is serious that two members were prevented from voting. We know we have votes imminently, even as early as next week. It seems to me that with that kind of urgency, we should be taking action. The obvious action is to put the matter before the committee so the committee can say what it is we are going to do about media buses or limousines in the future.

Would the member agree that this should immediately go to PROC, that this is a much more urgent issue than the longer-term conversation about the modernization of Parliament?

Mr. Dan Albas: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the urgency of the issue. If the government is serious about protecting members' rights where we see a prima facie case where rights were violated, whether it was inadvertent or not, it should be dealt with straight away. By doing so, perhaps the government would reconsider its current push at the procedure and House affairs committee for a wholesale change to the way the House conducts its own business.

I really hope the government is listening. I really hope that members of Parliament from all sides have those conversations with the ministers and whoever has that decision-making. Of course, I believe it centres on the Prime Minister himself to decide to change how this process is working out.

• (1300)

Mr. Robert-Falcon Ouellette (Winnipeg Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to point out to the member that at the end of the day, we all have responsibilities in this chamber. With that responsibility has to come a sense that we have to be able to plan forward. When we hear the bells, we know we are supposed to come to this place in a reasonable time. We are not supposed to dilly-dally in our offices, or continue with meetings, even sometimes committee meetings. It is incumbent upon us to hear those bells and ensure our parties are aware of where we are and what we are doing so we can come to this place and exercise our privilege, our right, and our responsibility to vote.

Mr. Dan Albas: Mr. Speaker, I am not sure but the member may have missed my initial comments. I personally wear ID. I personally plan my day. However, with the bus transportation system, I would also mention that I have seen members who have had knee operations or hip operations waiting for the buses. They oftentimes cannot be on time, especially in winter. If we go back to March 22, there was still snow outside. One occupational hazard we have in this precinct is ice.

Privilege

While the member is completely correct that members must use reasonableness when they apply this privilege, by the same token, if a member is told that they are waiting for the Prime Minister's motorcade to get out of the way, is that reasonable? The member then decided to walk, and still could not get here in time to vote. Is that reasonable? I would say it is not.

We have to work these things out. There is construction going on here. There are all sorts of reasons for what it could be. However, when members start missing votes because of an unreasonable delay, and the Speaker found a prima facie case that their rights were violated, I would suggest the members were acting reasonably or the Speaker would not have us debate this. Instead, we would be properly focused on government business.

Mr. Robert-Falcon Ouellette (Winnipeg Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I very much appreciate the opportunity to speak to this. I would like to start with a little quote, "With great power comes great responsibility." I bet members do not know who said that, but it was Uncle Ben to Spiderman, Peter Parker. That is important. Not to make light of the situation, but it is incredible that we just spent two hours debating bollards and buses and whether people were able to get here on time.

I think the Speaker has made a very good ruling that is based on many of the precedents that have been set in this chamber, and those precedents, I think, speak to the civil servants who help run the facility here, who help run our institutions, who look after our security and are very aware, and more aware now, of what they need to do to ensure that members are not impeded in coming to the House.

I would also like to say that with great privileges there comes great responsibility. When I spoke with an elder of mine, Winston Wuttunee from Red Pheasant First Nation, he talked about responsibility, the ability to respond to a situation. He told me that when he was a young child, he would have to walk long distances to school and have to plan how long it would take for him to get there. I also remember this as a young child, having to walk two and a half miles in order to arrive at my school on time. My mum had no money for buses. She had no money for gas for the car, and we had to do this with our own two legs, and take the time to plan out the two and a half miles and say it would take around 45 or 30 minutes to get there, so I would need to leave at a certain time.

I know there is an idea as well that we often talk about. In this case, I was able to plan into the future. I knew when I needed to be at school. In this case, sometimes votes happen inadvertently or they happen at inopportune moments, but if we remember about this vote, we have to remember that at the end of the day, this vote was caused by the members of the Conservative Party, who forced this vote—

● (1305)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): We have a point of order from the hon. member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley.

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, with apologies to my friend, I have been listening to his speech since he began. What we are debating here today is the Speaker's ruling on what took place when members of Parliament were denied access to the Hill. What the speaker found was that access was denied by circumstances beyond the members' control.

Any comments or speeches given suggesting otherwise are in fact a direct challenge of the ruling we are debating today, which is out of order for the member to do, unless he seeks to challenge the Speaker's ruling itself.

We can debate access to Parliament. We can debate the need to come together and find ways to make this place work, but inferring that the problem and the source of this was in fact the members of Parliament themselves is to challenge directly the ruling by the Speaker of the House of Commons. It is to suggest that somehow—this is important, and I do not interrupt often, as members know—that the calling of a vote, by whoever, was the source of the problem or to suggest that members of Parliament did not plan properly or that the buses being stopped from going on to the Hill with no notification whatsoever was the fault of the members of Parliament. It is in fact an attempt to justify members not gaining access to the House as if there were some sort of set of excuses that MPs were meant to anticipate, which was impossible.

The Speaker's ruling is quite clear, as you know, Mr. Speaker, since I know you have read it as well, that this is a prima facie case of privilege. That is what we are debating. If my friend from Winnipeg Centre would like to debate whether that is in fact true, then that is a challenge of the ruling itself. I hope that is not his intention, but that is clearly the way he has embarked on his speech, suggesting it is the fault of those who were denied access to the House of Commons and denied the right to vote on behalf of their constituents, which is clearly not the case.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): I thank the hon. member for his intervention. We will take it under advisement and bring it back, and should we have any comments to make on it, we will bring them back.

In the meantime, I will allow the hon. member for Winnipeg Centre to continue his speech to the end to see where he is going with it. I have sat in this House so many times and listened to speeches and wondered where an individual was going with this, and suddenly it all makes sense at the end, because everyone has a different way of interpreting things and bringing them back together.

Again, I want to thank the hon. member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley, and we will continue. The hon. member for Winnipeg Centre.

Mr. Robert-Falcon Ouellette: Mr. Speaker, I very much appreciate the opportunity and the comments from the member from Skeena, though I must say I have heard in this House, in this debate, people talking not only about parliamentary privilege but also about rules and regulations, and we have to have a bit of leeway for people to get to the argument that they would like to make at the end of the day.

Privilege

I remember as a young kid having to plan for a certain time and to think about how I was going to get somewhere. I also remember when we had Barack Obama here to give a speech. I was told by my party I had to be here three hours in advance, and I listened, and I still encountered some difficulties in getting past certain barricades throughout this city. I had a discussion with a police officer down by the Rideau Centre, and he said, "You cannot go right now; we are waiting for perhaps the motorcade for the President." We had a little discussion. We talked about parliamentary privilege and I moved through to the next barricade and at some point someone called someone and security came down and made sure I was able to get to the place where I was supposed to be so I could participate in the proceedings to listen to the President of the United States, and it was a great thing.

I am not saying that the members for Milton and Beauce were intentionally not doing something. I know they had the full intention of coming to the House to vote, and sometimes things happen. If we want, we can review again for a number of minutes and a certain period of time what exactly happened. We can read this ruling again: "At approximately 3:47 p.m., the bollards at or by the vehicle screening facility were lowered to allow for the arrival of a bus transporting journalists to Centre Block for the presentation of the budget. The media bus, under Parliamentary Protective Service escort, immediately proceeded to Centre Block. Seconds later, after the media bus had proceeded, a House of Commons shuttle bus arrived at the vehicle screening facility but was not allowed to proceed to Centre Block. In the ensuing minutes, two more shuttle buses arrived at the vehicle screening facility and were similarly delayed."

I heard from the member for Beauce that he had to get out and start walking. According to the member from Okanagan, we all have different abilities in this place, meaning some of us cannot walk as well as others: some are younger, some are a bit older, some are younger but have a knee problem. Once in a while I have a knee problem as well.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: That is why we have buses. We just need them to run on time.

Mr. Robert-Falcon Ouellette: Mr. Speaker, that is why we do have buses, yes. It is a good idea to have these buses.

However, at the end of the day I am also able to plan for that long-term thought about where I should be, so when I hear the bells, I try to get out. It does not mean that there has not been a case, and the Speaker has ruled conclusively on this that a case of *prima facie* did occur. However at the end of the day, we all have this responsibility.

For me, one of the main issues is that we are spending an awful lot of time debating something, which is very important, but there are also other issues that are far more important to be debating in this House. There is government legislation, which I am sure both the opposition members and the Canadian public would like to see us debate to ensure that the agenda that we set forth in the last election is actually put forward and implemented in a concrete way. We are delaying getting to those bills because we are spending a lot of time debating whether a bollard was in the right place and whether people knew the proper procedures. I am certain, as I have already stated,

that the security staff are now fully aware, and I am sure they have always been aware of the procedures on what should be occurring.

I always find it interesting when I read the *House of Commons Procedures and Practice*, which we were given when we first joined the House. In fact, as part of a little ceremony, we were given the pin to indicate someone is a member of Parliament and also the fine green book, and the Clerk or Deputy Clerk said, "Good luck; I hope you enjoy your reading." Inside it we can find on page 110 where it talks about physical obstruction, assault, and molestation. It also talks about other examples of obstruction, interference, and intimidation.

● (1310)

These are all very important. A number of cases are laid out, starting on page 110, previous examples that demonstrate the types of obstruction that have occurred and what was done to prevent them from occurring in the future. For instance:

In 1999, a number of questions of privilege were raised resulting from picket lines set up by members of the Public Service Alliance of Canada at strategic locations of entry to Parliament Hill and at entrances to specific buildings used by parliamentarians. One Member stated that the strikers had used physical violence and intimidation to stop him from gaining access to his office. On this matter, Speaker Parent ruled immediately that there was a *prima facie* case of privilege and the matter was referred to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs. Other related questions of privilege focused on the difficulties some Members had had in gaining access to their offices, thus preventing them from performing their functions and meeting their obligations in a timely fashion. After consideration, Speaker Parent found that the incident constituted a *prima facie* case of contempt of the House and the matter was also referred to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs. In 2004, a question of privilege was raised regarding the free movement of Members within the Parliamentary Precinct during a visit by the President of the United States, George W. Bush. A number of Members complained that, in attempting to prevent protestors from gaining entrance to Parliament Hill, police had also denied certain Members access to the Parliamentary Precinct and thus prevented them from carrying out their parliamentary functions. Speaker Milliken found a *prima facie* case of privilege and the matter was referred to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

These are also very serious, extremely serious, in the sense that there were instances of protesters, barricades, incidents of police actually preventing, in a sustained and enduring manner, members from accessing the House and carrying out their functions.

In the case at hand, which is also very serious, nonetheless, I am certain that the security personnel for the House of Commons, for Parliament, were not sustaining a way of preventing parliamentarians from carrying out their duties. We could create a scale. I know people love things to be black and white, but does black and white ever truly exist? Do we always have to have a great divide, whether it is on the left or the right? Is there not ever some grey, where truth has colour from both sides of a story? When I look at this case, while it is very serious, which all of them are, I think it is perhaps, on a scale, a little less serious than protesters actively preventing and obstructing members from gaining access to the parliamentary precinct in order to carry out their functions.

Privilege

I have also been on a bus when a vote is occurring. I tried to get off the bus because it was stuck in traffic. I asked the bus driver to let me off, but he said he could not let me off because it was not safe. I insisted on being allowed to get off immediately and the driver still said he could not. After a bit of discussion, I said I had about five minutes to get to the vote and asked to please be allowed to get off. The driver looked around and said he would let me off—

• (1315)

Mr. Mark Strahl: That is poor planning. You did not think ahead. It is poor planning.

Mr. Robert-Falcon Ouellette: It was, but there is traffic.

At the end of the day, I was able to find a way to get to the House and carry out my functions—

Hon. Kevin Sorenson: You made him stop in an unsafe place.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: That is unsafe.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): I am sure the hon. member for Winnipeg Centre appreciates the coaching he is getting from the other side, but I am sure he can make his speech all on his own. If members would wait until the question and comment period, I am sure he would be more than happy to entertain questions then.

The hon. member for Winnipeg Centre.

Mr. Robert-Falcon Ouellette: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the fine comments coming from the other side. It is a wonderful thing. I love the heckling in the House. It is always most enjoyable. It actually adds some theatre to this place sometimes. It is very much appreciated.

I remember when I was an elementary school teacher. In grade 1 and 2, we would often try to quiet the classes. It was not always easy. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the hard work you do in order to make this a more enjoyable place to work.

To resume, at the end of the day he was concerned about my safety. There are security concerns on this Hill, and that is a paramount issue. We have to find a balance not only between the privileges of members and our responsibilities but also to ensure that we have security. If we cannot access the House, there might be a very good reason relating to someone's personal security. For instance, if the bus driver had said to me that he was going to let me off even though he saw cars whipping by, and I had been hit by a car, I do not think we would be farther along. More rules would have been put in place.

Sometimes it takes a bit of listening, for instance, to the bus driver who is trying to do his job in a good way, trying to make a difference and do his work. He was not actively out there saying that he was going to stop a member from going to vote. Hopefully that never occurs.

In the Speaker's ruling, I enjoyed reading that he talked to the director of the Parliamentary Protective Service and indicated that one of the director's annual objectives should be "to provide mandatory training on an ongoing basis for all members of the service on the privileges, rights, immunities, and powers of the House of Commons, including unfettered access of members of the House of Commons to the parliamentary precinct."

The Speaker also indicated he "has every confidence that the leadership of the Parliamentary Protective Service will be able to achieve this important understanding of the parliamentary community that they serve by availing themselves of all opportunities available for relevant training, including those previously offered by procedural staff of the House."

For me, it is wonderful that we are able to actually raise these issues at any given time. However, there is also a moment when it is important for us to accept the ruling, to understand that on the procedures of the House, the bureaucracy will do its job, that they will be able to take that information and craft policy and better procedures that will help protect members and ensure that they have unfettered access to this place, allow the Speaker the opportunity to do his job in a good way, allow him to work with the parliamentary staff so that they can do their job in a good way, and allow him to work with the clerks so that they are able to inform the protective services of the rights and responsibilities of MPs in the House of Commons.

However, we have to give them the time to do so. We have to give them the time to carry out that function. We cannot immediately have knee-jerk reactions and all of a sudden slap our knee and say, "We have to do this lickety-split, right now." Sometimes snapping our fingers and trying to get things done too quickly leads to a work environment that is not conducive to the long-term benefit of all people involved. Sometimes it is good to take the time to consult, talk, and think about things.

I very much enjoyed speaking on this issue. I was really interested in reading some of the examples.

Maybe I will highlight some other things for the House. There is a case I was reading, for instance, that described how obstruction or intimidation of members can sometimes be related to electronic surveillance, and I wanted to get this on the record. I believe it was actually Speaker Jeanne Sauvé who made a ruling on this issue. It is something that has been in the news a little lately. That is perhaps far more important to discuss. Nonetheless, buses are also very important.

• (1320)

I am going to finish off with a quote from elder Winston Wuttunee, who said, "Always do things in a good way, with an open heart, to offer yourself to those around who you must serve, to give yourself to your family and to your community, to your brothers and sisters, to all your relations, to not think selfishly of what you're hoping to gain from something but what you can actually give back."

When we debate this in this place, in our House, the people's House, we need to have that foremost in our minds. We need to remember that it is not about playing political games but about how we work together and what we do in order to create a better life for more Canadians. To me, what we are actually doing for Canadians is the most important thing, because at the end of the day they are all that matters and they are the reason we are here. We are not here to play political games. We are not here to simply spend many hours debating things. While debating is very important, it is perhaps less important than many other issues that Canadians want us to deal with here and now.

Privilege

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that was interesting.

The member went out of his way to, as the member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley said, essentially challenge the ruling of the Speaker by saying that although the Speaker has declared that on the basis of an initial look at the facts that a member's privileges were violated, it is probably actually the fault of the member for Beauce and the member for Milton. This reminds me of another time when there was a *prima facie* case before the House. In this case members of the government blamed a member of the NDP for getting in the way of the Prime Minister when he was manhandling members of the opposition. The member says he does not want to make this partisan, but he is really saying that it is members' fault when their privileges are violated. That is unbelievable.

The member went on to talk about members having a responsibility. He said that the members should have known there would be a nine-minute delay on the bus. He questioned how the members could not have known, saying that if they had done their planning they would have known. That is ridiculous and is not what the Speaker found. We have a responsibility, he said; we also have privileges, which is what we are debating here.

The Speaker has said that members' privileges were violated and has invited the House to take this matter up. The member for Winnipeg Centre seems to think the matter is closed, that the Speaker has ruled. The Speaker has ruled, but he has ruled that we have the right to have this matter considered, and we have asked that it be considered as a priority matter, because it is so serious.

The Liberals keep on saying how serious it is, but they do not want it to be at the procedure and House affairs committee as a priority item. They want to punt it back behind the other violation of privileges that is currently taking place at the procedure and House affairs committee.

If the Liberals want this matter to be taken seriously, will they join with us on this side of the House and instruct the procedure and House affairs committee to treat this violation of the privileges of a member of Parliament to be the most pressing matter and consider it immediately?

• (1325)

Mr. Robert-Falcon Ouellette: Mr. Speaker, games, games, anger, anger: that is a lot of what I seem to be hearing.

It is important that we do debate this, but at some point we need to move on. We need to listen to the Speaker. What I said before was that the Speaker has already made a ruling, and yes, he has suggested this can be moved on, but it is also up to the House to decide if it does in fact move on.

I would also like to point out that we have an opportunity to debate things that are of graver importance to Canadians than some other issues. We should be discussing issues that actually impact the lives of everyday Canadians rather than the bollards on the precinct and whether we can get in or out of the bollards and how we plan our time. Canadians expect us to be here to vote, and they expect us to be able to plan ourselves accordingly.

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, trying to put aside the obvious irony of my friend from

Winnipeg complaining that we should be talking about something else just after he has given a 20-minute speech talking about it, the House of Commons is talking about this issue and this impasse because the Liberals refused to move it to the appropriate committee—ironically enough, because that committee is studying a motion the Liberals are trying to ram down the throat of Parliament and is at an impasse. The number of contradictions in my friend's speech is breathtaking.

My point is this. He tries to belittle the notion that members of Parliament were denied their ability to vote, that it is somehow about bollards or something. He said that this is frivolous and we should move on, and at the same time he said that of course this is a sacred right and obligation we have as members of Parliament.

Blaming the victim does not work in this situation. He understands that. Members of Parliament, as has been ruled by the Speaker, were denied their right to get into the House of Commons and do their job.

We have simply suggested what has happened in every other case that I am aware of: that we take the ruling from the Speaker that says something went wrong to the appropriate committee so that we can hear the evidence from our security officials and from the MPs who were affected, and then find out how to fix it. The Liberals again stand in the way of moving forward. They stand and say there are more important things we should be seized with.

First of all, for members of Parliament to be able to vote and work on behalf of the people who sent us here is the most important thing this place has to talk about. Second, it is the Liberals who are holding up the process. The member should walk down the aisle, tap on his House leader's shoulder, and say, "Let us get this off to the committee, and then the House of Commons can return back to all those important issues that Canadians are facing today and tomorrow."

Will the member do that? Will he agree with us that this needs to move out of the House of Commons and get to the committee so we can resolve it, or would he just like to talk some more and complain about all the time that we are wasting talking some more?

• (1330)

Mr. Robert-Falcon Ouellette: Mr. Speaker, I used the words "anger, anger" and "games, games", and now I can add the words "time, time, wasted, wasted". I think the Chair has made a good ruling. I think the Chair has offered some suggestions for repair to make sure this does not occur in the future, and we have to give time to the bureaucracy to actually do their work. We have to give time to the precinct staff to make sure that they correct what happened before and to make sure it does not occur in the future. It takes time to let the experts accomplish that work.

I would not pretend to be an expert on security on the Hill, but I know there are people who work in this precinct who have the ability to do that day in and day out.

Privilege

I hope no one here pretends to be an expert on security on the Hill, because there are very few people who have that expertise. We have to make sure those functionaries—those bureaucrats, those people who carry out the day-to-day functions—have the rules and procedures they believe are necessary so that after listening to us and what our concerns are, they then correct the situation so that things actually work on the ground.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to pick up on my colleague's words of "games, games". The Speaker made the ruling, and I appreciate the ruling that was made by the Speaker, but the member for Milton was the one who moved the motion, and just prior to moving it, this is what she indicated to the House in regard to going to the vote. She said that "the supremacy of one was paramount over the supremacy of the members of Parliament going to vote. The supremacy was in one person, and that was the Prime Minister." She went on to be very critical of the Prime Minister.

If we listen to the Speaker's ruling, we see that nowhere did it make reference to the Prime Minister or any motorcade. It causes me to believe that this is a game. Indeed privilege is very serious, and unfettered access to the Parliament buildings is also an important issue. I recognize that, but it seems that there might be other members across the way who are prepared to make a game of this. That is a concern that I have, and that is why I would be interested in hearing more from some of the Conservative members on that issue.

Mr. Robert-Falcon Ouellette: Mr. Speaker, I believe I know the intentions of the Prime Minister. He wants me here voting all the time, as much as I possibly can be. I hope he does, anyway, even though sometimes I do not always vote with the government. Nonetheless, he wants me here, because he believes it is my responsibility to be here. He also believes it is the responsibility of members of the opposition. I do not believe that at any moment he wants to impede people.

The great thing about this Speaker's ruling is that he actually conducted an investigation. He went out and looked for the information. He asked the right people to conduct an investigation.

As a former sergeant-at-arms with the 5th Field Ambulance in Valcartier, Quebec, I had to conduct a number of security investigations myself on security breaches of some of the buildings I was responsible for. It is no small task. One has to go around and find people who might have witnessed a small incident, such as a door left unlocked or something. No matter how small or how large, they were all important. However, we had to take the time to do an investigation, and once we had all the facts, we were able to lay out what actually occurred.

I think in this case, the Speaker has laid out a very clear and precise document that gives all of us a way to move forward. I do not believe it needs to be studied any further. Personally, I think what we have is a document that really allows us to now create a way to ensure that this never occurs in the future. Therefore, we should let the bureaucracy do what it does best and let the House of Commons staff do what they do best. Let them get down to work and ensure that we are no longer late for our votes. I know that I have never been late.

Hon. Peter Van Loan (York—Simcoe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to participate in this debate. It would be better if I did not have to, but I am certainly pleased to come to the House to offer my thoughts in this debate, coming from a number of perspectives from my own personal experience.

I, of course, spent a number of years as minister of public safety, and in that regard, had responsibility for, among other things, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, who, at that time, had responsibility for security in the precinct outside this building. I also, of course, spent some time as government House leader. We had occasions when we had to deal with questions of privilege when peoples' access was denied, for one reason or another, on the Hill. As well, I had the honour of serving on the Board of Internal Economy, which wrestled with the many questions on how to deal with security and at the same time with the question of members' privileges.

The recurring theme that has become loud and clear here is that notwithstanding these repeated problems in the past, members' privileges continue to be denied. Why is that important and why is the amendment of the member for Beauce so important in that context?

There is no greater privilege a member of this House has, and no greater duty and responsibility, than the duty and obligation to be in the House to cast a vote on behalf of constituents. Hence, there is no greater violation of members' privileges than actions that deny them that most fundamental right. That is why it is taken so seriously. That is why it must be taken so seriously. That is why it is a matter of urgency, and that is why the member for Beauce is so correct in his amendment that says that not only must this be studied, but this study must be given priority and treated as an urgent and important matter. That is certainly the case here.

As I said, this is the second time. There was another occasion in this Parliament, in different circumstances, admittedly, when tempers were high and people were heated over Motion No. 6. It is funny how that happens. Every time someone is denied a chance to vote, it is at the same time as Liberals are proposing draconian rule changes to suppress the rights of members in the opposition, and lo and behold, at the same time, members of the opposition are denied their privilege and right to vote. I do not know if that is coincidence or God sending a message or some kind of literary theme at work, but it is a recurring theme. We are seeing that right now with the effort by the government to unilaterally force changes through the procedure and House affairs committee.

It is also a nice way of juxtaposing those two issues and focusing on why, indeed, the privilege of members to vote needs to take precedence at this particular time. It is a matter of urgency that could occur again tomorrow. It could occur again today, for all we know. None of the changes being talked about at that committee include this dramatic, urgent situation, but we could face the exact same problem today, tomorrow, or the next day, and we have to work to resolve it as soon as possible.

The member for Winnipeg Centre set the groundwork for me on what I want to say next, when he said that the Speaker went on at length in his decision on this. I want to approach my next set of comments with sensitivity and a bit of delicacy, because I am going into what is a very delicate area.

In his ruling, the Speaker stated, “In fact, I have received two reports of the incident. The first, from the House of Commons Corporate Security Officer and Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms, provides an excellent minute-by-minute summary of events and is supplemented by witness statements. The second report was received from the acting director of the Parliamentary Protective Service. Based on those reports, here is what appears to have happened on March 22. At approximately 3:47 p.m., the bollards at the vehicle screening facility were lowered to allow for the arrival of a bus transporting journalists to Centre Block for the presentation of the budget. The media bus, under Parliamentary Protective Service escort, immediately proceeded to Centre Block.”

The Speaker then continued with his interpretation of events, as reflected in these reports. He went on for some time and then wove in references to the member's presence at the gate and the inquiries that were made. It is not clear in the reports where those came from or whether they were based on the member's representation in the House when this question of privilege was argued. In any event, they are there. Why am I troubled and uncomfortable?

• (1335)

Those findings were in reports that were apparently made available to the Speaker. I have not seen those. I do not believe they have been tendered to this House, yet they were the evidentiary basis on which the Speaker's finding was made.

I want to make it clear that I do not take issue with the *prima facie* finding of the Speaker. I conclude, in fact, that it is fair and correct. However, there is a long-established principle. In the courts, for example, we know full well that if judges are hearing a case and they hear evidence before them, they are to decide that case based on the evidence. It is considered highly inappropriate, and we would have an instant appeal to the courts, if judges were to play detective, gather evidence of their own, and seek out the advice of experts on their own.

I say this because the hon. member for Winnipeg Centre is saying that we should just leave it to the experts, something that is our responsibility, and we should trust them. That has already happened here, in part, in a way that I find uncomfortable, if I can put it delicately. That discomfort is that the basis of the decision in these reports was available to the Speaker but not to me, as a member of the House. It is evidence on which his finding of a *prima facie* case was made, but I had no opportunity to look at that evidence myself and make my submission on whether it supports or does not support a *prima facie* case, and that is, of course, the proper role in place in this House.

That evidence should have been before all of us before that finding was made. Certainly, I would hope, it would come out as part of what would be available to the committee when it does its study, a reason the study must go ahead and why it is urgent.

It really is not the place of the Speaker to conduct such inquiries. We have the good fortune of having had precedents on it. For example, Speaker Milliken was faced with this on one occasion. This is from October 25, 2001, where he stated the following:

The hon. member for Winnipeg—Transcona in his remarks tried to assist the Chair by suggesting that it was for the Chair to investigate the matter and come up with the name of the culprit and so on. I respect his opinion of course in all matters,

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but in this matter I think his view is perhaps wrong. There is a body that is well equipped to commit acts of inquisition, and that is the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, which has a fearsome chairman, quite able to extract information from witnesses who appear before the committee, with the aid of capable members who form that committee of the House.

I think there the Speaker was saying that it is not the role of the Speaker to conduct inquiries, to gather evidence, and to make decisions about those him or herself.

I recognize that the Speaker has an administrative responsibility here, with the recomposition of the Parliamentary Protective Service and the unification of those on the Hill and in the House. That being said, that does not change the fundamental principle in law and in parliamentary law that if we are to be able to debate an issue and make a decision on it, if some facts or evidence, not law or previous decisions but facts or evidence, form the foundation of a Speaker's decision, it should be before all members of this House. We should all have an opportunity to evaluate it, pass comment on it, and make our submissions on it. That did not happen here. That I find a little bit troubling.

It then becomes one step more troubling. We have seen the member for Hull—Aylmer make reference to these documents, suggesting that he has them. We have had the Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons wave the documents about, yelling, “Look, it's in here, it's in the report.” Not only did the Speaker have this evidence and not present it to the House, but he apparently has presented it, or someone has, his administrative responsibility, to members of the Liberal government. It has not been presented to us in the opposition on this side, so we are handicapped in this debate to begin with.

The worst part is for the confidence of people in this House, the confidence that this House is working properly, fairly, and judiciously. We have to understand that this evidence was before everyone before the *prima facie* finding was made.

As I said, I believe the Speaker made the right finding in the end. My concern is the process of getting there and particularly that members of the Liberal government had access to this information.

• (1340)

That could lead a critic to suggest there were perhaps an unseemly, inappropriate proximity between the role of the Speaker, sitting in a quasi-judicial function deciding a question like this, and the government having and sharing information unavailable to other members of the House. By this, I do not wish to in anyway call disrespect upon the role of the Speaker and the job he has done. This ruling is a sound one in the end. It is not unusual for a sound ruling to occasionally have an error in process on the way. However, I did want to share with the House my discomfort with that process. There is a concern there.

That we have these documents floating about, which the opposition has not seen, underlines the importance of why this has to go to the procedure and House affairs committee to be studied. It also underlines why it is a matter of urgency.

There is a lot at the procedure and House affairs committee right now. The government has suggested all kinds of things that in other ways will tilt the table toward the Liberal government.

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In all my time as House leader, and I am the longest-serving Conservative government House leader in Canadian history, we never, ever proposed unilateral changes to the rules. I know I am well respected for the approach I took of respecting the rules of the House and making everyone happy that we were in it. We never once sought to propose unilateral changes. In fact, my friend, who was my parliamentary secretary, the member from Regina, was very good at laying out the government's position at the procedure and House affairs committee. We agreed that changes would not made without agreement among all the parties. That is the proper approach.

Something like that can be done in the matter before the procedure and House affairs committee. If such a commitment is made, if such an agreement is arrived at, the committee need simply pass a resolution like that and we can proceed on with all the business. I do not think anyone in that context would argue that it does not make sense for our procedural matter here, the question of privilege about the rights of members to vote, to take immediate precedence.

What is so discomfoting is that when we pull all these things together, there is a recurring theme again and again. It is a recurring theme where Liberals may have said one thing when they were in opposition, but now have a very different approach in government. That has never been my approach. I have tried to be consistent throughout, and tried to follow the rules of the House. They are very important and should be followed. However, to change those rules in mid-stream for partisan advantage is poisoning the well of this place. I think everyone who has been here sees how it is poisoning that well.

I feel badly for many of the Liberals, including the candidate I ran against, a fine lady, who spent much time in meetings telling their constituents they wanted to do things differently with a new respect for Parliament. They wanted to be more consensus-oriented, communicate and consult more, and work together. Apparently, that was not true. I sense that is why in these debates we see such lack of diversity in the spokespeople on the other side, because so many of them feel that discomfort. They did not campaign on the proposition of replacing or adding to time allocation, with an ability for the government to unilaterally impose it without a vote of the House, not just in each stage of the bill, but all the way through the process, to dictate it for every stage and advance, and thereby limit debate. No one ever talked about that. However, that is what the Liberal government now wants to do.

Now the Liberals think it is more important to talk about that and make that happen than it is to talk about the fundamental privileges of members of the House to vote. That is what the member for Beauce is saying. If we keep having occasions where people get denied their opportunity to vote, the most critical central part of every member of Parliament's role, what do I say? I feel for the member for Beauce and the member for Milton. What do they say to their constituents who ask why they missed that vote?

• (1345)

Some people care about voting records. As leadership candidates, they may have the odd hole. However, to then have additional holes created because somebody stopped them from carrying out their duties here, how could that be? How can somebody stop them from

voting? They are there to vote on behalf of their constituents. It is a difficult thing to explain. Some people may begin to arrive at arguments like that presented by the member for Winnipeg Centre, that it must be the fault of the members somehow that they got stopped. That is why this is so serious.

If I can step into a place as genuinely non-partisan as possible, we had the same problems when we were in government. I wrestled with them as a member of the Board of Internal Economy, as government House leader, and as public safety minister. Why? Because people had a job to do, usually in the security service, that they took far too seriously and did not appreciate the importance of the privileges here. The thought and the hope was that by creating a single unified service on the Hill, we would finally overcome that, because the problems were always on the RCMP side. The Parliament Hill side was pretty good. It was always the RCMP.

Guess what? Notwithstanding all the changes, the problem has not been solved. That is pretty urgent. That is pretty important for us. Toward the end of our government, when these questions would come up, I would be very quick to stand and say that the member of the opposition, who was unhappy with the circumstances, was absolutely right. A member's privilege should never be violated in this fashion. Even if it is just to hear the speech of a visiting head of state who we are interested in, a member's privileges should not be denied. Certainly, when it is the question of that most profound element of our job here, to vote, it should not be denied and should not be permitted.

When this issue arose initially, I found it surprising that the government did not offer to bring to the House the evidence that the Speaker went and got on his own. We always did that. We offered to go and get that information and provide it to the House. I am surprised that did not happen. I am surprised he did not intervene to do that at all, but let it come to this without providing those kinds of answers. It is not an answer to say that it should be turned over to the experts, that the functionaries, the officials, will decide for us what our privileges are and how they shall be respected.

If we do not assert our own privileges and rights in this place, I can assure members that nobody else will. That is why I thank the Speaker for his *prima facie* finding. That is why I think he made the right decision. That is why I think it is so important that we study it. I do not know if this is one of the things the Liberal government has proposed in its set of changes, but there is a reason why it is built into the rules right now. When a finding like this is made, the House proceeds immediately to the motion from the member and immediately to the debate and that debate continues until the question is resolved.

The drafters of those rules cared about how this place worked. They cared about balancing the rights of members. They cared about ensuring the minority was protected in all cases. They realized this place was not here for the convenience or efficiency of this place. I keep hearing the word efficiency from the government House leader in defending what the Liberals are doing. The drafters of those rules realized that this place has certain inefficiencies which are called “protecting people’s rights”. Protecting our rights means sometimes those inefficiencies. They recognized it was so important that when a finding like this was made and a motion like this came forward, it took priority over all other business of the House. That is what the Standing Orders say now.

Perhaps the Liberals want to change that. Perhaps they do not think it should have precedence. Perhaps they do not think it is the most important part of business. That is what their conduct shows. That is what it showed with Motion No. 6. That is what it shows with their work at the procedure and House affairs committee now. That is what it shows with the submissions from the member for Winnipeg Centre from the Liberal Party. It shows that we should not deal with this, that it can be dealt with by officials, so never mind.

We stand on centuries of precedent in the Westminster system. These rules are there for a reason: to protect our democracy, to protect the rights of the minority. That is what this motion is for. That is what the motion moved by the member for Milton would do and what the amendment moved by the member for Beauce would do. That is why they should indeed be approved, and why priority must be given to this most fundamental question of a member’s right to vote in the House.

• (1355)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for years, I sat in opposition and listened to the member across the way. He commented about time allocation in particular. It was moved over 100 times, in record highs.

I am sure if the member were to be truly transparent and honest on the issue, he would recognize that the modernization of Parliament, in good part, is being driven by some of the things we witnessed over the last four years. There were the hundreds of hours where there were stand-up votes and bells ringing, as well as a pile of other things all related to time allocation. What is clear, in listening to the member, is that he is right. The Conservative Party never really wanted to modernize Parliament. That appears to be the case today. This does not mean the government of day cannot have that as a high priority. We made a commitment to it. We are inviting all members to get engaged in that discussion.

I have a question for the member. Given his comments in regard to the fact that we should have access to the report, I want to make it very clear that I do not have a copy of the report the member referred to, nor have I ever seen the report. Does the member believe that before it goes to PROC, at least the House leadership of the different parties should see that report? Is that what the member is suggesting with his implication?

Hon. Peter Van Loan: Mr. Speaker, I am comforted by the hon. member’s words now. They stand in stark contrast to what he was doing and saying in the House some hours ago. While other members were speaking, he was waving a piece of paper in the air

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and pointing to it, saying “I have the report. We know what happened. We have the report.” I will take him at his word now, as we all should do as members of the House, that what he is saying now is true, and that gives me great comfort. It still does not change the basic discomfort I have with the process of the Speaker conducting his own inquiry, but I am comforted to say that what he says is true. I hope the same is true for the member for Hull—Aylmer, who similarly indicated he had possession of the report. I hope that is not the case.

On the question of the rules, our approach was very simple. It might have been very convenient for me as government House leader to have different rules and to not have to stand and move time allocation, and pay what political price was necessary.

The Liberals want to short-circuit that, jam it down the throat of the committee right now, and never have to take responsibility for their actions under the rules. They would rather come to the game and decide that they would like to change the rules. I understand that if one comes from Winnipeg, perhaps occasionally, as their football team or hockey team has challenges, he or she might like to change the rules a little. However, I have never once heard those fine players on the Jets or the Blue Bombers suggest that what they needed to do was change the rules so they could finally—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Sherbrooke.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his intervention.

I am very pleased to hear him speak today and see him be so reasonable to the minority in the House because that was not always the case when he was across the way.

I would like him to comment on why the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs is the ideal place to get to the bottom of things, as we saw not so long ago when a similar thing happened to our former colleague Yvon Godin, who was prevented from getting to the Hill just before a vote. The question was thoroughly reviewed at the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs. The committee heard witnesses and made its findings.

Can my colleague reiterate why the ideal place to address this type of issue is the committee and not the House, as part of a debate like the one we are currently having with all members?

[*English*]

Hon. Peter Van Loan: Mr. Speaker, that is the place where such matters are always studied. I appreciate the member’s comments on fairness in the rules.

Of course, those of us who have been here for some time recognize that the purpose of the rules is not the efficiency of the government. The purpose of the rules is the protection of the rights of the minorities through which our democracy is protected. That is why we, as a government, never once proposed changing those rules without the consent of the other parties. That is why the only changes ever made by the Conservatives were with the consent of the opposition parties.

Statements by Members

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for York—Simcoe will have five minutes remaining for a period of questions and comments when the House next resumes debate on the question.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

• (1400)

[*Translation*]

HULL—AYLMER CONSTITUENCY YOUTH COUNCIL

Mr. Greg Fergus (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, tomorrow I will have the enormous pleasure of hosting over 50 young people from the Hull—Aylmer constituency youth council for a day on the Hill. They will spend the day at the heart of our democracy, rubbing shoulders with people in our parliamentary community. They will take part in many workshops and attend lectures.

I wish to invite all of my colleagues in the House to come and meet them and share their political experiences with them.

[*English*]

I hope that two things will come out of tomorrow's events. First, I hope that all members will let themselves be taken by the enthusiasm, energy, and ideas of the members of the Hull—Aylmer youth council. They will remind us why we chose to enter this noble vocation. Second, members should please share freely with these young dynamic people the distinctiveness of the ridings they represent.

[*Translation*]

I can say confidently, Mr. Speaker, that the young people you will encounter on the Hill tomorrow are full of enthusiasm.

* * *

[*English*]

SERGEI MAGNITSKY LEGISLATION

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, during the last federal election, all parties, including the Liberal Party, promised to bring forward a bill in memory of Sergei Magnitsky that would increase sanctions on foreign officials who are involved in government corruption and human rights abuses.

Sergei Magnitsky was a Russian lawyer who uncovered the biggest tax fraud orchestrated by corrupt officials. The Russian government arrested Sergei. He was tortured, denied justice, and beaten to death in a Russian prison.

This morning, the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development presented its unanimous report entitled "A Coherent and Effective Approach to Canada's Sanctions Regimes: Sergei Magnitsky and Beyond". Magnitsky legislation has been adopted by the United States, the European Parliament, and Estonia, to impose stricter sanctions on all corrupt officials and violators of human rights.

Adopting Magnitsky legislation here would further enable the Government of Canada to quickly sanction corrupt foreign officials from all corners of the world. This is not a partisan issue, but the Liberal government has refused to take action. I encourage

government members to support my bill, Bill C-267, the justice for victims of corrupt foreign officials act, also known as the Sergei Magnitsky law), as the bill their campaign promised.

* * *

RECONCILIATION TOTEM POLE

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is a great honour for me today to rise and pay tribute to a truly meaningful and historic event that recently took place on Coast Salish territory at the University of British Columbia.

I often visited my friend Jim Hart, also known as 7idansuu, of Old Massett, Haida Gwaii, as he and his team of carvers for months worked on a 55-foot, 800-year-old red cedar totem pole.

This, the reconciliation pole, has salmon at its base representing the cycle of life. A mother bear holds her two cubs. Then comes the break: a residential school, a government-instituted system designed to assimilate and destroy all indigenous cultures across Canada. There are copper nails to represent the lives of the children that were lost. The children with numbers on their chests come next, but they are followed by four spirit figures representing the strong cultural roots of first nations people. Next comes a family holding a child, representing revitalization of the family in the story today. Two canoes, first nations and Canadian governments, represent different paths yet track together. An eagle rises at the top representing the hope for the future.

* * *

BATTLE OF VIMY RIDGE

Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as we near the 100th anniversary of the Battle of Vimy Ridge, I would like to acknowledge the contribution of a wonderful group right here in Ottawa. This Sunday, the Ottawa Children's Choir will be performing as part of the official ceremony marking the 100th anniversary of Vimy Ridge at the Canadian National Vimy Memorial in France.

The choir is made of 24 singers, ages 11 through 15. I am pleased to say that one of my constituents, Adrianna Winchester, will be taking part in the ceremony this weekend. The Ottawa Children's Choir will be joining Canadian dignitaries, veterans, members of the Canadian Armed Forces, and the RCMP in participating in the ceremony.

I request to be joined by all members in the House in wishing Adrianna and the members of the Ottawa Children's Choir all the best in France.

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[*Translation*]

GATINEAU SENIORS' CENTRE

Mr. Steven MacKinnon (Gatineau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last Monday I was at the Centre des aînés de Gatineau to kick off the programming for its 40th anniversary. This is good news.

For the past 40 years, the centre has been meeting the needs of people 50 and over in the areas of engagement, education, support, and socialization. Thanks to its partners, staff, and volunteers, it offers a variety of courses and services, as well as recreational activities and even housing.

The housing offered by the centre provides an environment with plenty of services and activities designed to end isolation and solitude among seniors.

I have visited the centre many times, and I assure my colleagues that it offers high-quality services that should be a model throughout Canada.

The centre is using its 40th anniversary as an opportunity to unveil its new name. Since it is already a campus offering services and activities for Gatineau's seniors, the centre has decided to use the name "Campus 3".

I want to congratulate Campus 3, which has been serving the Gatineau community for 40 years.

* * *

• (1405)

[English]

THE BUDGET

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last month the Liberal government introduced its second budget.

Budget 2017 actually does more to hurt Oshawa businesses and families than it does to help. We now have a new carbon tax, increased payroll taxes, and the highest electrical rates in all of North America, while the Americans are lowering taxes and lowering the costs of doing business.

Budget 2017 nickels-and-dimes Oshawa businesses and families and makes life under the Liberals more expensive. In Oshawa, we know that in order to create jobs and grow the economy, we need to be competitive. The Liberals failed to lower small business taxes, and they did not offer any new incentives to create jobs.

Budget 2017 takes aim at Oshawa's middle-class families and students. Nothing in the budget puts money back into their pockets. The Liberal budget eliminated the public transit credit, the caregiver credit, and the family caregiver tax credit. Canadians said goodbye to the measures that hard-working middle-class students and young Canadians relied on to make their lives more affordable.

Working-class Canadians, and those wanting to join them, deserve better.

* * *

[Translation]

QUEBEC LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR'S MEDALS

Ms. Linda Lapointe (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last Saturday, I had a very busy day. In the morning, I was in Deux-Montagnes to participate in a citizenship ceremony where 30 new citizens became members of the great Canadian family. I was then very pleased to go to Lachute to attend the ceremony where the

Statements by Members

Quebec Lieutenant Governor's medals were awarded for the Laurentian region.

Six people from my riding were honoured at that ceremony. First, the youth medal was awarded to three young people for their academic achievement and volunteer work. Congratulations to Jimmy Bell, Elizabeth Hua, and Helen Skalkogiannis.

I am also proud to recognize the three recipients of the seniors medal, which is awarded for volunteer work. Congratulations to Marilyn Drew, Thérèse Léger, and Gisèle Long.

Congratulations to all of you and thank you for helping our beautiful riding of Rivière-des-Mille-Îles to flourish.

[English]

I congratulate all of them.

* * *

DAFFODIL MONTH

Mr. Andy Fillmore (Halifax, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am sure you have noticed the prevalence of the colour yellow in the halls of Parliament this month as MPs adorn themselves with daffodils, like the one I am wearing today. That is because April is Daffodil Month, a chance for Canadians to show solidarity with the more than 800,000 of those among us who live with cancer.

The daffodil is also a call to action. In the over 60 years since the Canadian Cancer Society sold its first daffodil, cancer survival rates have increased from 35% to over 60%. That is impressive, but there is more work to be done.

I know all MPs have organizations in their ridings that are part of the effort to defeat cancer and to support those who are battling it. In Halifax, groups like The Lodge that Gives, the IWK Health Centre, Prostate Cancer Canada, and Ovarian Cancer Canada are part of that fight every day.

I encourage everyone to reach out to organizations in their hometowns to #jointhefight, because in a time when we all know someone living with cancer, we are all in this together.

* * *

THE BUDGET

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is throwback Thursday on the Internet, #tbt, and I can think of no better theme for this Liberal-spending deficit budget.

I know many Canadians' reaction to this "tax and borrow and spend" budget would be to throw it back in the government's face. However, this budget is also a throwback to a dark and painful time in Canadian history, the seventies. Disco was popular, bellbottoms were a fashion must, and the father of the current Prime Minister was unleashing a 25-year structural deficit on the nation.

Statements by Members

Flash forward to today, and the son is practising what the father preached. Like something out of the seventies, the Liberal government believes in a sort of super-freaky Keynesian economics, which is another way of saying the Liberals have things backward. They run deficits when times are good, which means even bigger deficits when times are bad. The weird belief that spending more than we have will magically create jobs that last longer than the money we borrowed is throwback thinking, #tbt.

* * *

• (1410)

BUSINESS EXCELLENCE

Mrs. Bernadette Jordan (South Shore—St. Margarets, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, happy Tartan Day to all.

To say that I am proud of the companies and residents of South Shore—St. Margarets who continue to raise the bar when it comes to business, innovation, and community involvement would be an understatement. I would like to highlight a few of those businesses which last month were recognized by the Lunenburg-Queens Business Excellence awards for their outstanding achievements: All Outdoors Landscaping, Buck's Home Building Centre, Tilia Builders, CO3 co-working space, Terra Beata Cranberry Farm, and Atlantica Oak Island Resort & Conference Centre.

That is not all. Just last week we learned that Ironworks Distillery in Lunenburg took home five medals from the international distillers' competition in Germany: two golds for its gin and apple brandy, and silvers for its Pear-eau-de-vie, amber rum, and its ever-popular Bluenose rum.

I invite all of my colleagues to join me in congratulating these award winners, and all rural businesses across the country, for the outstanding contributions they make to our communities.

* * *

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Mr. Omar Alhabra (Mississauga Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for International Women's Day I invited my constituents to nominate a woman who inspires them.

I stand today to recognize an exceptional woman. Gabriella Mammone demonstrated to all of us that when life gets difficult, how we react to it is what is important.

In 2004, Gaby was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. A successful entrepreneur, Gaby became an ambassador for the MS Society. She also founded Kind Projects, which helps charities achieve their goals.

Ms. Mammone received a Mississauga Civic Award of Recognition followed by a Canadian Small Business Woman of the Month award.

Gaby is married to Tony and is the mother of Gianluca and Alessia.

If people ever feel a sense of helplessness in the face of adversity, all they need to do is look at Gaby. She is a mother, a wife, an entrepreneur, an activist, dealing with MS, yet she finds strength to lift us all and make Canada a better place.

FORCED ORGAN HARVESTING

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this week I announced my intention to reintroduce Bill C-561 from the last Parliament, a bill dealing with forced organ harvesting.

In other parts of the world, most notably in China, people who have committed no crime are murdered by the state so that their organs can be used for transplantation and for other purposes. Often these people are being targeted as part of the PRC's repression of religious and spiritual communities that they do not like.

Here in Canada we have a legal gap that must be addressed. There is no law to prevent a Canadian from going abroad to receive a harvested organ. Supporting forced organ harvesting is a crime against humanity in international law, so it should be a crime here in Canada as well.

I am reaching across party lines to get this done. This bill was originally written by Irwin Cotler, a former Liberal justice minister.

I look forward to working with the member for Etobicoke Centre, who also proposed a bill on this issue in a previous Parliament.

As the government pursues closer ties with China, it must allay legitimate fears that human rights will be sacrificed along the way. Fixing gaps in Canadian law on organ harvesting would be a very good step.

* * *

BATTLE OF VIMY RIDGE

Mr. Marc Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Sœurs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, at 5:30 in the morning on April 9, 1917, a relentless artillery barrage pounded German trenches in front of the Canadian lines at Vimy Ridge. Unlike on most of the ridge, the barrage failed to hit a critical German trench system facing the 87th Battalion CEF, the Canadian Grenadier Guards.

Facing the steeper part of the hill, these brave men, mostly in their 20s, rose from their trench encountering the stiffest resistance of the German lines. Within six minutes, more than half of the initial wave was wiped out.

While the Canadian corps won the day, the Canadian Grenadier Guards, the unit I would proudly serve in 73 years later, suffered one of the highest casualty rates among all units, with 155 killed in action and more than 150 others wounded, of the 800 or so who took part in the assault. Thanks to these men, who fought foremost for their fellow brothers in arms, a country was born.

Sons who loved and were loved, never to be fathers, this simple soldier lucky enough to have avoided the stench of war thanks my brothers and sisters. Rest in peace.

POVERTY REDUCTION

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this week a working group of local mayors, regional district directors, the MLA, the MP, first nations, and community groups like the Alberni-Clayoquot Health Network put together the Alberni-Clayoquot working together to reduce poverty protocol agreement.

The protocol agreement compels leaders to consider the innate connections between poverty and health outcomes when formulating policy and planning for the future of our communities.

Sadly, Canada and B.C. have failed to show leadership on poverty reduction, and it shows. The ACRD has the fourth-highest rate of poverty in all of British Columbia. One in three children is living in poverty. The percentage of people receiving income assistance in that area is three times the provincial average. This is why we need collaborative leadership on poverty eradication across all jurisdictions.

There is a lot to be done, but together we can work to lift people out of poverty and build thriving, strong communities for all.

* * *

•(1415)

TARTAN DAY

Mr. John Nater (Perth—Wellington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today is Canada's seventh annual Tartan Day. This is an opportunity for us to celebrate the nearly five million Canadians of Scottish heritage.

In Perth County, we are celebrating the unveiling of the Perth County tartan. Under the leadership of Perth County Council, the Perth County tartan was created to honour the 150th anniversary of Confederation.

The tartan colours are green to represent our deep agricultural roots and fertile land, blue to represent the rivers and streams, red to commemorate the sacrifice of our early settlers and pioneers and the veterans who fought so hard for our freedoms, and gold to reflect the industrious nature of the people of Perth County.

I would like to thank and congratulate all of those involved in the creation of this wonderful tartan, including councillors Helen Dowd, Doug Kellum, and Bob Wilhelm and committee member Pauline Hartfeil.

I am proud to wear this tartan as a part of our county's proud and rich heritage.

* * *

[Translation]

RWANDAN GENOCIDE

Mrs. Celina Caesar-Chavannes (Whitby, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, tomorrow marks the 23rd anniversary of the Rwandan genocide, which began on April 7, 1994. Approximately one million people lost their lives over a three-month period.

[English]

Tomorrow's commemoration marks the beginning of one of the darkest chapters in human history and should serve as a constant reminder of the never-again promise that the international commu-

Oral Questions

nity failed to uphold in Rwanda. It is also a day to reflect on our responsibility to prevent genocide and protect the vulnerable.

I would like to salute the actions of those who, in the face of unspeakable atrocities, stayed to protect civilians. The resilience of the survivors of the Rwandan genocide inspires admiration and respect. Rest assured that we will never forget and continue to stand with them.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

AEROSPACE INDUSTRY

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on Monday the government reported to the House in writing that no deal had yet been signed with Bombardier.

Yesterday the office of the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development said the deal was sealed by March 24, five days before the company announced a 50% pay hike for its executives. What a coincidence. Now each of these executives will earn more in four days than the average Canadian earns all year long. I guess they will not have to work on Fridays either.

If this agreement actually exists, did it ban Bombardier from using Canadian tax dollars for these outrageous bonuses?

[Translation]

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the aerospace sector is one of the most innovative and export-driven sectors in Canada. It accounts for more than 200,000 high-quality jobs in Canada and represents over 1% of our gross domestic product. The repayable contribution announced a few months ago will create 1,300 good-quality jobs and maintain 4,000 others.

The long-term competitiveness of our aerospace industry is important to grow our economy and our middle class.

[English]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, members of the billionaire Bombardier Beaudoin family have super-voting shares that give them a majority of the votes with a minority of the stocks.

That allows family members to elect themselves to be executives and pay themselves, in the case of Pierre Beaudoin, 10 times the industry average. If the company raised money by issuing shares, they would dilute their votes and lose company control.

Is it not true that the government bailout is really about protecting the feudal privileges of this billionaire family?

Oral Questions

● (1420)

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government was elected to grow the economy, to grow the middle class, and to help more Canadians join the middle class.

In that context, key investments in the aerospace industry are important. We are going to support that industry, which contributes more than 1% of the total GDP in our country. In this particular case of a reimbursable contribution, it will also help maintain 4,000 jobs and create 1,300 additional new jobs.

* * *

TAXATION

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, all of this raises a question of how the government defines the middle class.

There is \$372 million for Bombardier billionaires; however, everyday Canadians will pay more for gas and groceries, kids' sports, Uber rides, beer, and bus passes.

Why is the government taxing more from those who take the bus, so it can give more to those who take limousines?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I welcome the question from my hon. colleague. I am just afraid that his memory is failing.

The first thing that our government did was to reduce taxes for the middle class. Nine million Canadians are paying less tax. I would guess there are thousands in the member's riding today who are paying less tax because of the government.

We invested in families. We invested in the middle class. We invested in infrastructure. That is what responsible government is doing. That is exactly what we will continue to do.

* * *

THE BUDGET

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, may I remind the minister that the first thing the government did was to create a huge deficit? With no plan to return to zero deficit in this country, this is totally unacceptable.

[Translation]

If the government really wants to be nice to Canadian taxpayers, could it tell them the truth for once?

This government was elected by promising small deficits and a balanced budget in 2019.

Could the government tell us when Canada will have a balanced budget?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased that my colleague from Louis-Saint-Laurent is asking me a question.

The first thing we did was cut taxes for the middle class. The reality is that nine million Canadians pay less taxes. In my colleague's riding, in the Quebec City region, thousands of people are paying less tax thanks to our government.

In 2016, we invested in families, the economy, and infrastructure. In 2017, we invested in training and innovation. That is exactly what responsible governments do; they invest in their people. That is what we have done and what we will continue to do.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, like me, you listened closely to the minister's reply and, like me, you noted that the government cannot tell Canadians when it will balance the budget. That is unacceptable.

The Liberals have no plan for balancing the budget and they are doing very little, if anything, for farmers, those people who feed us and who feed all Canadians. Agriculture is not mentioned in the government's budget document until page 107.

Why has the government turned its back on those who feed Canadians?

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

[English]

The Speaker: Order, please. I know members, including the hon. Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, are very engaged in this discussion, but I would ask them to restrain themselves until they have the floor.

The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food.

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have been in the House a long time and to be able to present as Minister of Agriculture the type of budget our Minister of Finance presented to the House is certainly a credit to our agricultural sector and certainly gives me great pride. There is \$950 million to enhance Canada's global competitiveness by focusing on industry, \$200 million for clean technology, and \$1.26 billion for innovation. What this government has done is made sure that our—

● (1425)

The Speaker: The hon. member for Nanaimo—Ladysmith.

* * *

STATUS OF WOMEN

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Mr. Speaker, while the Prime Minister never misses a photo op to proclaim his feminism, his government's credibility does not add up on the world stage. The Prime Minister has given Donald Trump, a misogynist, cover on women's issues, and still defends arms sales to a country that systematically discriminates against women. A report just released says that Canada ranks fourth-last on the gender wage gap.

If the Prime Minister really wants to impress his friends at the UN, he should take real action for Canadian women. Will the Liberals implement child care and pay equity legislation now?

Oral Questions

Hon. Maryam Monsef (Minister of Status of Women, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague joined me in New York City for the Commission on the Status of Women, with over 200 members of team Canada who proudly waved the Canadian flag. We have a feminist Prime Minister who has helped bring forward the most feminist budget this federal government has ever seen.

There are \$100 million devoted to addressing and preventing gender-based violence. There is a commitment to introduce pay equity legislation by 2018. There is a commitment to invest in women and girls entering fields they are not traditionally included in. That is feminism.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister loves to tell everyone how proud he is to be a feminist, but according to the Conference Board of Canada, his government is falling far short when it comes to closing the gender wage gap. Canadian citizens have been waiting years for policies that would help eliminate income inequality between men and women.

The Prime Minister says all the right things to women in New York City, but when will he take action here at home to end this unfairness?

[*English*]

Hon. Maryam Monsef (Minister of Status of Women, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I recognize that for decades members of the feminist movement have calling for actions, which this government is taking. We recognize that the majority of caregiving work is provided by women. That is why we have introduced \$7 billion for an early learning and childhood framework and to work with provinces and territories to implement it. We recognize that elderly parents and other family members are also cared for by women usually. That is why we have introduced EI benefits that are flexible and provide women with choice.

We have also done a number of other things. I will get back to them the next time I get a question.

* * *

[*Translation*]

STANDING ORDERS OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Prime Minister proved our point: he does not need to change the rules in order to answer the opposition's questions. That is his job.

Yet he is still bound and determined to take full control with no regard for our democracy.

Will he stop fooling around and sit down with the opposition for a real conversation so we can get on with formulating unanimous recommendations to improve our parliamentary system?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is firmly committed to transforming question period to make all MPs, including the Prime Minister, more accountable. We made that promise to

Canadians last election along with other general measures to modernize Parliament.

As the member said, yesterday the Prime Minister answered all of the questions in question period. That was to demonstrate how committed we are to bringing about real change. We hope that all members will weigh in on this.

[*English*]

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, both opposition House leaders have made a fair and reasonable proposal that we follow the model that Jean Chrétien used for his parliamentary modernization. It included one member from each party and it was chaired by the deputy speaker.

Let me quote from the committee's mandate: "the committee shall not adopt any report without the unanimous agreement of all the Members of the committee". If it was good enough for Jean Chrétien's majority Liberals, why does the minister believe her majority government is so much more entitled?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this government campaigned on a commitment to Canadians to bring real change to Ottawa and to have their voices heard in this place. That is exactly why we want to have a conversation with all members of Parliament.

We know the important work the committee does and we want it to continue to do that important work. The discussion paper was meant to build upon the work the committee was already doing, to have important conversations and discussions so we could modernize the way this place worked and to bring it into the 21st century workplace. I encourage all members to share their points of view, and I look forward to hearing them.

● (1430)

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston, CPC): Mr. Speaker, one starts a conversation by telling the truth, and the truth is that in the last election the Liberals had exactly two promises regarding Standing Order changes, which were to prohibit omnibus bills, and to prohibit parliamentary secretaries from sitting on committees. There was nothing there about four-day work weeks. There was nothing there about the Prime Minister turning up once a week. There was nothing there about limiting debate in committees.

Therefore, this story that somehow the opposition would be practising a veto on the government's election mandate is just nonsense. Why does the government continue to perpetrate this kind of nonsense in its so-called conversation?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what is the case in regard to the discussion paper will remain the case in regard to the platform on which we ran. It is important that members read the document in its entirety. Many commitments were made in the platform to Canadians to respond to the very real concerns people had. These concerns we were responding to were in direct response to the approach the previous government took in this place.

Oral Questions

What we know is that it is important for all members of Parliament to have an important conversation on the Standing Orders to modernize this place. This government has already been taking action. What we are saying is that if we could codify those in the Standing Orders, not only could we hold this government—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Mégantic—L'Érable.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Prime Minister staged a one-man play worthy of Shakespeare. Let me repeat a few lines: “I want to work with the members”; “People expect us to work together in a respectful manner”; “It is perfectly reasonable to want to work with hon. members”.

The Prime Minister is generous with his words, but short on action. We all know that the Liberals want to unilaterally change our rules in their favour. The unanimous consent of all members is needed to change the rules.

When will the Prime Minister stop these theatrics?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have said many times, we hope that all members will share their perspectives regarding our ideas and how to integrate them into the Standing Orders of the House of Commons. I know that we can work together. I encourage all members to join the conversation. I think it is an important conversation to have.

* * *

[English]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of National Defence is willing to stifle, silence, and outright contradict government and military officials, all to save face for the Prime Minister. Despite what the defence minister says, official documents prove there is no capability gap in our fighter fleet, it was the Liberals who cut danger pay to our troops, and our allies were not happy with the decision of the Liberals to withdraw our CF18s from the fight against ISIS.

When will the Minister of National Defence admit he is misleading Canadians, and put an end to his dirty little habit?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his question, but not all the language he used. We are committed to ensuring we deliver for our troops. When we looked at the massive cuts that were made by the previous government, we conducted a defence policy review. That is why we are going to be ensuring, when we launch the defence policy review, that we have the appropriate investments in looking after our Canadian Armed Forces and our men and women who serve us into the future.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister is an expert in “alternative facts”. First, our allies did not like Canada's new mission in Iraq and asked that we continue our air strikes. Second, Canada is not in need of fighter jets. This is a Liberal invention to offer Boeing a nice

\$7 billion contract. Third, the Canadian Armed Forces urgently need equipment, but the Liberals cut the procurement budget by \$12 billion and silence everyone involved with a lifetime gag order.

What percentage of the minister's answers are not “alternative facts”?

[English]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would remind the member opposite that last year I also stated that the fight in Iraq could not happen from the air, that it had to happen from the ground. That is when we tripled our trainers and doubled the intelligence. I am happy to say that it is actually having an impact on the ground right now. That is one of the reasons we are having that success on the ground.

We are going to ensure our troops have all the appropriate equipment. We are going to be launching a full competition to replace our entire fleet. When we launch our new defence policy, we will be outlining to Canadians and to all parliamentarians our plan to look after the Canadian Armed Forces.

* * *

● (1435)

ETHICS

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Peter Cleary, the health minister's former senior adviser, has joined Santis Health, a registered lobbying firm that exclusively lobbies the federal government on behalf of health care clients. Not only was he her former adviser, but he was personally lobbied by Santis Health numerous times in 2017. He will now be the one lobbying the Liberals.

Does the minister think it is acceptable for one of her senior staff to immediately accept a position with a company that is actively lobbying her and her department?

Hon. Jane Philpott (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member would assume, the person he referred to, who is no longer working in my office, obviously met with the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner to discuss arrangements. Everything about his new position was cleared with the commissioner. The staff member will not be lobbying our government.

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, not only does Peter Cleary's new job raise red flags, but it turns out that all of Santis Health's principals worked closely with the Prime Minister's chief of staff and principal secretary at Queen's Park. Not only are they registered to lobby the Minister of Health, they also lobby the PMO.

How can Canadians believe that a prime minister who only makes decisions that benefits his friends will not allow the PMO to be lobbied by its friends at Santis Health?

Oral Questions

Hon. Jane Philpott (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I certainly encourage the member opposite to not manufacture a concern that is not based on fact. The person about whom he is speaking has cleared this new position, and it is very clear he will not be lobbying this government.

* * *

[Translation]

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, for months now, the federal pay services have been a complete shambles. Some people are being paid twice as much, while others are not being paid at all and must borrow money to buy groceries.

Normally, the managers responsible for such a mess should be rapped on the knuckles, but what do the Liberals do? They give out bonuses, yes sir, and we are not talking small peanuts: \$5 million of our money to reward people who are incapable of paying employees.

Is this the Liberal way of managing: rewarding the foolish and incompetent?

M. Steven MacKinnon (secrétaire parlementaire de la ministre des Services publics et de l'Approvisionnement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as parliamentary secretary and as the MP for Gatineau, I can assure my colleague that resolving the Phoenix pay system problems left by our previous government is our highest priority. I would like to remind the hon. member that the executives—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

[English]

The Speaker: Order, please. Most members, on all sides, are able to listen to question period and hear things they do not like without reacting, without saying anything until it is their turn. I encourage others to do the same.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

[Translation]

Mr. Steven MacKinnon: Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind the hon. member, my hon. colleague, that the executives directly responsible for Phoenix did not receive their performance pay.

The minister asked the Auditor General to examine all aspects of Phoenix, something our honourable opposition should not be looking forward to.

[English]

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have been flipping through the Liberal platform, which has been nominated for several prestigious Canadian fiction awards, by the way, yet nowhere in this fantasy does it say anything about shovelling out millions of dollars for private company bonuses. I cannot seem to find the chapter that talks about paying millions more in bonuses to government executives who screwed up the lives of 82,000 public servants.

When will the Liberals actually start helping working people in the country, instead of the wealthy and well-connected? Frankly, Canadians are getting tired of this old Liberal story.

Mr. Steven MacKinnon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I can assure my hon. colleague that Canadians are welcoming the fact that we will fix this pay system, which we inherited from the Conservatives, that we will honour our public servants with respect, and that we will pay them on time with a pay system they demand.

Perhaps my hon. colleague would be better off asking the Leader of the Opposition why, on March 12, 2012, she said that Phoenix “not only ensures the sustainability and increased efficiency of pay services for the Government of Canada, but also generates savings for Canadian taxpayers.”

* * *

GOVERNMENT APPOINTMENTS

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Transport handed failed Liberal candidate Jennifer Stebbing a new job: director at the Hamilton Port Authority.

We know that Transport Canada requires candidates for this job to be experienced in transportation, especially marine transportation. However, that experience is nowhere to be found on her resume. In fact, she's an estate planner. Maybe she plans burials at sea?

Will the minister just admit that Jennifer Stebbing's only qualification for this job is that she's a Liberal?

• (1440)

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to answer this question. I hope my colleague is actually listening.

Jennifer Stebbing is an outstanding choice, with vast professional governance and community experience, serving leadership positions in the Halton law association, the Hamilton-Halton Women's Lawyers Association, and the Hamilton Taxpayer Coalition, of which she is president.

We all know how important it is for port authorities to work with neighbouring residents to address the needs of the port, as well as those of local communities.

I am confident that Jennifer Stebbing will be a strong—

The Speaker: Order, please. While I would like members to listen, I would like members to let me ask people to listen. It is better for order in this place that I do that rather than others do it.

The hon. member for Grande Prairie—Mackenzie.

* * *

ETHICS

Mr. Chris Warkentin (Grande Prairie—Mackenzie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when I go to visit my friends, I have never left with an invoice. However, that seems to be exactly what happened when the Prime Minister left billionaire island, but instead of paying the bill himself, he stuck it to the taxpayer.

Oral Questions

In what world does the Prime Minister live when he believes that it is acceptable to use taxpayers' money to repay hospitality expenses charged to him by his billionaire friends?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have answered in this House many times before, irrespective of where the Prime Minister travels, whether it is personal or business travel, he is given the necessary resources, just as has been the case for all previous prime ministers. This is the case. This is what it has been, and that is exactly what the answer is.

I look forward to working with the member on doing the important work that Canadians elected us to do.

* * *

STANDING ORDERS OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is no wonder the Prime Minister wants to shut this place down on Fridays, cut off debate, and reduce the number of questions he faces. With all of his ethical scandals and bad government policy, the Prime Minister wants to avoid accountability at all costs.

Canadians elect us as MPs to make their lives better; they don't send us here to make the Prime Minister's life easier.

When will the Prime Minister stop his attack on accountability and transparency in this place and end his unilateral pursuit of making this House into his personal safe space?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this government was elected on a campaign and a promise to Canadians to actually do better work in this place, for all members of Parliament to work better together.

The discussion paper was exactly that: an opportunity for all members of Parliament to have a discussion, to have a conversation, to really be able to contribute to how we can work better in this place to do the important work that Canadians elected us to do.

Yesterday was another example of a Prime Minister's question period when the opposition leaders, as well as private members, had an opportunity to ask the Prime Minister a question and receive an answer. That was in addition to other days that the Prime Minister is present.

We believe we can do better in this place.

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister can answer as many questions as he wants without ramming rule changes down the throats of members of Parliament.

The changes being rammed down our throats by the Prime Minister diminish the voices of all Canadians in this place.

The Prime Minister's new rules will reduce opportunities to debate, to ask questions, and to hold this government accountable to Canadians. Turning off the lights on Fridays does not serve the interests of Canadians; it serves the interests of the Prime Minister.

When will he stop his arrogant push to make his life easier and abandon his attempts to reduce his own accountability and transparency in this House of Commons?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have said many times before, I actually look forward to having conversations with members on both sides of the aisle on this important topic.

It is in regard to our Standing Orders. It is in regard to modernizing the way the House of Commons works and bringing it into the 21st century.

I believe that we should be able to have these important conversations. I believe we should be able to listen to different opinions that might not match our own so that we can have constructive conversations to improve the way this place works.

* * *

[*Translation*]

TEMPORARY FOREIGN WORKER PROGRAM

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the budget includes measures for improving the temporary foreign worker program, but according to the Union des producteurs agricoles and FERME, those measures will not be implemented on time for this season. However, the parliamentary committee made its recommendations to the government indicating that it needed to have measures in place before January 19.

We knew that this program was not working. Even the press secretary to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour said so in an interview in *La Terre de chez nous*.

Will the Liberals apologize to the farmers back home, who are going to lose thousands of dollars because of the government's inaction?

• (1445)

[*English*]

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have taken concrete steps to improve the temporary foreign worker program to ensure two things: first of all that Canadians have the first chance of getting available jobs, and then that the rights of temporary foreign workers are respected in Canada and are upheld.

Last December we strengthened the labour market impact assessment that each employer must complete. Employers must demonstrate concrete actions in their efforts to hire Canadians, including Canadians from under-represented groups.

We are continuing to work on this program and we are confident that we are getting it right.

[Translation]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we already know that this government is not even going to meet Stephen Harper's weak climate change targets.

The Liberals promised the moon during the election campaign. However, the recent budget indicates that there will be nothing for electric cars and charging stations for at least another year despite the urgent need to address climate change.

In the United States, Volkswagen was required to pay for a network of charging stations as penitence for its diesel scandal.

Did the government at least consider that approach? Unlike charging stations, there is no shortage of Volkswagens on our roads.

[English]

Mr. Jonathan Wilkinson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, climate change is an incredibly important issue for Canada, and it is an incredibly important issue for the government.

When we came to power, we launched development of a pan-Canadian framework with the provinces and territories that resulted in a historic agreement in December that focused on how we can have steps that will allow us to get to the greenhouse gas reduction targets while at the same time accelerating clean growth going forward.

The budget followed on, providing funding for the pan-Canadian framework, providing \$21.9 billion in green infrastructure funding and \$2.2 billion for clean tech in Canada. We are on the right track, and we will meet our targets.

* * *

INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Randy Boissonnault (Edmonton Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government recognizes that strategic investments in public infrastructure play a key role in supporting dynamic communities while creating good jobs that help grow the middle class.

Budget 2017 commits new funding for investment in public transit, water and waste water, culture and recreation, and rural infrastructure. These are all much-needed projects in Alberta.

Can the minister tell the House how our government is supporting infrastructure investments across Alberta?

Hon. Amarjeet Sohi (Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Edmonton Centre for his advocacy.

Working in partnership with the Government of Alberta and Alberta municipalities, we have approved 128 projects with a combined investment of \$4.2 billion. These projects include a waste water line in Lacombe, a project that should have been funded in 2012, and transit projects for St. Albert, Grande Prairie, Fort McMurray, and Red Deer. Some of these municipalities are receiving funding for the first time in a decade.

Oral Questions

TAXATION

Mr. David Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government never misses an opportunity to rip money out of the pockets of hard-working Canadians.

For decades Canadian farmers have been able to defer cash grain income from one year to the next. Now the Liberals want to take that away without proper consultation, and apparently without even knowing what they are doing. This bad decision will affect farmers from across the country.

Why is it that the only new agricultural initiative in budget 2017 is a Liberal rip-off of hard-working Canadian farmers?

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am always honoured to stand in this House and talk about the good work that our government is doing.

Our government strongly supports the Canadian grain industry, which is a key driver of exports, jobs, and economic growth. With changes in recent years in grain marketing, the delivery of listed grains is now the responsibility of the private sector instead of the federal government.

Budget 2017 launches consultations with farmers and stakeholders on this tax deferral, and we want to hear from farmers before moving forward.

* * *

SMALL BUSINESS

Mr. Blake Richards (Banff—Airdrie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals are waging war on small businesses. Family-run operations like campgrounds and self-storage facilities are being targeted for being too small to be a small business and are receiving huge new tax bills.

The Minister of National Revenue keeps claiming that she knows the critical role that small businesses play, even while the government ended the review of active versus passive business income rules that would have ensured small businesses had access to the small business tax rate, as they should.

Will these Liberals stop talking out of both sides of their mouth and actually stand up for small businesses instead of trying to tax them out of existence?

[Translation]

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, small businesses play a vital role in Canada. We work with all small businesses. The rules have not changed and they apply to all small businesses.

Oral Questions

• (1450)

[English]

TAXATION

Mr. Blake Richards (Banff—Airdrie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when she says the rules have not changed, she might want to try telling that to the campgrounds who are currently taking this government to court to fight this.

If nothing has changed, the minister should explain why they are all of a sudden faced with huge new tax bills. I will give her a hint: they ended the review of these rules that Conservatives put in place in the last Conservative budget, and then changed the interpretation of what is considered an active business so they could go after family-run campgrounds.

If the Liberals are successful in taxing campgrounds out of existence, what other small businesses will they send the taxman after next?

[Translation]

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will repeat that small businesses play a vital role in Canada. I will repeat that the tax rules have not changed. These rules were brought in by the Conservatives. If the Conservatives thought that the rules were that bad, they had 10 years to change them.

* * *

[English]

INFRASTRUCTURE

Ms. Dianne L. Watts (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, municipalities across Canada are desperate for infrastructure funding. The Liberals have a new hallmark infrastructure fund of a quarter of a billion dollars slated for essential infrastructure. Unfortunately, it is in Asia, going to the Asian infrastructure bank, a bank that the Conservative government and the Obama administration declined to join because it was not in the best interests of taxpayers.

Why are the Liberals wasting taxpayer dollars in China instead of funding essential infrastructure in Canadian communities?

[Translation]

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of International Development and La Francophonie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for two years we looked at how the new Asian infrastructure bank operates. We concluded that it was a good way to fund development projects in the poorest and most vulnerable countries. For example, it has funded a drinking water supply project in Indonesia and an electrification project in Bangladesh.

* * *

SOFTWOOD LUMBER

Ms. Karine Trudel (Jonquière, NDP): Mr. Speaker, once again today, the unions, the municipalities, and the industry were in Quebec City to demand that the government show leadership on the softwood lumber file. Less than a month from now, the Americans are expected to start taxing Canadian imports. The cries for help are

growing, but they are falling on deaf ears, and the federal government still has no plan to offer loan guarantees.

The government is constantly bragging about all the consulting it is doing with Canadians, but will it listen for once and do something to protect our jobs?

Ms. Kim Rudd (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian forest industry is very important to our communities. A stable and predictable market promotes economic development and helps create good jobs. We will continue to work closely with the provinces through the federal-provincial task force on softwood lumber to come up with a coordinated approach and meet the needs of the businesses and workers who may be affected.

* * *

[English]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Wayne Stetski (Kootenay—Columbia, NDP): Mr. Speaker, border services officers in my riding of Kootenay—Columbia and across Canada are some of our hardest-working law enforcement officers. Every day they protect our borders from illegal arms, drugs, and other smuggled goods. Despite their importance, the Liberal government, like the Conservative government before it, refuses to fairly negotiate a collective agreement with these officers. The government is demanding concessions from our border staff, and now talks have broken off.

When will the Liberals get back to the bargaining table and treat our border services officers fairly?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Treasury Board is the bargaining agent on behalf of the Government of Canada. Those responsibilities are taken very seriously by the government to ensure that everyone who works for the Government of Canada is treated in a proper and appropriate way. Obviously the border guards who work for CBSA do a very important job, keeping this country safe and making sure that our borders are sound, secure, and efficient.

* * *

[Translation]

MARIJUANA

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the numbers speak for themselves. In Washington and Colorado, where marijuana has been legalized, road fatalities have increased. Just last week, the Saskatchewan Association of Chiefs of Police indicated that it was worried that the Liberals would legalize marijuana before ensuring that all the necessary tools and training are in place to protect our communities.

My question for the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness is very simple. Can he tell us whether police officers will receive training and whether all police vehicles in Canada will be equipped with screening devices before the government legalizes marijuana?

•(1455)

[English]

Mr. Bill Blair (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government has been very clear that we take the issue of maintaining the safety of our roads very seriously. We have made a commitment and we are committed to undertaking to ensure that law enforcement and our courts have the legislation, the technology, the training, and the resources that they will require to keep our roadways safe.

* * *

[Translation]

CANADIAN HERITAGE

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, before the summer of 2016, the Canada 150 fund supported activities that encouraged participants to give back to Canada through gifts of time and energy, in ways that leave a legacy for the future.

It supported activities that provided Canadians with opportunities to actively participate and celebrate together, promoting and building a deeper understanding of Canada, its people, and what it means to be Canadian.

It supported activities that recognized and promoted exceptional Canadian people, places, achievements, and events that continue to shape our country.

Why did the Minister of Canadian Heritage reject all of the proposals with these noble objectives?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his important question. We are very proud of the vision we have put in place for the Canada 150 celebrations and of the lasting legacy they will leave, based on four themes: youth, the environment, reconciliation with indigenous peoples, and diversity.

I am confident that my colleagues recognize the importance of those four themes and that we can work together to build our future for the next 150 years. We are also proud that thousands of projects funded in co-operation with our partners across the country will be carried out all over Canada and showcasing the best of who we are.

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let us be honest. Written words remain.

Question 50 in part G has magically been transformed to read, “The Canada 150 Fund will support new activities specifically designed to celebrate the 150th anniversary of Confederation. We encourage applicants to design and propose projects that promote active participation and bring Canadians together to mark and celebrate our diversity in inclusive ways and help shape our country for the future.”

Can the minister be honest, show some integrity, admit that she created an unfair situation, and explain why she changed the program's objectives?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I can assure my colleague that everything was done with

Oral Questions

complete honesty and integrity. Everyone who participated in the requests for proposals was contacted and invited to submit proposals.

As a government, we want to ensure a strong vision for Canada 150 celebrations, a vision encompassing the four themes that matter to all Canadians: youth, the environment, reconciliation with indigenous peoples, and the importance of diversity and inclusivity.

* * *

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Mr. Denis Lemieux (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, while the Conservative Party is debating the merits of Canada's supply management system, our party fully understands that this system is a model of stability that provides fair prices for farmers, stability for processors, and safe, high-quality products at reasonable prices for consumers. We know that this system supports farm families and rural communities across the country.

Could the Minister of Agriculture tell us what the Conservative plan to eliminate supply management would mean for Canadian farmers and farm families?

[English]

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our party fully supports our dairy farmers and our supply management system. We are the party that fought to implement supply management, and we are the government that will continue to support supply management. The Conservative plan to eliminate supply management would cost billions of dollars. It would cause the closure of many farms and it would not affect the price of the product. Our government will continue to work closely with our farmers to protect and defend our farmers, which very much includes our supply management sector.

* * *

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Charmaine Stick, a member of the Onion Lake Cree Nation, is here in Ottawa today pleading with the Liberals to enforce the First Nations Financial Transparency Act. Band members are often told that there is no money to pay for essentials like housing repairs or medical supplies. For years, Charmaine has been trying to get her band leadership to tell her where the money is going. Now she has finally resorted to going to court.

Instead of enforcing the law, why are the Liberals forcing grassroots band members to go to court to get basic information?

Oral Questions

● (1500)

Ms. Yvonne Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we believe that transparency is very important in all aspects of government. We are working very hard with aboriginal governments across Canada to develop an act that is truly transparent and ensures full accountability. In communities like Onion Lake, for example, we have been involved in working with the leadership in that community, and we want to ensure that we can increase transparency and accountability with its first nation leadership and all of its organizations.

* * *

[Translation]

AIR TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, at the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, the study on aviation safety has already revealed that representatives of pilots and workers support Justice Moshansky's proposal to hold a public, independent inquiry on aviation safety. Justice Moshansky, who is recognized for his credibility, states that the federal government is gambling with aviation safety because Transport Canada has completely abandoned conventional regulatory oversight.

What will the Minister of Transport do to fix the situation after years of Liberal and Conservative cuts?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as you know, aviation safety is a priority for us, and we are constantly looking at ways to improve it.

We must be constantly vigilant and ensure that the aviation network is safe. We use a risk-based approach to do this. Our department conducted over 10,000 inspections last year. We will continue to be vigilant, and if changes are needed, we will make them.

* * *

[English]

HOUSING

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz (Davenport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, housing is a key issue of concern for the residents of my riding. Affordable housing, co-operative housing, social housing, and housing for our aging and ethnic populations are top of mind for Davenport residents.

Our government has taken important measures to answer the housing needs in this country by investing \$2.3 billion in budget 2016 and has introduced a much-needed \$11.2 billion for the national housing strategy in budget 2017. Could the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development provide more details to the House on this important investment and how it will address the needs not only of those living in Davenport but all Canadians?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Davenport for being such a strong advocate for housing.

Our government is investing in affordable housing to help Canadians who need it most. That is why our national housing

strategy will demonstrate the most ambitious federal housing leadership in over half a century. Our strategy will ensure that Canadians have adequate and affordable housing and will provide stable housing for homeless Canadians. These measures will take 500,000 Canadians out of housing need and lead to more inclusive communities and a stronger economy.

* * *

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Mr. Robert Sopuck (Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, fish harvesters attending the Gulf Groundfish Advisory Committee in Moncton expressed their frustration and disbelief over the Liberals' inaction in protecting groundfish stocks by controlling the grey seal population. Despite scientists confirming that grey seals are responsible for declining fish populations, the minister has failed to take action.

Given the importance of the fishery to communities in rural Atlantic Canada, especially in light of the drastic reductions in the shrimp quota, will the minister commit to using a portion of the new Atlantic fisheries fund to address growing seal populations that are preventing the recovery of commercially valuable fish stocks?

[Translation]

Mr. Serge Cormier (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as you know, our government is committed to supporting a sustainable, humane, and well-regulated seal hunt. This commitment is in keeping with the government's priorities, which include a renewed relationship with Canada's indigenous communities and inclusive growth for rural and coastal communities.

We recognize the economic and cultural value of the seal hunt for Canadians who participate, including indigenous groups, individuals, and commercial hunters. We will not tolerate inhumane seal hunting practices. During the seal hunt, fisheries officers monitor activities via regular at-sea and dockside inspections, as well as aerial patrols. We will work very hard to ensure that our seal hunt is sustainable.

* * *

TAXATION

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the public finance committee of Quebec's National Assembly tabled its report on the use of tax havens. Unlike Ottawa, the Quebec government wants to put an end to the injustice caused by the complacency of our institutions, the consulting firms that engage in tax evasion, and the 1% of very wealthy people who are willing to do whatever it takes to avoid paying taxes.

Are the 40 Liberal members from Quebec going to side with Bay Street, as usual, or will they finally listen to Quebecers who are saying that enough is enough?

•(1505)

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know that middle-class Canadians pay their fair share of taxes, but some wealthy individuals participate in complex tax schemes to avoid paying their fair share. This is unacceptable. That is why the government has made historic investments in the Canada Revenue Agency, specifically, \$444 million in 2016 and \$524 million in 2017. Over the past year, our government has managed to recover \$13 billion. We are working hard, we are living up to our commitments, and we will continue to do so.

* * *

SOFTWOOD LUMBER

Mrs. Marilène Gill (Manicouagan, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would remind hon. members across the way that a period of questions should be followed by a period of answers.

I will try again. The forestry sector, the unions, l'Union des municipalités du Québec, and the Government of Quebec have been calling for the same thing that the Bloc Québécois has been trying to get an answer to for months. How many times do we need to ask the same question?

A new softwood lumber crisis is set to begin in 20 days. It is said that this crisis will affect workers and families in entire regions, but it is already affecting them.

We need a clear response immediately. Stop toying with people's emotions.

I will repeat my question. Will the government give loan guarantees to the forestry industry to help it cope with the new crisis or not?

Ms. Kim Rudd (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is taking the challenges in the forestry sector very seriously.

The federal-provincial task force met recently to discuss different options and find creative solutions to this important challenge. We are working as a team with our provincial partners to ensure the long-term prosperity of the sector and to protect the jobs and families that depend on it.

[*English*]

The Speaker: Now I believe the hon. member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes has the usual Thursday question.

* * *

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Gordon Brown (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to rise today to ask the hon. government House leader to give the House an update on the plans for the rest of this week and next week.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the bills on the agenda for the coming

Privilege

days are Bills C-25 on diversity in corporations, and C-17 on the Yukon.

I would like to note two things for next week.

[*English*]

Next week on Wednesday at noon, Malala Yousafzai will make an address to Parliament. Following the address, the House shall meet at 3 p.m. for statements by members and question period.

Last, for Thursday next week, the House will sit according to Friday hours.

[*Members sang Happy Birthday*]

The Speaker: As much as it nice to hear harmonious sounds coming from this room, I would not encourage the singing of *Happy Birthday* on a regular basis as it could take up a lot of time if we did it every day, but happy birthday to anybody who has a birthday today.

* * *

•(1510)

PRIVILEGE

REFERENCE TO STANDING COMMITTEE ON PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

The House resumed consideration of the motion, and of the amendment.

The Speaker: There are five minutes remaining in questions and comments after the speech of the hon. member for York—Simcoe.

The hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to make it very clear that the government members within the Liberal caucus understand the importance of having unfettered access to the parliamentary precinct. The parliamentary precinct includes the offices of members of Parliament, the House of Commons here for a vote or a debate, and the committees on the Hill and in the many different offices off the Hill itself. There is no doubt about that.

Having said that, there is some concern, if we listen to what the mover and the seconder of the motion had to say about it, in terms of what is motivating it. This is, as I expressed earlier, that we should not in any way whatsoever be attempting to politicize this very important principle, which is indeed a privilege. Would the member across the way not agree with me? Would we get the commitment from the member that in no fashion would the member participate in something that would politicize this? After all, we all understand and appreciate that unfettered access. Will the member join me by making that statement?

Privilege

Hon. Peter Van Loan (York—Simcoe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am somewhat puzzled by the question, and I am not sure what the member is driving at. The motion is that this matter be studied by the committee, and the amendment is that the motion should have priority over other business of the procedure and House affairs committee. In fact, it is an amendment to the motion that parallels exactly what the rules of this place are, which is that an issue of this matter takes precedence. The amendment is asking that it take precedence as well at the committee that deals with such business. Essentially, it is recreating in the committee the same philosophy, approach, and rules here. I do not understand how that is partisan.

I know the hon. member knows something of partisanship. I know that because I have been reading through some things he has said in the past five years, and his positions are 180 degrees opposite of the positions he takes nowadays. That suggests to me, if nothing else, partisanship if one can have one set of views on this side and views that are 180 degrees opposite on the other side.

Certainly the question of the rights of a member to vote should be considered paramount. The reason it is considered partisan by some of us over here is that we hear members from the Liberal Party saying, as we heard here, that this should not go to the committee, that this should not have priority and that we should let it be dealt with by officials and put it off into the shadows somewhere and leave members out of it, to “leave it to us, trust us”. That, to me, sounds a bit dangerous.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague focused on how voting is one of the most important things we do in this House. We are going to be voting next week, and if people can be impeded from coming and doing that, which is the most important thing, that seems to me to be a priority as well. I wonder if the member could comment on what the consequences would be if this does not get immediate attention at PROC.

Hon. Peter Van Loan: Mr. Speaker, I think the hon. member is referring to the fact that right now the procedure and House affairs committee is dealing with other business that is very much of a long-term nature. It is the kind of stuff that is generally the subject of study. In fact, we hear the government say it has no particular proposals. We fear it does have particular proposals in mind. It will not commit that it will agree to any kind of unified approach here. It seems to me there are a lot of discussions still to be had there. However, we are not going to be changing the rules next week, but we will be having votes next week, so the question of what we need to do to ensure we do not have a repetition of the unfortunate event is important.

This is the first time we will be considering this issue in this particular context, where security is a question under the new unified Parliamentary Protective Service that was supposed to solve these problems from happening again, as they had in the past.

Clearly, the design that was created by the experts, with the best of intentions, and I think they all do good work, that was supposed to solve the problem did not do it. That is why parliamentarians, all of us, have to take responsibility for ensuring all of our rights are properly protected, particularly the rights of minorities, but every individual member. That is an urgent and priority matter.

•(1515)

Mrs. Alexandra Mendès (Brossard—Saint-Lambert, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government firmly believes and agrees with the opposition that any instances of a member being impeded from attending the House of Commons, particularly for a vote, is an extremely serious situation that needs to be studied in detail.

Mr. Speaker, this morning you ruled that you believe there are sufficient grounds for finding a prima facie question of privilege. We support your findings.

The House has debated this important issue today, and I want to thank all members for their important contributions to this debate. However, I would like to draw to the attention of members what the consequences are of what the Conservatives have done with their amendment to their own motion. Their amendment seeks to direct the procedure and House affairs committee to drop whatever else it is working on. This amendment is highly unusual, and it has one purpose: to stop the procedure and House affairs committee from continuing the debate on the important issue of how we modernize the House of Commons. Our members on the committee have been hoping to debate the substance of these ideas, and this Conservative amendment is an attempt to block this important work.

We will not allow the Conservatives to play politics with the rights and privileges of members of Parliament. This is just too important. We will also not let them try to block a study on how we modernize the rules of the House of Commons. During the election campaign, we committed to modernizing Parliament and making it a 21st century workplace. As a direct result of the Harper government's approach to Parliament over the past 10 years, we promised Canadians we would bring a new approach to Ottawa to ensure their voices were also heard in this place. We will not allow the Conservatives to play politics with the rights and privileges of members of Parliament. This is just too important.

Therefore, the Liberal member for Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas, who is a member of the procedure and House affairs committee, has today given notice of a motion that reads as follows: “That, the committee examine the question of privilege raised by the member for Milton respecting the free movement of members within the parliamentary precinct.” We look forward to this important debate at committee.

I believe we must now return to debating the important legislation scheduled for today, Bill C-25, which would help increase shareholder democracy and participation, and increase women's participation on corporate boards and in senior management. Therefore, I move:

That the House do now proceed to Orders of the Day.

•(1555)

[*Translation*]

(The House divided on the motion, which was agreed to on the following division:)

(Division No. 250)

YEAS

Members

Aldag	Alghabra
Amos	Anandasangaree
Arseneault	Arya
Ayoub	Badawey
Bagnell	Baylis
Bennett	Bittle
Blair	Boissonnault
Bossio	Bratina
Brisson	Caesar-Chavannes
Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)	Casey (Charlottetown)
Chagger	Champagne
Cormier	Cuzner
Dabrusin	Damoff
DeCoursey	Dhillon
Di Iorio	Drouin
Dubourg	Duclos
Duguid	Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Dzerowicz	Easter
Ehsassi	El-Khoury
Ellis	Eyolfson
Fergus	Fillmore
Finnigan	Fisher
Fragiskatos	Fraser (Central Nova)
Fry	Fuhr
Gerretsen	Goldsmith-Jones
Gould	Graham
Grewal	Hardie
Harvey	Holland
Housefather	Hutchings
Iacono	Joly
Jones	Jordan
Jowhari	Kang
Khalid	Khera
Lametti	Lamoureux
Lapointe	Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)
Lebouthillier	Lefebvre
Lemieux	Leslie
Levitt	Lightbound
Lockhart	Long
Longfield	Ludwig
MacAulay (Cardigan)	MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Maloney	May (Cambridge)
McCrimmon	McDonald
McGuinty	McKay
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)	McLeod (Northwest Territories)
Mendès	Mendicino
Mihychuk	Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Soeurs)
Monsef	Morrissey
Nassif	Nault
O'Connell	Oliver
O'Regan	Ouellette
Paradis	Peschisolido
Petitpas Taylor	Philpott
Picard	Qualtrough
Ratansi	Rioux
Rodriguez	Romanado
Rota	Rudd
Ruimy	Rusnak
Sahota	Saini
Sajjan	Samson
Sangha	Sarai
Scarpaleggia	Schiefke
Schulte	Serré
Sgro	Shanahan
Sheehan	Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)
Sidhu (Brampton South)	Sikand
Simms	Sohi
Sorbara	Tabbara
Tan	Tassi
Vandal	Vandenbeld
Virani	Whalen
Wilkinson	Wrzesnewskyj
Young	Zahid — 146

Government Orders

NAYS

Members

Aboultouf	Albas
Albrecht	Allison
Anderson	Arnold
Aubin	Barlow
Beaulieu	Benson
Berthold	Bezan
Blaikie	Blaney (North Island—Powell River)
Boucher	Brosseau
Brown	Carrie
Choquette	Clarke
Cooper	Cullen
Deltell	Diotte
Donnelly	Dreeschen
Dusseault	Duvall
Egliniski	Falk
Finley	Gallant
Garrison	Généreux
Genuis	Gladu
Godin	Gourde
Jeneroux	Johns
Julian	Kelly
Kent	Kitchen
Kwan	Liepert
Lukiwski	MacGregor
Malcolmson	Masse (Windsor West)
McCauley (Edmonton West)	Motz
Nantel	Nater
Paul-Hus	Pauzé
Poilievre	Rankin
Rayes	Richards
Ritz	Saganash
Saroya	Schmale
Shields	Sopuck
Sorenson	Stanton
Stetski	Strahl
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Van Loan	Vecchio
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PAIRED

Members

Foote

Moore — 2

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.**GOVERNMENT ORDERS****CANADA BUSINESS CORPORATIONS ACT**

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill C-25, An Act to amend the Canada Business Corporations Act, the Canada Cooperatives Act, the Canada Not-for-profit Corporations Act, and the Competition Act, as reported (with amendments) from the committee.

[*English*]

SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: There is one motion in amendment standing on the Notice Paper for the report stage of Bill C-25.

Motion No. 1 will be debated and voted upon.

[*Translation*]

I will now put Motion No. 1 to the House.

Government Orders

[English]

MOTION IN AMENDMENT

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP) moved:

Motion No. 1

That Bill C-25, in Clause 107.1, be amended by replacing lines 7 to 14 on page 35 with the following:

“107.1 (1) No later than October 19, 2020, a comprehensive review of the provisions and operation of Part XIV.1 of the Canada Business Corporations Act, including an analysis of their impact on gender equity and diversity among the directors and among the members of senior management as defined by regulation, shall be undertaken by any committee of the Senate, of the House of Commons or of both Houses of Parliament that may be designated or established for that purpose.”

He said: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to deal with Bill C-25, an act to amend the Canada Business Corporations Act, the Canada Cooperatives Act, the Canada Not-for-profit Corporations Act, and the Competition Act.

The essence of the bill is an attempt to provide some balance in Canada in terms of gender equity and racial and ethnic representation on boards of directors, especially in the corporate sector, as well as to end some practices in Canada related to the business sector that have been rather unscrupulous. There have been issues related to say on pay for shareholders. There have been issues related to bearer bonds, where there are issues of accountability. There is money laundering that could potentially take place, or is taking place, in Canada, which has become a snow washing destination for some money movement in our country.

The amendment we are debating, before we get to the main bill at a later date, is about providing some security that the very minimum the Liberals have promised is going to take place and that there is going to be accountability.

During the committee process, we heard testimony from experts from the business sector and the not-for-profit sector. We also heard expert testimony from the academic community and from Canadians.

The bill is supposed to improve gender equality on boards of directors, which has been championed by this government, but nowhere in the bill does it include the word “gender”. In fact, we had a number of witnesses who identified the weaknesses in the bill, and I brought forward several amendments based on that testimony. Some of the witnesses were from the legal sector and some represented groups and organizations. They had contributions to the bill that we later crafted into amendments. They were not even necessarily from the New Democratic Party. They were ideas and thoughts we thought would be helpful, but they were ones that were presented by witnesses. That is the reason we have public hearings at committee.

Sadly, they were defeated by the Liberals. There was co-operation with the Conservatives, and even when there was disagreement over language, there was a working environment to improve it. There was a recognition that there is a continual front, a quite disgusting front, by the Liberals to use nothing short of disguise and deceit to try to put one over Canadians, but they are not that naive. Today is about defending what the bill proclaims it should do by at least having an amendment in it on oversight.

One of the first things the government did not do when it tabled Bill C-25 was have any review process. For example, in corporate Canada, the representation of women is one of the lower percentages in a model called comply or explain used by the provinces. It does not actually work in many respects and has shown very little progress. Canada is stuck at around 20%.

The Liberals will talk about gender equality, talk about gender inclusion, talk about the so-called feminist Prime Minister, but when it comes to significant or specific actions, the bill is hollow. Not only that, the Liberals hollowed out any accountability for any future government in the legislation. Amazingly, this legislation has only been looked at twice in the last 40 years, and this time, the Liberals built a bill that would have no accountability.

● (1600)

Witness testimony from organizations that represent women in corporate Canada and women in general identified this weakness and the significant differences from what other countries were doing. How did the Liberals respond to this? They gutted further accountability. To be specific, they left out a review of the bill. They actually came through with an amendment for that, eventually, after they were shamed and embarrassed into this position, so there will be a five-year review after this bill gets royal assent.

However, the reality is that right now, in this day and age, the percentages are becoming more challenging. In fact, we have seen the representation of women on boards of directors shrink. That change should be looked at, and there should be some type of measurement, some impetus, to push the minister in a direction that is positive, if need be.

The Liberals changed their bill to include a review after five years, but if we go through the parliamentary schedule, we will find that it will actually take up to 10 years to conduct the review.

The first part of the legislation calls for a review of gender equality and diversity among directors and senior management, as defined by regulation, to be done by a specific date to make sure it is going to happen. We actually get diversity in the bill. If we look at representation on Canada's corporate boards, in some places, whether it be Toronto or Montreal, whether it be racial or gender diversity, we have seen some setbacks. There has been a reduction. That is important, because Canadians want accountability.

I will point no further, for a current example of accountability, than Bombardier. For its corporate board, there is say on pay, another amendment the Liberals made sure was not going to be part of the bill. There is some accountability to the shareholders. They have some say with regard to compensation for CEOs. The Conservatives have raised this in the House of Commons and have asked some very good questions. It is interesting that on the Bombardier lending file, the model of loan they built in for the CEOs of Bombardier encourages practices that could often lead to job losses for Canadians. It built that into the system.

The second part that is very important is that the word “shall” will be put in the bill. It will change the bill to make sure that this review takes place. Instead of “may”, we have “shall”, so that legally, it will set a predictable amount of time to review the current situation.

Government Orders

A series of things has taken place with regard to Bill C-25, which will come later, but most importantly, the accountability aspect will be in it. Without these amendments, the Liberals will get away with sending the bill in its final form and not having any oversight whatsoever. We have seen that as we go through electoral cycles, none of this will happen.

What is ironic is that the rest of the world, including the United States and other places, is acting on this much more significantly. We follow comply or explain. If we look at corporate boardrooms, currently the Canadian average is 20% for women. If they lower it to 15% or raise it to 22%, which is still very minor compared to the rest of the world, especially for countries like Canada, they will have to explain it. What is the consequence if five to seven years from now a company is still at a 15% or 20% rate and not even meeting the Canadian average of women on corporate boards? What is the penalty? It is nothing.

● (1605)

This bill would add an honest approach for accountability, a measurement for racial, ethnic, and women representation on boards of corporate Canada and make companies more accountable to their shareholders and to Canadians.

[*Translation*]

Mr. David Lametti (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his speech and I would like to ask him a question.

We have seen the procedures during committee meetings. First, is the bill itself a positive step? Is the requirement that the bill be reviewed after five years to determine whether it was effective also a positive step?

[*English*]

Mr. Brian Masse: Mr. Speaker, I had an amendment with regard to making it two to three years, which is much more reasonable. It will take several years for the bill to go through the House, get out into the community for consultation, and then come back to the House for us to review. Having a five-year period unprescribed, unmandated, and unaccountable would allow for several scenarios to take place. It could take up to a decade before the bill is reviewed.

The government is almost two years into its mandate. If this legislation is a so-called priority for the Liberals, then why has it taken until now to come before the House? The Liberals claim this is a housekeeping matter. This legislation has taken this long to get to Parliament, and eventually it has to go through the Senate and receive royal assent. Meanwhile the world is moving on.

Other jurisdictions have quota models. Some even have hybrid quota models to ensure gender equity takes place and the culture of boardrooms gets the accountability that is necessary, where it has so long played a role historically against visible minorities, ethnic minorities, and women, keeping them down because of a collusion for their own interests over that of their shareholders and the public.

● (1610)

Mr. Erin Weir (Regina—Lewvan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am wondering if my colleague could speak to the growth in inequality between wealthy CEOs and ordinary Canadians and whether he

could explain if Bill C-25 usefully addresses the explosion of executive compensation.

Mr. Brian Masse: Mr. Speaker, the bill would not do that in its current form, and that is why my amendment is so critical. It would at least put a finish line for review that has to take place.

As I mentioned, we are going to a comply-and-explain model, which has been abandoned by many other countries. Norway and France have quotas with penalties. Not only do they have quotas, but they have related penalties. I would argue that we do not have to go that far. We could actually have a hybrid model in between those two. If we do not have that, there is very little expectation.

The Liberals shut down further corporate accountability by making say on pay not something that actually would be done.

Right now as things stand, it is bad enough, but my amendment would at least set a deadline and a hard finish line for scientific and non-partisan evaluation of the quotas and the actual numbers when it comes to representation. The science has already been done by researchers not only across Canada but around the world, and it shows, for example, that Montreal has less than 5% representation by racial minorities on corporate boards despite racial minorities comprising a significant portion of its population. That is just a science-based approach. It is the same with respect to women who occupy these positions. Canada is low, with around a 20% mark on that. There would be a measurement date and deadline for that as a result of my amendment. Right now, all companies need to do is comply and explain. The way the Liberals have set up this legislation, we do not even know when that will happen because of the parliamentary process and no hard finish line, which is necessary.

Therefore the clock never starts to tick on them. We could have successive governments, over and over, and unless one of those governments takes the time to make this a priority, it will never get done and we will be talking about this for the third time in 80 years.

Mr. David Lametti (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today in support of Bill C-25, an act to amend the Canada Business Corporations Act, the Canada Cooperatives Act, the Canada Not-for-profit Corporations Act, and the Competition Act.

Our government sees inclusive innovation as a Canadian value. That is why we spent all of the summer of 2016 consulting Canadians on our innovation and skills plan in order to gather ideas on how we can help position Canada as a global centre for innovation.

When we come together in our community, in the workplace, or on a board of directors, our diversity and our experiences are what bring unique ideas to the table.

Government Orders

I want to begin by highlighting the important work that was done during the committee review stage for Bill C-25. The committee made one amendment that is important to note because it speaks to diversity, which is at the heart of the bill. A review element was included to allow a government to come back to the bill and ensure that diversity is upheld in the spirit in which it is cast in the bill, so there is a five-year review period precisely for that reason. I want to thank members of the committee for that work they did.

I want to commend the efforts of my colleagues who sit on the committee and who brought forward this progressive addition to Bill C-25. By bringing more voices to the table, Bill C-25 would help to make another important step toward diversity.

Several studies have shown a link between diversity on boards, particularly gender diversity, and strong financial performance, heightened innovation, and enhanced client insight. For instance, in March 2016, the International Monetary Fund released its research of European firms, which demonstrated that there was a higher return on investment when there was a larger share of women in senior positions.

Some studies have also reported that, by considering diversity and new skills, corporations were able to outperform and out-innovate other companies. Why is that? It is because, when different views are heard around the decision table, it creates a place where innovative ideas can emerge.

In Canada, most provincial securities regulators have adopted rules to require listed corporations to disclose the gender representation of their boards, and senior management to disclose their policy for promoting gender diversity or to explain why they do not have such a policy.

Bill C-25 would build and expand on these existing initiatives to support diversity on boards and in senior management as a good corporate governance principle. The bill would require the Canada Business Corporations Act corporations—corporations registered under the CBCA—to disclose diversity information such as the diversity composition of boards and senior management. Corporations would also have to disclose their diversity policies to their shareholders or to explain why they do not have diversity policies. Hence, it is comply or explain.

• (1615)

[*Translation*]

If we do not make the most of all the diversity and the quality of our talent pool to guide our Canadian businesses, come up with creative ideas, and foster innovation, investors, our ability to compete, and the Canadian economy overall will suffer the consequences.

Whether they are small, medium-sized, or large, companies are a powerful engine of economic growth. Throughout their lifecycle Canadian businesses are a key source of innovation and employment, which helps improve Canada's standard of living and economy.

It is vital that companies continue to pave the way by creating a culture of diversity and innovation. Bill C-25 will help government

and businesses work together to foster diversity and entrench innovation in their business strategies.

I would like to end my speech by pointing out that the last significant amendments to the Canada Business Corporations Act were made in 2001. The time has come for the act to reflect modern principles of corporate governance that are in line not only with changes in the marketplace, but also with the modern economy. These amendments foster inclusive innovation, diversity, and a strong and prosperous Canada.

[*English*]

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, most of the member's comments were about the bill and not about the amendment that my colleague has brought forward.

I am very surprised that the government resisted all of the amendments that came forward at committee asking to define diversity. In my role as chair of the status of women committee, I know we do not seem to have a problem defining what that is and adding that to our scope: indigenous women, immigrants, people with disabilities, people of colour. We put these things in all the time.

I wonder if the member could comment on why the government did not want to be more inclusive in its definition of diversity.

Mr. David Lametti: Mr. Speaker, the concern raised by my hon. colleague is an important one, and one that the committee and the government takes to heart.

We felt that the guidance we would give on diversity would be done in the regulations. There is proposed text along the lines of the federal government's Employment Equity Act. It may end up looking like that at the end of the day, but it is there to help guide corporations.

A number of the expert witnesses who came in front of the committee thought it could go either way, either in the legislation or in the regulations. We felt that, in the history of Canadian diversity jurisprudence and diversity regulation and laws, it was better to maintain the flexibility in terms of defining through open-ended guidance in the regulations than it was to cast something within the statute.

• (1620)

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will ask the parliamentary secretary to maybe tell us who those witnesses were who said it was okay to put it in regulations.

My recollection, and from checking with the minutes, was that witnesses were not okay with that, and that a definition of race and gender inequity would be an advantage in terms of the legislation. I find that particularly interesting.

I will follow that up with the testimony that took place at the committee hearing. I am interested to hear what the parliamentary secretary says to actual testimony that was provided there. It started with his own member, the member for Richmond Hill asking a question to one of our witnesses, Prof. Aaron Dhir, who answered:

I would have to say that I suspect that [the member for Windsor West] is right, that five years with respect to the diversity provision in particular, will be too long.

The member for Richmond Hill then said:

Government Orders

I'm going to interrupt you because I want to give Tanya about 45 seconds to also give her input on this.

The answer from Ms. Tanya van Biesen was:

In terms of time frame, I would say no more than three years.

What witnesses can the parliamentary secretary provide today that would actually corroborate his statement?

Mr. David Lametti: Mr. Speaker, I cannot name the names, but when asked, they said in the legislation and if not in the legislation then in the regulations. It is a decision we made as a government, as a committee. Committee members had a vivid discussion in committee. There is a good reason.

When the Charter of Rights came into force in 1981 in Canada, had we had a fixed definition under section 15, we would not have had LG, and a few years later we would not have had BT or Q2. There is an evolution in diversity, in the way we think about diversity in this country, and it is worth maintaining that flexibility in the regulations.

As to the period for review, we felt that the three-year period was too short. We think a five-year period gives us time to actually analyze how well the bill is working.

Ms. Karen Ludwig (New Brunswick Southwest, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, to me Bill C-25 is a very important bill. It is about diversity.

At this point, we still have the opportunity, as we stand here today and as we listen to these speeches, to go out and promote awareness of the value of women and men of diversified backgrounds on boards, and also to share that with shareholders. I have to say that I actually take offence at the notion of quotas, because I believe everyone wants the best talent to be appointed to a board, not based on quotas.

I am wondering if my colleague could speak to the unintended consequences of quotas for appointments to boards.

Mr. David Lametti: Mr. Speaker, there was a fair bit of discussion on quotas. There are a number of people who feel that quotas can be counterproductive and lead to the appointment of people who may or may not be qualified for those positions.

I am not going to take a position on that. I think quotas are within the tool kit of a government in moving forward with this kind of legislation. However, we have chosen a comply-and-explain model. It has worked well in the U.K. and in Australia. We feel that it closely resembles what is already being done at the provincial level with securities regulators and in other statutes.

We feel this is a good, positive step forward that will lead to positive results. We have put in the five-year period for review. If at some point down the road, after that five-year review, we feel we have to change it, we will.

Hon. Diane Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to see the member for Windsor West put forth this motion today regarding a timeline for a comprehensive review of the diversity aspect that will be added to the Canada Business Corporations Act after Bill C-25 is passed. As the member is aware, our party members on the industry committee put forth a similar amendment, which would call upon the government of the day to do a review of the diversity policy after three years to determine how

effective it has been. Initially, the member for Windsor West had suggested a timeline of two years. Obviously, I am happy to see that he listened to the arguments made by the member for Red Deer—Mountain View, who put forth the three-year amendment, and is now agreeing with him.

I would like to talk a bit about diversity, and then I will elaborate on why this review and this specific timeline are so important.

I have mentioned in the past that our Conservative Party has never been on the sidelines when it comes to diversity firsts in Canada. In fact, it was the Conservative Party that had the first Canadian female prime minister, that elected the first female MP to the House of Commons, and the first Chinese, Muslim, black, Latino, Hindu, Pakistani, and Japanese MPs. We had the first Mennonite cabinet minister, the first female engineer MP, and even the first quadriplegic MP and later cabinet minister, my dear friend Steven Fletcher. We had the first married couple to sit in this House at the same time. We even had the first husband and wife team to sit in both Houses at the same time anywhere in the Westminster parliamentary system.

None of those MPs was nominated or elected to meet or fill some regulatory quota. They themselves chose to run for us because they knew that we, on this side of the House, believe in merit and not quotas. I think the list that I just read makes it clear that talent and skills know no boundaries, be they racial, religious, or gender. In fact, talent and skills are only enhanced when discussions around boardroom tables, and even debates in this chamber, are between people of different backgrounds and different perspectives. Because each of us has had unique experiences that have shaped our view of the world and how we respond to the challenges that we encounter, each of us brings something unique to the table, and I would like to think that we are all the richer for that.

To help see more diversity on boards, Bill C-25 suggests the comply or explain model. This was proposed by the previous Conservative government after extensive consultation in 2014 in order to modernize Canada's corporate framework. Through consultation, we have seen across the world, and even within our own borders, the positive effects that this model produces. For example, countries like the U.K. and Australia have implemented comply or explain models similar to the one that we are discussing today that focus particularly on increasing gender diversity on corporate boards, and they have seen significant results. In fact, one of the witnesses who appeared before committee said that in Australia, "women's representation shot up from 10.7% in 2010 to 22.7% in 2016", and in the U.K., "women's representation on FTSE 100 boards has more than doubled from 12.5% in 2011 to 26.1% in 2015." Both cases were a result of implementing this policy.

Government Orders

Here at home in Ontario, we have seen rises in the number of women who sit on boards as well. Just over two years ago, the Ontario Securities Commission implemented the comply or explain model, and since then the number of women on boards has steadily increased to 20%. However, looking at Canada as a whole, in larger companies women make up an average of 34% of corporate boards. Implementing the widely used comply or explain model is the first step to seeing these numbers improve.

• (1625)

Most successful companies know that in today's society they must diversify to prosper and to be effective. Good companies diversify their product lines, their target customers, and their geographic markets, because they do not want to put all of their eggs in one basket. When they are smart, they diversify their workforce and their corporate boards, too. I say when they are smart, because numerous studies have shown that companies that employ people with disabilities almost invariably see their workplace morale, attendance, and productivity go up. Corporate boards with higher percentages of women almost invariably have higher growth and profitability rates than those that do not.

Our party is not here today to tell private companies how to run their businesses, but we do need to make sure that people of diverse backgrounds, genders, and ethnicity are considered at the table for the reasons I just mentioned. I think the comply or explain model provides the right balance to do this, but a review is a crucial part of determining the right balance. That is what we are discussing here today, the need for a comprehensive review of the diversity disclosure section.

Like many pieces of legislation created and presented in the House, it is important to look back on what was implemented to see if results have actually been achieved. In fact, most pieces of legislation do have a built-in review process. As we used to say when I was in the corporate world, "What gets measured gets managed."

During committee, it was unanimously agreed upon by the members and by the witnesses who appeared that a review of the diversity and the comply or explain model should be done, but the opinion on timing was varied. While only a few people, and I stress only a few people, suggested five years, most agreed that five years would be too long to analyze the effects of this policy and said a two-year or three-year window would be more appropriate.

Members on this side of the House listened to those suggestions. In fact, the member for Red Deer—Mountain View put forth an amendment in committee with the hopes of seeing a three-year review take place. Unfortunately, the Liberals must have been experiencing a bit of selective hearing at that time. While the Liberals originally amended the bill to include a five-year review of the Canada Business Corporations Act, most witnesses expressed concern that this was in fact too long.

Our party believes that three years is an optimal time frame for review. First, it is important to provide enough time to see results. Witnesses stated that good, solid results would be seen within this time frame. While we need to make sure that we can actually get enough data to see the effects, we also need to make sure that a

review is done in a timely manner. If changes need to be made, it is better to do them sooner rather than later.

One other thing we need to consider is we need to be mindful of the scheduled 2019 election. The member for Windsor West originally suggested that the review be done in two years, but that review process has the potential to conflict with an election that is scheduled for two years from now. This means the review could be interrupted or even swept under the rug until an election is over.

For those reasons, we believe that a three-year period would get us past an election so that a new Parliament could take a look at it.

Unfortunately, the amendment was shot down by the Liberals. As the member for Windsor West has suggested, this review process will occur before October 19, 2020, which brings us to about three and a half years from now.

I am happy to see that he took our suggestions and that he listened to the points that were made, especially by so many witnesses. It is for these reasons that I will be supporting the motion, and I encourage my colleagues to do the same.

• (1630)

Ms. Anita Vandenberg (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague for her support of the bill, a bill which I think we all acknowledge would do a lot. It is a big step forward in making sure that corporate boards would be more diverse in terms of gender, but also in terms of intersectional identities.

In my colleague's speech, she mentioned that the U.K., Australia, and some other countries have implemented similar measures which almost doubled the number of women on boards.

I wonder if she could elaborate on the ways in which shareholders being able to see exactly what diversity policies companies have or do not have would incentivize those companies to put more women and more diverse people on their boards. We all know that increases profits, increases innovation, and makes the boards more effective. Perhaps the hon. member could elaborate on that.

Hon. Diane Finley: Mr. Speaker, I referenced my years in the corporate sector prior to the privilege of being in the House. It was very true that what gets measured gets managed. If we measure the wrong things, then the wrong things get managed. It is the same thing when it comes to talent. Talent knows no boundaries, but that being said, we must make sure that everyone who has talent gets a chance to participate, that people are not excluded from being on corporate boards or indeed in management for the wrong reasons.

One of the best ways for shareholders to know what a company's policy is, is to see what it does. When this becomes law, as long as companies understand the government's intention of the definition of diversity, they will comply or they will have to explain to their shareholders, because the shareholders will be able to ask at the annual general meeting or at any time what they are doing in that regard.

Government Orders

It is really important that the comply or explain model be brought in. It provides accountability without telling companies exactly how to run their businesses.

• (1635)

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for supporting the amendment and for her contribution here today. One thing that is clear is that we are not discussing in the amendment the way things can take place, whether it be comply or explain, or whether it is quotas, or whether it is a hybrid system. They all have their advantages and disadvantages and there is a lot of discussion about that in general and also positions that are taking place.

What is clear by the amendment and was made clear by the Conservative Party is having accountability and making sure there would be a specific measurement and finish line in regard to having companies explain under this model if their measurement system shows them to be deficient. Some companies would probably come in very well and others may not.

Comply or explain in the way the Liberals have built the bill would be such that the minister really has no powers in it. I would ask the member to comment on this. The Conservatives had an amendment similar to ours regarding three years, but five years is what was passed. At least with this amendment it sets a hard finish date for that versus that of several years or a decade from now when we do have a review process taking place, so the finish line is hard and fast and the intention is strong and astute.

Hon. Diane Finley: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Windsor West for the amendment and for being willing to listen to the arguments put forward by the witnesses as to why it should be a three-year hard deadline. It gets us past an election without letting things drag out too long. If there is some problem with the implementation of this policy, then it would be better to review it now and fix it than to wait too long and let things get out of hand by saying that we cannot touch it because it will be reviewed in a couple of years anyway.

My bigger concern was when the definition of diversity was voted down by the Liberals. To many in the corporate world, diversity in hiring means the board should be made up of someone from accounting, someone from marketing, someone with legal experience, functional diversity in the corporate background as opposed to background relating to gender, ethnicity, or religion. That is where we develop different personalities, view the world with different perspectives, and we bring different solutions to any of the given problems that are being presented.

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Mégantic—L'Érable, Employment; the hon. member for Edmonton West, Public Services and Procurement; the hon. member for Beauport—Limoilou, Public Services and Procurement.

Mr. Alupa Clarke (Beauport—Limoilou, CPC): Mr. Speaker, thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak this afternoon. I am pleased that you are the one in the chair right now.

I am rising today to share some of my thoughts and, of course, those of Her Majesty's official opposition on Bill C-25, An act to amend the Canada Business Corporations Act, the Canada Cooperatives Act, the Canada Not-for-profit Corporations Act, and the Competition Act.

It is important to begin by saying that this bill targets some 270,000 federally incorporated companies, which are, for the most part, small and medium-sized businesses that do not sell shares and to which the changes will not apply.

It is important to remember that the amendments proposed in Bill C-25 are the result of a legislative review that was conducted by a House of Commons committee in 2010, two Parliaments ago. Consultations were then held by our government and Industry Canada in 2014.

Like the majority of my colleagues who have spoken to Bill C-25, I think it is commendable and fantastic in many ways that the current government was open enough to use old legislation from the Conservatives' 2015 budget to develop Bill C-25.

However, what my opposition colleagues and I find a little unfortunate is the lack of substance in the bill we have before us at the current stage and, in fact, the lack of substance we see all too often in the current government's bills. I would even say the lack of bills, quite simply. No more than 50 bills have been tabled by the Liberal government since October 19, 2015. The minority government of the Right Hon. Stephen Harper had tabled three times as much legislation by 2007.

Certainly, the bills lack substance. In addition, there is a lack of real change. I will come back to the bill after this aside. The Liberals campaign slogan was “real change”. We can certainly change the things we say. That is obviously what the Liberals have done. However, Canadians expect legislative change, and that is not what we are seeing currently.

The Liberal government is missing several opportunities to do a good job in the House and bring in concrete measures for Canadian society, to address problems affecting workers, seniors, the unemployed, and corporate boards. This is how I am getting back to the bill.

We are delighted that the Liberal government is using legislation that the previous Conservative government worked very hard on. However, in committee, we brought forward two main amendments that, it appears, do not suit the opposition, or rather the government. Excuse me. I misspoke. I saw the future and called the government the official opposition. That will be two and a half years from now.

During the committee stage of Bill C-25, the Conservatives proposed amendments that would have strengthened the bill. First, we proposed to define the word “diversity”, which is an integral part of the bill.

• (1640)

It is one of the key components of the bill since the other side of the House wants to impose diversity, which is still undefined, within various federally regulated corporate boards and institutions.

Government Orders

The amendment we wanted to bring forward would define the word correctly. The need for this was also raised by a number of the witnesses who appeared before the committee. The official opposition critic responsible for this issue and several of my Conservative colleagues met with these witnesses.

The second amendment would require a review of the diversity policy in three years.

There is a reason why the Liberal government did not accept this amendment, which would define the word “diversity”. One of the things this government most often does is present sweeping concepts that they do not want to define. In this case, it is diversity. In another case, it is the 1%. For the next two and a half years I will repeat that the 1% does not exist. We are one of the world’s fairest societies, one of the societies where wealth redistribution is unparalleled in the history of mankind. I really find it incredible. I had the chance to go to university and I can say that any professor or academic would tell you that there is no such thing as the 1%.

I would like to give a parallel example that will explain why imposing diversity could have consequences that are not necessarily what the government intends. I will go out on a limb: I assume that by diversity, they mean cultural minorities of all kinds. Today it is rather fashionable to identify all kinds of minorities, when what really counts is protecting the political minority, first and foremost. I will give an example of some of the consequences that sometimes result from a desire found only in rhetoric. When the Liberals talk about a gender-balanced cabinet, I see rather significant consequences. It is not in law, thank God, but if by misfortune the next government decides to continue with that, this would then become a convention. We would have a sort of parliamentary convention to have a gender-balanced cabinet.

According to the Liberals, having a convention saying that cabinet must be gender balanced means that women will forever hold half the power in the cabinet that forms the government. From another perspective, this also means that from now on, women will never be the majority in cabinet. Is that not a bit ironic to think that for centuries, cabinet was composed mostly of men, and now, with this convention we end up never seeing a cabinet composed mostly of women?

I believe this is a first consequence of this rather dangerous convention, based on misconceptions, dangerous social interpretations, and political capital, which, furthermore, in a way endangers—to put it bluntly—the possibility of having the best cabinet possible. I am sure that my colleague from Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, across the way, would make a wonderful minister. I was with him on the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates. He is incredible, clever and has an outstanding mind. However, because of gender parity, he will probably never be as close to me on the seating plan as he could be. We will never get the best by relying on sweeping misconceptions.

● (1645)

Creating such misconceptions of social reality that can be interpreted differently can have consequences. We therefore need to define the word “diversity” to ensure that this bill will not have negative consequences on corporate administration.

● (1650)

[*English*]

Mr. Erin Weir (Regina—Lewvan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my colleague, who also serves on the government operations committee, suggested that inequality and the 1% represent a false concept, but I am sure he is aware of the fact that the top 100 CEOs, on average, make 193 times as much as the average Canadian employee.

I wonder he would justify this. Does he believe that these CEOs are 193 times more productive than the average worker? Maybe they are somewhat more productive, but are they 193 times more productive? I am just wondering what the explanation is, if it is not an example of unfairness and justified inequality.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alupa Clarke: Mr. Speaker, obviously, liberalism and the capitalist system result in these kinds of problems. A good government must always ensure that wealth is redistributed in the best interests of all Canadians.

That said, if I were told that 30% of Canadians were a lot richer than others, I would say we are starting to have a problem. However, the concept of the 1% leads to dangerous political battles, since it makes Canadians cynical.

Canadians live in one of the wealthiest countries in the world, one of the only countries where anyone, even the poorest of the poor, can do their best and succeed, since there is the crown government. Canada presents all sorts of opportunities. We need to stop talking to Canadians as though they were pathetic children. Quite the contrary, we need to show them that this great country is there for them and for their future. We especially have to stop coming up with sweeping concepts that create cynicism day after day in society.

[*English*]

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my colleague's party has been raising some very important questions in question period related to the Bombardier sale and CEO compensation from the public. It was important in this legislation that “say on pay” was not allowed. Say on pay provides democracy from the shareholders, who help to determine corporate salaries and compensation.

I would like to hear from my colleague how, for example, the government's position on Bombardier right now allows for that, and in fact encourages Bombardier to take actions that could eliminate workers while receiving a lot of different subsidies, one from Quebec and a second one from the federal government, when we know their CEOs are actually receiving compensation for this.

I find that a paradox for his own party, which is criticizing the CEOs from Bombardier for getting rich off the loans and the grants from taxpayers.

Mr. Alupa Clarke: All I can say, Mr. Speaker, is that I profoundly believe that the bonuses that were automatically given to the CEOs were outrageous. Twenty-four hours before people in Quebec and most political figures started to be outraged, I had already put on Twitter that it was dishonourable, dishonourable, and dishonourable.

To answer the hon. member's question more specifically, I would say that is one of the reasons I support the member for Beauce for the leadership. He just basically stands against any subsidies. He specifically said in his platform that he would strike subsidies against companies. However, I often say to my friend the member for Beauce that we still have to be cognizant of the fact that some regions in Canada need subsidies—for example, the Atlantic provinces—to make sure that we increase and support economic development there. Sometimes we have to be straight with our ideas, but we must always acknowledge the needs and the realities of the different regions.

The bonuses for the CEO are outrageous, and we should all hopefully be against that.

• (1655)

Mr. Robert Kitchen (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to the report stage of Bill C-25, An Act to amend the Canada Business Corporations Act, the Canada Cooperatives Act, the Canada Not-for-profit Corporations Act, and the Competition Act.

Bill C-25 aims to make changes to the corporate governance regime for reporting issuers incorporated under the Canada Business Corporations Act. The CBCA is the incorporating statute for nearly 270,000 corporations. Although most of these are small or medium-sized and privately held, Canada's largest reporting issuers are also governed by the CBCA. Professionals are able to incorporate, and in my previous life as a chiropractor, this option was available to me.

With that said, and in light of how the government conducts discussion and debates, I move:

That the House do now adjourn.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

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

And five or more members having risen:

The Deputy Speaker: Call in the members.

• (1735)

(The House divided on the motion, which was negated on the following division:)

(Division No. 251)

YEAS

Members

Abouttaif
Albrecht

Albas
Allison

Aubin
Benson
Blaikie
Boucher
Brown
Choquette
Cooper
Dusseau
Falk
Gallant
Genius
Godin
Johns
Kelly
Liepert
MacGregor
McCauley (Edmonton West)
Nater
Paul-Hus
Rankin
Ritz
Schmale
Sopuck
Stetski
Van Loan
Viersen
Waugh
Weir

Government Orders

Barlow
Berthold
Blaney (North Island—Powell River)
Brosseau
Carrie
Clarke
Deltell
Eglinski
Finley
Garrison
Gladu
Gourde
Julian
Kitchen
Lukiwski
Masse (Windsor West)
Motz
Nuttall
Poilievre
Reid
Saroya
Shields
Sorenson
Sweet
Vecchio
Watts
Webber
Yurdiga— 60

NAYS

Members

Alghabra
Anandasangaree
Arya
Badawey
Baylis
Bibeau
Blair
Bossio
Brison
Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)
Chagger
Cormier
Dabrusin
DeCoursey
Drouin
Duclos
Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Easter
El-Khoury
Eyolfson
Fillmore
Fisher
Fraser (Central Nova)
Fuhr
Goldsmith-Jones
Graham
Hardie
Iacono
Jones
Jowhari
Khalid
Lametti
Lapointe
Lebouthillier
Lightbound
Long
Ludwig
MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)
May (Cambridge)
McCrimmon
McKay
McLeod (Northwest Territories)
Mendicino
Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Sœurs)
Monsef
Morrissey
Nassif
O'Connell
O'Regan
Paupé

Amos
Arseneault
Ayoub
Bagnell
Bennett
Bittle
Boissonnault
Bratina
Caesar-Chavannes
Casey (Charlottetown)
Champagne
Cuzner
Damoff
Dhillon
Dubourg
Duguid
Dzerowicz
Ehsassi
Ellis
Fergus
Finnigan
Fragiskatos
Fry
Gerretsen
Gould
Grewal
Housefather
Joly
Jordan
Kang
Khera
Lamoureux
Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)
Leslie
Lockhart
Longfield
MacAulay (Cardigan)
Maloney
McGuinity
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
Mendès
Mihychuk
Murray
Nault
Oliver
Paradis
Peschisolido

Private Members' Business

Petitpas Taylor	Philpott
Picard	Qualtrough
Ratansi	Rioux
Rodriguez	Romanado
Rota	Rudd
Ruimy	Rusnak
Sahota	Saini
Sajjan	Samson
Sangha	Scarpaleggia
Schiefke	Schulte
Serré	Sgro
Shanahan	Sheehan
Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)	Sidhu (Brampton South)
Sikand	Simms
Sohi	Sorbara
Tabbara	Tan
Tassi	Vandal
Vandenbeld	Vaughan
Virani	Whalen
Wrzesnewskyj	Young
Zahid — 139	

PAIRED

Members

Foote

Moore — 2

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion defeated.

The Deputy Speaker: It being 5:35 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]

OTTAWA RIVER WATERSHED

The House resumed from February 23 consideration of the motion, and of the amendment.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, many Algonquins will see this motion, rightly, as interference in a delicate negotiation process. The negotiations in the aboriginal community have not been harmonious. The aboriginal community is divided by more than the Ottawa River. While the Algonquin community can be found throughout the Ottawa River watershed on both sides of the river, Algonquins who live in Quebec are not included.

The Province of Quebec has refused to participate in the negotiation process. This motion reads, as seen through the eyes of an Algonquin, that the federal government will not honour what has been negotiated in good faith. In fact, Motion No. 104 was made worse by an amendment that shifted blame from a standing committee to the federal government. It now reads that the federal government will redraft the terms of the Algonquin agreement in principle.

The Algonquins ask why they should relinquish management of the Ottawa River watershed beyond what has been currently negotiated. They assert that land is traditional Algonquin territory. They see the management council that is proposed in the motion as just another layer of bureaucracy that is preventing them from controlling their own destiny. To an average band member, the motion reads that the Algonquins are incapable of preserving the economic, cultural, heritage, and natural values within the Ottawa River watershed, so they need a council of outsiders to control their

lives. Aboriginals already feel there is too much government interference in their lives.

Only time prevents me from describing how aboriginals feel about that type of white-man colonialist mentality implied by this proposed management council implicit in the motion. I caution members of Parliament to reflect on the harm Motion No. 104 would do to our relations with first nations people in the Ottawa Valley and how the motion would affect the land negotiation process, should it be accepted.

Constituents in my riding share many of the concerns of the Quebec residents, as well as the Algonquins who live on the Ottawa River watershed. They fear a study will be used as an excuse to impose new rules, regulations, and laws that would take away property ownership and economic rights, including the right to make a living.

This brings me to my final observation regarding the introduction of the motion at this time.

Ottawa Valley residents in my riding were assured that the designation of the Ottawa River as a Canadian heritage river would bring no new regulations or laws that would infringe on the use and enjoyment of their private property. My constituents do not believe in coincidences. The speed with which this motion appeared after the river designation is a cause for concern. It may be a simple exercise of follow the dollar.

It is well known that the Prime Minister's chief adviser and principal secretary, Gerald Butts, used to head the charity World Wildlife Fund Canada. It has been documented that the Ontario Power Authority, a body dominated by Liberal Party appointees, implemented a twisted conservation incentive program that provided an option for participants to pledge Air Miles reward miles to WWF Canada. At the time, Butts was at the WWF. The OPA is the body that takes its direction from the Liberal cabinet for electricity price increases in Ontario. We now see the WWF is involved in a watershed campaign that includes the Ottawa River watershed. Is that just a coincidence, or another fundraiser, like the Air Miles scheme, only this time looking for direct handouts from the federal government?

I leave it to others watching this debate to draw their own conclusions, considering Mr. Butts' jaded past with the Toronto Liberal Party and the rise of energy poverty in Ontario.

For the reasons outlined above, Motion No. 104 should be defeated.

● (1740)

[Translation]

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise this afternoon in support of Motion No. 104, sponsored by my colleague from Ottawa South. We have sat together in the House since our election, which was held the same year.

I would like to take a moment to pay tribute to my colleague, a great environmentalist and environmental lawyer who helped me a lot in my own journey on the issue of freshwater in Canada. He has often shared his knowledge with me.

Private Members' Business

I would also like to pay tribute to the hon. member for Pontiac, who is seated behind me and knew me before he was elected. As an environmental lawyer, he also offered me good advice. I contacted him before he was elected to seek his advice and to benefit from his knowledge on water and the environment.

I would like to speak a little bit about my riding because its geographical location is relevant to the debate on this motion. It is one of the reasons I am rising this evening to support the motion.

My riding could be called urban. It is a Montreal suburb covering the far west end of the Island of Montreal. What may be surprising is that it is almost 75% surrounded by water. There are few urban ridings in a similar situation. To the south of the riding is the St. Lawrence River, or more accurately Lake Saint-Louis, which is part of the St. Lawrence River, and to the north is the Rivière des Prairies. To the west of the riding is the Lake of Two Mountains, and those somewhat familiar with the local geography will know that this is where the St. Lawrence and Ottawa rivers meet.

The Ottawa River is a tributary of the St. Lawrence River, and its waters empty into Lake Saint-Louis. Boaters know that you can see both water flows—the one that is a bit cloudy comes from the Ottawa River, and the clearer other is the flow of the St. Lawrence coming from Ontario.

In short, what happens in the Ottawa River and the Ottawa River watershed has a direct impact on the environment surrounding my riding.

• (1745)

[English]

What I just finished saying in French is that what happens in the Ottawa River directly impacts my community because it is located where the Ottawa River and the St. Lawrence River meet. Also, as I was saying before, boaters tell me they can actually see where the Ottawa River enters Lake Saint-Louis as it is water of a different colour.

The Ottawa River is a majestic river in its own right. I will describe some of its characteristics. It is 1,270 kilometres in length. Its watershed covers 140,000 square kilometres. It has 17 tributaries. It includes 200 municipalities, including the cities of Ottawa and Gatineau. It provides drinking water for over one million people. It has 50 dams and hydroelectric generating stations. It includes 300 smaller impoundments or reservoirs and water control structures. It includes over 30 beaches. Therefore, water quality is obviously very important to the people in the watershed who wish to use these beaches for recreation and to cool off in our very humid, hot summers in eastern Canada.

The watershed includes 85 species of fish and 300 species of birds. I am told its flow is greater than the flow of all tributaries in western Europe, which is pretty remarkable. This is not a small stream or a small river. It is a major river, and its watershed is therefore a major watershed in Canada.

So far, unfortunately, there is only one coordinating body that oversees some aspects of the river's management, and of course I am speaking of the Ottawa River Regulation Planning Board, which apparently was instituted in 1983. It involves co-operation between

the Ontario and Quebec governments principally for the integrated management of dams and reservoirs in the river for flood prevention and hydroelectric production. The whole point of the motion that has been brought forward is that, despite this long-standing co-operative body, the Ottawa River watershed deserves greater and broader attention.

There has been a step in the right direction. The Ontario and Quebec governments have created a joint committee on water management to protect their shared water resources. Our provinces are very much linked by shared waterways. Motion No. 104 really is the logical extension, one could say, of this earlier initiative to create this Ontario-Quebec joint committee on water management. In fact, Motion No. 104 would give body to this initial joint management structure.

My riding is on the St. Lawrence River, and the St. Lawrence River fortunately has been the object of some fairly long-standing governmental attention in the last 25 years, and I am speaking of course of the St. Lawrence action plan. The St. Lawrence action plan could serve in some way as a model for the kind of co-operative council that the hon. member for Ottawa South is working to create.

The St. Lawrence action plan has created a highly integrated vertical and horizontal management structure for essentially monitoring the St. Lawrence River and the banks along the St. Lawrence River and essentially being a framework for action both locally and at higher levels of government, action to preserve the St. Lawrence River.

One of the most interesting aspects of the St. Lawrence action plan is the *comités ZIP*. ZIP means *zones d'intervention prioritaire*, and there are 13 along the St. Lawrence River. Essentially, these ZIPs divide the St. Lawrence into ecological and urban zones. I suppose we could compare them to areas of concern, which we have in the Great Lakes and so on, but these ZIPs go a little beyond simply focusing on problematic areas of the St. Lawrence. Their main objective is to involve citizen and stakeholder participation. In other words, they act to encourage communities to take ownership in protecting their stretch of the St. Lawrence River. As a group, these 13 ZIPs are managed or coordinated by an organization called *Stratégies Saint-Laurent*, which is a collection of Quebec environmental groups headed by the *Union québécoise pour la conservation de la nature*. The UQCN plays a big role in coordinating these groups' activities.

There is also stakeholder coordination at higher levels. There is what I would call a council of the St. Lawrence. It is not formally called that, but it involves many federal departments and many Quebec provincial government departments and other stakeholders, first nations, who get together to oversee the management from higher levels of the St. Lawrence.

Private Members' Business

•(1750)

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am glad to rise today to speak to Motion No. 104, brought to this House by the member for Ottawa South. As a former chair of the environment committee, and having lived in a primarily rural area of Ontario all my life, this topic is of special interest to me. It is critically important that we do all we can to protect our water, our land, and our air.

While today we are discussing an amendment made to this draft motion, an amendment that was made by the Liberals themselves, I will first read the original motion. Motion No. 104 reads as follows:

That the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development be instructed to undertake a detailed study with regard to the creation of an Ottawa River Watershed Council, which would bring a comprehensive, inclusive, co-management approach to the Ottawa River Watershed, in order to foster ecological integrity, sustainable economic opportunities, and quality of life; in its study, the Committee shall examine (i) the council membership, which would include, but would not be limited to, federal, provincial, regional, and municipal governments, First Nations, industry groups, non-governmental organizations, and academic institutions, (ii) important indicators such as water quality, biodiversity, and shoreline integrity, in order to assist with the creation of a co-management plan and conservation strategy, (iii) the economic, cultural, heritage, and natural values within the Ottawa River Watershed; and that the Committee report its findings and recommendations to the House no later than December 2017.

The amendments that have been made to the motion are:

(a) replacing the words “the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development be instructed to” with the word “, in the opinion of the House, the government should”; (b) replacing the words “the Committee shall” with the words “the government should”; [and] (c) deleting all the words after the words “within the Ottawa River Watershed;”.

It is clear that the Liberals tabled this amendment to the motion because they did not support their member for Ottawa South in his original motion, as it was simply pandering to local stakeholders who are seeking an audience on a federal committee. Therefore, the purpose of this motion is now redundant and is a simple exercise to make sure that the member does not lose face within his own party; hence, the referral to the government for examination. This matter no longer requires valuable parliamentary time, as the member could simply have asked the responsible minister to evaluate whether her officials believe it would be worth establishing an Ottawa River watershed council similar to the Fraser Basin Council the member used as an example in his speech.

The Ottawa River received heritage status on July 15, 2016. This was granted by the environment minister, the member for Ottawa Centre. The Ottawa River, from Lake Timiskaming to East Hawkesbury, which is about 590 kilometres in length, now joins the Rideau Canal as Ottawa's second river to be classified under Canada's national river conservation program.

It is important to note that the Quebec side of the river is not subject to the heritage classification, as the Quebec government has repeatedly refused handing over control of this waterway to the federal government. In fact, the Quebec provincial government of the day, represented by the then provincial minister of the environment, the current federal member of Parliament for Outremont, took the position that the provincial government was not interested in participating in the designation process, as this could result in relinquishing provincial jurisdiction to the federal government.

The current Motion No. 104 is asking to set up a management plan for the Ottawa River watershed, with no authority to act in fully two-thirds of the Ottawa River watershed. The Province of Quebec has no interest in inviting the federal government to interfere in matters of provincial jurisdiction.

On December 2, 2016, the member of Parliament for Ottawa Centre tabled the motion we are debating today, calling for the House of Commons Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development “to undertake a...study with regard to the creation of an Ottawa River Watershed Council, which would bring a...co-management approach to the Ottawa River Watershed”. None of Canada's other 41 designated heritage rivers has been studied by a standing committee and tasked to determine members of a council.

As I stated earlier, I was chair of the environment committee, and as chair, I was proud to hear from Mr. Joe Farwell, the chief administrative officer of the Grand River Conservation Authority, in my riding. The Grand River, which runs through my riding, became the first river in a working landscape to be designated a Canadian heritage river, in 1994. There was no parliamentary committee created to appoint members to the conservation authority. I am proud of the work the Grand River Conservation Authority has done and continues to do today.

•(1755)

Let me share some facts about the Grand River watershed. It is made up of four other rivers that feed into the Grand: the Conestoga, the Nith, the Speed, and Eramosa. The combined length of all of the rivers and streams is about 11,000 kilometres. The watershed crosses four climate zones, Dundalk Upland, Huron Slopes, South Slopes, and Lake Erie counties, and crosses two forest zones, the Alleghanian and Carolinian.

The GRCA manages floods and keeps the rivers flowing in dry weather with a network of seven reservoirs. Eighty species at risk are found in the watershed. More than 90 species of fish are found in the river system, about half of all species in Canada. Close to 250 species of birds have been reported at Luther Marsh Wildlife Management Area. Forest cover in the watershed was as low as 5% in the early 1900s, but today forests cover about 19% of the land.

River flows, reservoir levels, weather, and water quality are all tracked in real time by a large network of gauges that feed their data to the GRCA website around the clock. Municipal water systems draw their water from wells and the river system in contrast to most major Ontario communities, which depend on the Great Lakes.

Private Members' Business

I have had the privilege to visit a number of the streams and tributaries that feed into the Grand River and to see the great work that the GRCA has done in protecting our waterways, by creating buffer zones so cattle and other wildlife cannot enter into the streams, to allow grass and trees to grow, and cooling the water so fish which were not able to survive in the hot water are now able to come upstream, surviving in much cooler water. I have seen the good work it does in wetland restoration, working in partnership with Ducks Unlimited and other partners.

Motion No. 104 asks for yet another study to join the multitude of studies that have already been done on the Ottawa River and its watershed. The motion then asks for a study to justify the expenditure of more taxpayer dollars to create a new layer of bureaucracy to interfere with the lives of people who call the Ottawa River watershed home.

It is also important to inform the House that the detailed study that this motion calls for has already recently been completed. A detailed study of the Ottawa River watershed was done in preparation for the designation of the Ottawa River as a Canadian heritage river, and that was not done in the distant past. Less than one year ago, on July 15, 2016, this river was designated. I would encourage all members interested in this motion to look at that report.

This is not the first case in the House where we have seen the Liberals make environmental decisions based on politics instead of on the environment. One of the first actions of the government was to allow the dumping of eight billion litres of raw sewage from Montreal into the St. Lawrence River. It is certainly not a good environmental decision.

As much as possible, it is ideal that while we recognize the right of the federal government to impose certain things like this, we always try to take advantage of existing mechanisms like an organization that is already in place and pass the authority and control over, as much as possible, to more local entities that can be more directly accountable and responsive. Again, the Grand River Conservation Authority comes to mind as a gold standard in this regard.

When we have motions like Motion No. 104, we are asking the House of Commons as a whole to pronounce on something that has a particular impact on a particular region. Giving authority to those closest to that region creates maximum responsiveness to the needs of that community and it also creates far better accountability.

The hon. member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke has done a phenomenal job in standing up for her constituents who stand to be greatly affected by what seems to be needless political decisions. The hon. member has stood up for those residents, specifically those in the rural parts of her riding, who will be asked to pay for this new level of bureaucracy being proposed in this motion. It will be those who live on the land who will be required to pay. She also did a great job of addressing the point of the negative aspects that the motion would create as it related to our relationship with the first nations people.

In light of all these items, I will not be supporting the motion. I encourage all my colleagues in this place not to support it either.

● (1800)

Ms. Anita Vandenberg (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure today to speak in favour of Motion No. 104 brought forward by my friend and colleague, the member for Ottawa South. The management and protection of the Ottawa River is a key priority for all Canadians, especially those of us who are proud to call the Ottawa River watershed home.

My riding of Ottawa West—Nepean borders the Ottawa River and I know many of my constituents are concerned about its protection. The Ottawa River is central to the life of our community. The bike paths and parks, like Andrew Haydon Park and Britannia Park, are focal points for social gatherings and recreation. So many of our best memories are of summer days along the river.

[*Translation*]

It is a constant source of pride and inspiration that has had a major impact on the city of Ottawa and its history. I am sure that I am not the only member of the House who hopes to go kayaking on the river this summer.

[*English*]

Known to the Algonquin as the Kitchissippi, the Ottawa River has been an engine of economic growth, once allowing for the success of the lumberyards and sawmills that became a powerful industry in our city. When those same lumberyards were set ablaze in 1900 and large swathes of the city were set alight, the Ottawa River was a natural deterrent and helped protect the national capital region from total disaster.

Before that, it was an important path for the coureurs de bois and fuelled the Canadian fur trade. With the construction of the Rideau Canal, it once played a role in our national defence. Now it is a source of pride as a UNESCO world heritage site. Its unique and storied role in our nation's history was acknowledged when our government designated it a Canadian heritage river.

The Ottawa River watershed is 146,300 square kilometres and stretches from Shining Tree in the west to St. Jerome in the east, from Westport in the south to Launay in the north, and from Témiscaming to Tremblay. It is larger than Nova Scotia or New Brunswick, and larger than many countries, such as England or Greece.

It is not only the Ottawa River that is contemplated in this motion. In Ontario, the Ottawa River watershed includes some important heritage and ecological sites, such as Algonquin Park, Bon Echo Provincial Park, and Murphy's Point, to name a few.

● (1805)

[*Translation*]

In Quebec, the watershed includes Gatineau Park, Mont-Tremblant Park, the Papineau-Labelle Wildlife Reserve and several others. All these parks give Canadians, myself included, the opportunity to go camping, canoeing, kayaking, and swimming.

Private Members' Business

[English]

The Ottawa River also has huge ecological significance to both provinces and to Canada. According to Nature Conservancy of Canada and Ottawa Riverkeeper, it is home to at least 24 provincially or nationally imperilled species, including the least bittern, the spotted turtle, and American ginseng. Its microclimate and sand and limestone substrate sustain rich wetland and forest habitats that support a diversity of fauna and flora. Our region hosts one of the most biologically diverse ecosystems in Canada.

The Ottawa River is also home to a unique and diverse fauna of freshwater mussels. According to the Canadian Museum of Nature, this unique freshwater mussel fauna includes a minimum of 14 different species, each one linked to specific fish hosts, which ensures the upstream and downstream dispersal of the mussels' specialized glochidia larvae. In many areas of the Ottawa River, the density of freshwater mussels on the bottom commonly exceeds 100 individuals per square metre.

Currently the Ottawa River Regulation Planning Board is the only governance body for the Ottawa River that includes both federal and provincial representatives, including Ontario Power Generation and Hydro-Québec. The primary goal of the board is to provide protection against flooding along the Ottawa River and its tributaries, as well as to maintain the interests of various users, particularly those involved in hydroelectric energy production. However, its mandate is not either to protect the environment or to bring together all levels of government and stakeholders on both sides of the river.

The motion we are discussing today proposes a study about the creation of an Ottawa River watershed council that would have a much broader mandate than the Ottawa River Regulation Planning Board and would involve a more diverse array of stakeholders. The amended motion calls on the government to “undertake a detailed study with regard to the creation of an Ottawa River Watershed council, which would bring a comprehensive, inclusive, co-management approach to the Ottawa River Watershed, in order to foster ecological integrity, sustainable economic opportunities, and quality of life....”

The Ottawa River watershed council would be a venue that would bring together different levels of government—federal, provincial, municipal, and indigenous. It would also provide a forum for citizens, civic activists, and important stakeholders to have their voices counted in the protection of the Ottawa River and take on an ownership role in its management.

This approach is consistent with our government's current watershed activities, led by Environment and Climate Change Canada, and our water-related priorities. The implementation of this proposed study would help to demonstrate our commitment to treat Canada's fresh water as a precious resource that deserves protection and careful stewardship.

I would encourage all my colleagues on both sides of the House to support this motion.

[Translation]

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House to speak to the environment because the issue is extremely important to me.

I have already mentioned several times that I got into politics to protect the environment and to take concrete actions to improve the quality of our planet, our water and our land. I am not doing it just for myself, but mainly for my children.

I will speak to Motion No. 104 by my Liberal colleague from Ottawa South, which is on the Ottawa River watershed. The NDP has long worked on a number of fronts to promote the sustainable development of our communities. The quality of our waterways and the protection of our biodiversity are at the heart of our commitment.

I will read an excerpt of the motion so that we understand the context of our work. The motion asks:

That the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development be instructed to undertake a detailed study with regard to the creation of an Ottawa River Watershed Council, which would bring a comprehensive, inclusive, co-management approach to the Ottawa River Watershed...

The intention behind this motion is timely and laudable. No one can disagree with the desire to protect the Ottawa River watershed. However, there are a few little things that I will be talking about that explain why we question this motion.

I would note, first of all, that the Ottawa River is also called Kitchissippi or great river by the Algonquin. It is very important, and we must not forget that the first nations should be part of every discussion held within all our consultation processes and environmental assessments. On that point, I would like to note that the Canada Water Act does not say anything about an obligation to consult the first nations. That might be a first point to improve.

Second, it must be noted that the Ottawa River has been designated as a Canadian heritage river. That is a good thing, because during their reign, the Conservatives eliminated protection for almost 90% of the rivers that were previously protected. Unfortunately, that has had many negative consequences. Fortunately, the Ottawa River has stayed protected, thanks to the fact that it was designated as a Canadian heritage river.

On that point, the NDP was at the forefront of the fight to protect watercourses. In fact, when the Conservatives included that bill in their mammoth bill in 2012-13, when they removed practically every watercourse that enjoyed protection under the Navigable Waters Protection Act from the list, we introduced dozens of bills, for example in 2013, to have 27 rivers across Canada protected under the Canadian heritage river designation.

In fact, I introduced a bill myself to have important rivers designated as heritage rivers. Unfortunately, that has still not been done. That would be a concrete action the Liberal government could take to restore protection to a number of important watercourses in Canada. They could designate them as Canadian heritage rivers. That would protect them under the Navigable Waters Protection Act.

I am going to talk about something else that is very important and that I am very proud of. I was there when the former member for Halifax, Megan Leslie, who did a very good job and worked very hard on environmental issues, introduced a motion to ban microbeads from our products and from our environment. Fortunately, all representatives in the House of Commons voted in favour of that motion.

● (1810)

A process is currently in place to gradually ban all microbeads from our environment. Once again, I would like to congratulate Megan Leslie and commend the NDP for its work on this file, which enabled us to undertake the gradual and ongoing process of getting rid of microbeads that cause so much harm everywhere, including in the Ottawa River watershed, which is suffering as a result. Thanks to the NDP's work, we have been making progress, and we will be able to improve water quality in this watershed and others. This is extremely important. In my riding, the RCM of Drummond supports calls to ban plastic microbeads from our environment.

Paul Dewar is another NDP colleague who worked very hard to protect the Ottawa River watershed. He was inspired by citizen groups such as Ottawa Riverkeeper and Waterlution, another group that is very involved in the watershed file. Mr. Dewar repeatedly called for federal government measures to protect the Ottawa River. He lobbied for an action plan and a motion to adopt rules to protect and preserve the river's integrity.

Here are some examples of concrete action that the NDP has taken in recent years to improve the situation.

I spoke about the Drummond RCM, which recently did an excellent job protecting watersheds. Very recently, the City of Drummondville, together with partners, created a 2017-21 action plan to protect the Saint-Germain River and its watershed. I would like to acknowledge the regional work done in the greater Drummond area to implement this action plan to protect the Saint-Germain River. It is very important for our region.

The Conseil de gouvernance de l'eau des bassins versants de la rivière Saint-François, commonly known as COGESAF, is at the forefront of this initiative, which led to the development of the Saint-Germain River watershed charter, the first within the Saint-François River watershed. It is an extremely important initiative that needs to be recognized.

In the face of climate change, here are the objectives to be achieved through this initiative: monitoring water quality, protecting shorelines, conserving fish habitat, and improving communication with local stakeholders.

I want to thank all the local stakeholders in the greater Drummond area who helped develop the 2017-21 action plan to protect the Saint-Germain River watershed and who will help implement it in the years to come. It is extremely important.

My colleague from Edmonton Strathcona, our party's environment critic, gave a speech on this subject as part of our study of Motion No. 104. She brought forward an amendment in order to move this important motion forward. Unfortunately, her amendment was not adopted. The amendment called for the Mackenzie River Basin and the North Saskatchewan River to also be included in the study,

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instead of focusing only on the Ottawa River watershed. It was a matter of expanding the scope of the study being done by the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development. It is an independent committee and it should have a better overall idea of all the major steps the federal government can take, not only to improve water quality, but also to achieve other things like banning microbeads.

● (1815)

[English]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Resuming debate.

Seeing none, the hon. member for Ottawa South has the right to reply.

Mr. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the colleagues who have contributed. I would like to take a moment to thank, in particular, the members for Pontiac, Lac-Saint-Louis, and Ottawa West—Nepean for their thoughtful remarks on this motion. I thank all of my colleagues, all 11 MPs in the national capital region caucus, for their encouragement and collaboration on Motion No. 104. I would also like to pay a special tribute to and thank the Minister of Environment for her ongoing support for the Ottawa River watershed council. I look forward to working with her and her department on this important initiative.

Some 15 years ago, I wrote an op-ed in *The Globe and Mail* that I entitled "Overdraft at the Nature Bank". The piece was about trying to illustrate for Canadians that our economy, our daily lives, and the way in which we order our affairs continues to draw down and rely intensely on nature. We need nature for its carrying capacity. There is no replacement for a functioning air and water filtration system, for example, as is provided through the hundreds of millions of hectares of wetlands on this planet, yet we continue to deplete wetlands without really knowing the effect on our long-term sustainability. We continue to draw down species on the planet without knowing necessarily what will happen when they are depleted or cease to exist. My point at that time was that we needed a new form of reporting and wealth measurement and that all countries should begin to measure and report on their natural capital, on the wealth that surrounds us, which is beyond the typical economic reporting we use, for example, in the budget-making process.

Similarly, this motion looks to push out our thinking in another way, which is to rethink the way in which we manage the natural assets around us.

One of the world's top economic environmental economists once said that the economy is a wholly owned subsidiary of the environment, and not the other way around. We would be foolish as a species, as a people, to knowingly draw down the capital on this planet without replenishing it or investing in it. No corporation would do such a thing. No company would ever try to run its affairs knowingly drawing down and losing its capital base. On the contrary, it would look to increase its capital base. This new form of management we are trying to examine in the study is one where we recognize a fundamental truth, which is that we are not organized by geopolitical lines; we are organized through natural lines.

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The Ottawa River watershed is massive. It is mighty. It is the jewel in the crown of this entire part of our beautiful country. It does not understand that it is divided by province. It does not understand that it is divided by municipalities and that we have many different actors working within it. What we know is that it is one integral watershed. We know that it is subject to all kinds of stressors. We know that there are many kinds of activities in the watershed. For Canadians who might be listening or watching, this watershed is bigger than the province of New Brunswick. However, we do not sit down together in any one place and deal with this situation. We do not have business, first nations, governments, NGOs, labour groups, and community groups sitting down together and saying that there is one watershed, just one watershed. We can knowingly draw it down, or we can stop for a moment and look at the possibility of creating a council where we would respect the fact that it is one and understand that keeping it sustainable for all of us is the end game.

When Lord Stern did the most comprehensive study in history on climate change in the U.K., what he illustrated for the world was that we could take action on climate now. Yes, it would cost some money to deal with the climate crisis, while giving rise to all kinds of new economic activity. We could do it now and pay some price, or we could delay and pay so much more later.

• (1820)

I believe it is time for us to really clearly examine co-management going forward, integrated water management. That is why this motion is so important. It is time for us to admit what is true. It is time for us to come together and deal with the watershed as one whole.

[*Translation*]

Le vice-président adjoint (M. Anthony Rota): The question is on the amendment. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the amendment?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

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

And five or more members having risen:

• (1825)

[*English*]

Pursuant to order made on Monday, April 3, 2017, the division stands deferred until Wednesday May 3, 2017, immediately before the time provided for private members' business.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

[*Translation*]

EMPLOYMENT

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am always pleased to rise in the House to take part in adjournment proceedings because it gives us the opportunity to expand on topics that are touched on rather quickly during question period.

On February 24, I had the opportunity to ask the hon. Minister of Finance a question. That was before the government's budget was tabled. I asked the government when it was going to get around to lowering taxes on businesses and the middle class and help those working hard to join the middle class, as the parliamentary secretary likes to say, to promote job creation.

Unfortunately, over successive question periods and successive budgets, this being their second, this government has gotten us accustomed to wordy budgets full of slogans. For example, they come up with empty slogans, as in their plan to help Canadian businesses create jobs, and slogans on infrastructure investment or the environment to justify a new carbon tax. This government specializes in empty rhetoric and marketing slogans. It is no wonder, when we see how the Prime Minister is running this government with selfies all the time. It seems like image counts for everything.

It is always a pleasure for me to express myself enthusiastically and to use my arms when I am passionate about a topic. I do it, sometimes even during oral question period. I surely did it when I was addressing my question to the hon. Minister of Finance. It is important to highlight the government's weaknesses. I think waving my arms like that lets me tell people that they need to look closely at what is going on, at what the government is doing, because if they do not look, they will not see anything. Why? Because, ultimately, the Liberals are not doing much. That is the reality.

Mr. Morneau answered the question by saying—

Le vice-président adjoint (M. Anthony Rota): I would remind the hon. member that he cannot name members.

• (1830)

Mr. Luc Berthold: I am sorry, Mr. Speaker, I got carried away again.

The Minister of Finance had responded with a series of slogans.

Before I gave my remarks on the budget, I was fortunate to meet with two interns from the Université de Sherbrooke. I asked them what they thought of the last budget tabled by the Minister of Finance, especially with respect to employment and youth. They helped write the speech I gave on the budget. I will read two quotations from these students, who were particularly concerned about the fate of small and medium-sized businesses.

Growing deficits will affect their generation for many years to come, even though they are already facing the loss of many full-time jobs, specifically 42,000 jobs over the past year.

That is what was concerning these two young students. They went on to say:

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...how small businesses are supposed to grow in the absence of tax relief. We believe that creating the right conditions for businesses to hone their competitive edge is the only way to help Canadian businesses hold their own against U.S. competitors.

These university students are lecturing us. I hope that the Minister of Finance will hear their message. It is not too late to act, change the situation, present a plan to return to balanced budgets that will ensure that our businesses can start creating jobs again.

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague from Mégantic—L'Érable for his question.

[*English*]

Before I provide more details and actually emphasize what the government has been doing to help grow the middle class, I would like to make the hon. member aware of some of the facts on job creation in Canada, as he just mentioned it.

The steps we have taken to date are having a real, positive impact on our economy and on Canadians. Optimism is on the rise and with good reason. Forecasters are expecting Canada's economy to grow even faster in the next two years due in part to the action that we have taken to invest in Canadians, including historic investments in infrastructure and the Canada child benefit. The pace of our economic growth is expected to pick up in 2017.

Between mid-2016 and early 2017, the economy created one-quarter of a million new jobs, 250,000 new jobs, the largest seven month growth in the past decade. We understand that despite these positive signs, people are still feeling anxious about the future. Canadians want to be assured that their hard work will pay off with a better future for their kids and grandkids.

That is why we have taken the steps we have in budget 2017. We want every Canadian to benefit from a new innovative economy, which is why we are not just creating jobs of today, we are getting people ready for the jobs of tomorrow. The next job should be a better job for them.

We call that our innovation and skills plan. With it, we will support a culture of lifelong learning to help workers adapt to the changing demands of our time.

[*Translation*]

Canada already has one of the best, one of the most educated workforces in the world. However, in an increasingly competitive global economy, more needs to be done to ensure that Canadian workers can learn, adapt, and get good jobs throughout their working lives.

[*English*]

To ensure our skills training effectively helps unemployed and underemployed Canadians get good jobs in the new economy, budget 2017 significantly boosts federal support through the labour market transfer agreement with provinces and territories by \$2.7 billion over the next six years. For Canadians looking for work, this means more opportunities to upgrade their skills, gain experience, or get help to start their own business. It also means more support, such as employment counselling, to help them plan for their careers.

[*Translation*]

The budget also proposes to establish a new agency that would work with the provinces and territories, the private sector, educational institutions, and not-for-profit organizations to study new and innovative approaches to skills training and development.

[*English*]

For Canadians who have lost their jobs, budget 2017 will make better use of existing flexibility within the employment insurance programs that allow claimants to pursue self-funded training while remaining eligible for EI benefits. This will provide greater security for unemployed Canadians and their families as they get the skills they need to find their next job.

• (1835)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Mr. Speaker, if I knew that the members here were interested, I would seek unanimous consent to speak longer. Responding to what I just heard would take me at least 30 minutes. I will be quick, knowing that I would not get consent to speak longer.

So many things were said during this brief speech. It always makes me laugh when those in the government responsible for finance refer to our children and grandchildren and when they say they want to work today so that our children and grandchildren can have better jobs tomorrow.

Given the deficit that the Liberal government will be leaving us by 2055, a \$1,500-billion deficit, they will certainly need to start working so that our children will have jobs. One job will not be enough. Our grandchildren are going to need three jobs just to be able to pay back the deficit that the government will be leaving them, our young people later. That is what concerns us.

My students came to an extraordinary conclusion. It is time for the Liberal government to get the public finances under control and to stop increasing the tax burden. Growing the economy and supporting job creation is the only way to do it.

[*English*]

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor: Mr. Speaker, our government is taking significant action to help businesses, one of our most essential economic engines, to succeed. We have taken significant action to help spur business innovation and to help small and medium-sized businesses in particular grow.

[*Translation*]

Through initiatives such as the new global skills strategy, Canadian businesses will be able to recruit the best talent more quickly in order to bring people with new skills into the country and help create jobs.

*Adjournment Proceedings**[English]*

Our new innovation and skills plan imagines a Canada where more Canadian firms can access the capital they need to grow, where strong and growing businesses become global, where women are predominantly featured in positions of leadership, and where groundbreaking research happens here, attracting world-class scientists to Canadian institutions.

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the deputy minister for Public Services and Procurement Canada shamefully confirmed that those involved in the Liberal Phoenix fiasco are going to be receiving performance pay in spite of the colossal failure of the rollout. The minister and the government are content rewarding failure and avoiding responsibility for the issues that continue to hurt tens of thousands of Canadian public servants.

Every step of the way, the minister has avoided responsibility for her role in the fiasco. We know it was her decision to launch a system that was not ready. We know she was warned repeatedly of the consequences of rushing the launch, but she did so anyway. Every day since her decision, she tried to blame someone else and hide from the spotlight.

Public Services and Procurement Canada has provided almost 20 technical briefings since the launch of Phoenix, and the minister has been at exactly zero of them. Elvis has been spotted more often than the Minister of Public Services and Procurement.

My point is that the minister has an utterly dismal track record of competence and accountability, and given her track record, how can Canadians trust her on such a major file as purchase of new jets for our air force?

How can Canadians trust that, when she updates the House or the public, she is not providing spin as opposed to facts?

We have repeatedly asked the government why it was moving so fast on the sole-source Super Hornet purchase, an enormous cost to taxpayers, all the while breaking its promise to launch an open and transparent competition to replace our CF-18s. The minister and the government are content relying on their manufactured capability gap to keep a flawed election promise.

Let us be clear. The people who are getting hurt by this decision are the men and women in uniform in our Armed Forces, who are going to be forced to fly out-of-date fighter jets, and Canadian taxpayers, who will have to fork out billions of dollars more for this interim fleet.

Unlike any parts of the Super Hornet, we know the capability gap was manufactured in Canada by the Liberal government. We have heard from military and procurement experts, academic experts, and former commanders in the military and the air force that there is no capability gap.

Just two days ago, the air force unveiled a custom-painted CF-18 that is going to be taking to the skies across Canada this summer to celebrate the Canada 150 celebrations. There is hardly much of a capability gap if we have spare CF-18s around to fly in air shows.

I also want to emphasize that there is no practical reason to delay launching an open competition to replace our CF-18s today. The government says it will take five years, but that is frankly ridiculous. Belgium recently declared it is going to conduct a competition to replace its fighter jets and it needed only one year to do so. Here are some other comparisons: Norway, 23 months; South Korea, 16 months; Denmark, 11 months. Why does Canada need five years? Are our capabilities that different? Are we unique, or is the government hiding behind political mistakes and forcing our military and taxpayers to take a hit so the Liberals do not have to?

We asked PSPC procurement officials why Canada's procurement timelines are 300% longer than our allies'. We were told it is because our situation is unique. Well, it is unique, because Canada's military is subject to the political whims and poorly thought out campaign promises of the Liberal government.

We know there is no capability gap. We know there are no practical reasons why it takes five years to run an open competition. We know that, with such a track record of failure and hiding from responsibility, Canadians cannot trust the minister to buy the right jet at the right price for our air force.

I have to ask this. Why should Canadians trust the government? How can Canadians be assured that if something goes wrong, the minister will actually stand up and take responsibility for her actions? Her words say one thing, but her actions say something completely different.

• (1840)

[Translation]

Mr. Steven MacKinnon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague. This is kind of déjà vu. His colleague, the national defence critic, raised the issue the other night.

Nevertheless, I am pleased to reiterate the government's position, which I believe is quite clear and in keeping with the election promises we made to all Canadians during the 2015 election.

[English]

I want to speak briefly, as my hon. colleague did, about the Phoenix pay system. We inherited this system from a government that had fired 700 of the people needed to effect the Phoenix change, booked \$75 million in savings, and then said to start the project. It started on completely flawed grounds. This government is taking that project and turning it around.

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If it were not the end of the week, I would remind my hon. colleague that nine years passed under the previous government and not a single military fighter jet was purchased for our men and women in uniform. This government has put us, within months of taking office, on a very clear path to filling the capability gap that exists, and it does exist, to extending the life of our current fleet. I do not have the exact numbers, but in rough numbers, they went from 125 down to 75 CF-18 jets currently. We are extending the life of those in my home province of Quebec, and I am very pleased we are doing that.

We have initiated discussions with the U.S. government. We submitted a letter, and await negotiations with Boeing and others with respect to procuring an interim fleet of Super Hornets, something we are very excited to do. If we look at some of the literature that is being published, clearly the Canadian industry is very excited we are doing this. We have put a very clear process before Canadians, and that is to meet our NORAD and NATO requirements. With the horrors we see in Syria and other places and not knowing where Canadians may be pressed into service in other parts of the world, heaven knows there are other places we are going to need fighter jets as well.

Finally, we have committed to an open, transparent, and long-term purchase of fighter aircraft for our men and women in uniform. We have committed, at every step of the way, to consult with industry, obviously consult with our men and women in uniform, as well as the military, which will be very engaged on defining capabilities and ensuring we get the right aircraft for our country, the right aircraft at the right price and at the right time.

I can only conclude by assuring the hon. member that we have a unique geography, we have a unique climate, and we are a unique player in NATO and other alliances. Canada has specific and special requirements when it comes to purchases that total hundreds of billions of dollars over their life cycle, and we will take the time to get it right.

• (1845)

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Mr. Speaker, I mentioned that Elvis had been spotted more than the minister. I wish he were here, because he would have given more sensible answers.

I will go to Phoenix quickly. Every bit of access to information shows clearly that the government was told not to go ahead and delay it a bit longer, but it went ahead with it for no reason. We are still paying the consequences today.

Getting back to the jets, I asked the assistant deputy minister why it was taking so long and what was going on. She said that the government chose a foreign military sales process because it was the fastest way to get aircraft. It is not the best way, not the best plane, not at the best price, and it is certainly not best for our aerospace industry. Not one piece of the Super Hornet is manufactured in Canada, zero. Therefore, it is ridiculous to say that this is going to help industry.

When we asked why it is taking five years, which is one year past what is in the mandate letter to the minister, to run an open competition compared to a shorter time for Denmark, we were told it was not—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement.

Mr. Steven MacKinnon: We have a disagreement on the issue, Mr. Speaker. It is a very fundamental issue and it is an honest disagreement, but one thing is very clear. This government has set out a clear path to risk managing its military assets to procure the right aircraft for Canada, aircraft that helps us meet our international and domestic commitments, and results in the quickest possible acquisition to fill that capability gap. We have set a clear path, which should begin with a process in about 2019, of an open and transparent international competition for the procurement of new fighter aircraft for our country. It is a very important decision and one that I know we will continue to have exchanges about.

I thank the hon. member for his intervention. I am sure it will not be the last one. I can tell the women and men in the Canadian Forces—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The hon. member for Beauport—Limoilou.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alupa Clarke (Beauport—Limoilou, CPC): Mr. Speaker, somebody needs to get the situation at Public Services and Procurement Canada under control yesterday. Just look at the outrageous bonuses paid to executives involved with the Phoenix fiasco in various capacities.

I wish my colleague from Miramichi—Grand Lake were still here so I could tell him that the fact is, the Minister of Public Services and Procurement launched the Phoenix pay system on February 24, 2016. All of the access to information requests and all of the questions that we put on the House of Commons Order Paper leave no room for doubt, and the member for Gatineau knows it.

We initiated the Phoenix project as any responsible government would have done. We realized the previous pay system was outdated and had to be changed. However, we were not the ones who implemented it. Again, all of the access to information requests show that expert reports to the minister of the day said the system was not ready.

This evening, I want to talk about the Super Hornets, which the government plans to acquire very soon. My colleague from Edmonton West spoke about the advisability of procuring these aircraft and how long it would take. I would like to address another aspect of the problem.

The Government Contracts Regulations must apply to the Department of Public Services and Procurement because, in the end, that department's minister must give the go-ahead to the department that wants to enter into procurement contracts. The reason we have a framework for government procurement, the Government Contracts Regulations, is to prevent questionable acquisitions of this magnitude.

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What I suspect, and I am confident in saying that my party colleagues agree, is that the exceptions in the regulations were rigged by the Liberal Party because it often mentions the exception contained in subsection 3(1)(g), which allows a contract to fulfill an interim requirement for defence supplies. I would like the record to show that this is not simply a legal void that the Liberal Party can use to contravene the Government Contracts Regulations.

For greater clarity, if the Minister of Public Services and Procurement approved the future purchase of the Super Hornets without a tender, she must have a letter from the Department of National Defence stating, in black and white, why an exception is being made to proceed without a tender. There are four possible reasons for the exception: state of war, an emergency, a gap, and so forth. In this case, the Liberals are saying that there is a capability gap. I do not believe it, and my party does not either. Where is the proof?

Can the parliamentary secretary show us a document from the Department of National Defence, signed by the minister, that proves there is a capability gap?

• (1850)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): I would remind the hon. member that we do not comment on the presence or absence of a member in the House. I know people forget on occasion. This is simply a reminder.

Mr. Steven MacKinnon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it has been a long day. We must accept people's mistakes from time to time.

As I did earlier with our colleague from Edmonton, I want to reiterate that we have a difference of opinion. The member is asking for proof, and I will let the Department of National Defence provide him with details regarding this capability gap.

All I can say is that our fleet of CF-18s is aging. It has gone from about 125 aircraft to about 75. A process has been launched with L-3 Communications MAS in Mirabel—a supplier we really like—to extend the life of those aircraft. Based on the advice of the Department of National Defence, we know we have a capability gap that cannot be filled by extending the life of those aircraft. We need to go ahead with the procurement of interim aircraft that are compatible with our fleet.

That being said, as the hon. member opposite knows full well, making such procurements is complicated and takes time. It happens on an international level and it is a major undertaking. It is important to define all manner of things, such as the industrial benefit, the technical specifications, the unique capabilities, and so on. We will take the time needed to ensure that the process is open to everyone and transparent, and to maximize the benefits to our men and women in uniform and the economic benefits to Canada. This has to be a solid investment for Canadian taxpayers since they will be covering the cost.

We disagree. There are a number of other examples of that in daily life in the House. I respect my colleague's point of view. It is his opinion. We are going on facts presented by the Department of National Defence and the philosophy we presented to Canadians during the election. Now that we are in government, we maintain that we will procure new equipment for our troops. We will ensure that our men and women in uniform have the ships, aircraft, and land equipment they need to be world leaders and the pride of all Canadians.

Mr. Alupa Clarke: Mr. Speaker, the parliamentary secretary mentioned an honest political disagreement between the two of us. That is indeed the case, but that is not what I am talking about.

I would point out that Denmark was able to complete an open, transparent competition in 11 months.

I am speaking to the parliamentary secretary, and it is not up to the Department of National Defence to answer me. My question is this. The rules surrounding government contracts demand that the Minister of Public Services and Procurement play a role. Any department can say that it wants this or that, for any given reason. It is too easy. Public Services and Procurement and the Government Contracts Regulations necessitate, require, and demand that the minister of public services receive a letter that explains why there is an exception, why the need is exceptional. I assume that, for the Liberals, the exception here is the capability gap. Personally, I do not think the capability gap exists—

• (1855)

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

Mr. Steven MacKinnon: Mr. Speaker, we have a capability gap. As I just said, the number of planes has dropped from 125 to 75. There is an aircraft life extension plan, NORAD obligations, NATO obligations, and obligations to other ad hoc international and domestic missions. It is clear that we have a capability gap and we will fill it with a one-time procurement from the supplier of our CF-18s as part of a defence procurement with our allies from the United States. This will help maximize the economic benefits to Canada. We will not sign any old thing. We are negotiating an agreement with the supplier to ensure that there are benefits to Canada. This is an interim solution. We will move on to a permanent solution later. It will be well developed and a sound investment for Canadians.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted.

[English]

Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6:56 p.m.)

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