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Speaker: The Honourable Geoff Regan

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, March 26, 2018

The House met at 11 a.m.

Prayer

• (1100)

[English]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions among the parties and if you seek it, I think you will find unanimous consent for the following motion:

That notwithstanding any Standing or Special Order or usual practice of the House, during Statements by Ministers later this day, Tsilhqot'in First Nation Chiefs Joe Alphonse, Russell Myers Ross, Francis Lacey, Roy Stump, Otis Guichon and Jimmy Lulua be permitted on the floor of the House and that, following the responses to the ministerial statement, Peyal Lacey of the Tsilhqot'in First Nation be permitted to perform, from the floor of the House, a traditional drumming ceremony.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

POSTAL BANKING SYSTEM

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP) moved:

That a special committee of the House be appointed with the purpose of conducting hearings and proposing a plan for a postal banking system administered under the Canada Post Corporation; that this Committee consist of ten members of which six shall be from the government party, three from the Official Opposition, and one from the New Democratic Party, provided that the Chair is from the government party; that in addition to the Chair, there be one Vice-Chair from each of the recognized opposition parties; that the Committee have all the powers of a standing committee as provided in the Standing Orders; that the members to serve on the said Committee be appointed by the Whip of each party by depositing with the Clerk of the House a list of his or her party's members of the Committee no later than a week after the adoption of the said motion; that the quorum of the Committee be as provided for in Standing Order 118, provided that at least one member of each recognized party be present; that membership substitutions be permitted from time to time, if required, in

the manner provided for in Standing Order 114(2); and that the Committee report to the House no later than 12 months after the adoption of this motion.

She said: Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure, as the NDP critic for Canada Post, to bring Motion No. 166 forward for debate today.

In a country as vast and diverse as Canada, Canada Post is the jewel in the crown of public service corporations, providing the vital service that keeps us connected. While the corporation and its workers have come under attack over the past few years, Canada Post continues to deliver. It is the first choice of countless vendors who, in this digital age, ship parcels ordered online from coast to coast to coast.

We should recognize that the work of Canada Post is accomplished by workers, members of the Canadian Union of Postal Workers and the Canadian Postmasters and Assistants Association, who, despite the pressures of neo-liberalism and globalization to privatize, continue to deliver quality public service that is accessible and affordable to all.

I am proud to be a member of this NDP caucus, which has always supported labour rights and which understands that, absolutely and without exaggeration, upholding those rights is fundamental to democracy. None of us can forget the spring of 2011 when the summer recess of the House was delayed because freedom of association and the right to organize and collectively bargain was under threat by the Conservative government of the day, a government that imposed back-to-work legislation on CUPW members who had been locked out by Canada Post.

I encourage all members of the House to familiarize themselves with the speech given here by NDP leader Jack Layton in defence of the workers and in opposition to the legislation. In the meantime, I would like to quote from Jack's praise of the workers at Canada Post. He said:

I do not think a more diverse group of Canadians could be found anywhere. They come from absolutely every background. Maybe that is why there is a certain appreciation of the importance of the mail. In a way it is a part of the democratic communication process that brought them to Canada in the first place, the notion that people can communicate freely, that they can speak their mind and that there is a public postal service to make sure people can communicate with each other.

Many of them will mention the charter of rights and so on that we have here in Canada, and how proud they are to be Canadians and to be working on behalf of Canadians. That is why I found it very distressing to see them being partitioned off as though they were somehow not part of the 33 million Canadians. They are as much a part of the 33 million Canadians as anybody else.

They have connected Canadians across the country. Their labour supports an important service for all.

Private Members' Business

Members may recall that, despite opposition by the NDP, the undemocratic back-to-work legislation passed, forcing the workers to accept a less than satisfactory agreement. The good news is that in April of 2016 the Ontario Superior Court ruled that the Harper government had “infringed the [Charter] freedom of association of union members” by abrogating CUPW members' right to strike.

It is heartening to me to know that, while it may not consistently be said of Conservative and Liberal governments, the courts at least appreciate the value of public service and the protections we have put in place for free and democratic association.

It is indeed ironic that the Conservatives named their back-to-work legislation the Restoring Mail Delivery for Canadians Act, particularly in light of the fact that they proceeded to enact legislation to suspend home mail delivery to Canadians. The Conservatives did this despite overwhelming opposition to the change, most notably by seniors and disabled Canadians who would find traversing to a community mailbox difficult.

Who can forget the insensitivity of Canada Post president and CEO Deepak Chopra who responded to these objections with the statement that seniors could benefit from the exercise? It is shameful, and the callousness of that dismissal of seniors' concerns is breathtaking.

The corporation and the government argued that the suspension of home delivery was necessary in order to balance the books. The Liberals under their leader, the member for Papineau, campaigned vociferously and unapologetically in 2015 to restore home mail delivery, saying that they would be the champions of those for whom home delivery was essential.

We know now that this promise was only one in a long line of promises crafted to court votes, and just like the Liberal campaign promises to enact electoral reform, tax reform, and protect the environment, restoration of home mail delivery was thrown on the trash pile of broken promises once the Liberals had cashed in the votes of hopeful Canadians and won their majority government.

• (1105)

New Democrats know we can do better. New democrats know the value of affordable, accessible, and sustainable public services that are vital to the healthy community and healthy democracy we want, where everyone has a voice. This brings me to Motion No. 166, calling for the formation of the special committee to study a system of postal banking delivered by the Canada Post Corporation and propose a plan for the implementation of postal banking within a year.

However, please allow me to first share some relevant facts and figures. Over 600 municipalities have passed resolutions that support postal banking. Almost two out of every three respondents, 63%, of the 2013 Stratcom poll supported Canada Post expanding revenue-generating services, including financial services like bill payments, insurance, and postal banking.

A number of former Canada Post presidents including Michael Warren, André Ouellet, and Moya Greene, have considered and even promoted the notion of the corporation getting more involved in financial services. The UPU, a United Nations agency, thinks post offices should be looking at expanding financial services. It has

produced a global road map for the future. This road map calls for the continued development of postal networks along three dimensions: physical, financial, and digital or electronic routes.

In 2014, the Liberal Party critic for Canada Post said the merits of postal banking should be explored in the context of several different options for the future of the corporation. The Liberal and Conservative members of the House will say that we have already studied postal banking and found it to be non-viable.

The Harper government suppressed a 2014 study indicating postal banking would be a win-win endeavour for Canada Post and the communities it serves and generate revenues to support other vital services, including home mail delivery. However, in 2016, the government operations committee conducted a blanket study of Canada Post including a section on postal banking and deemed it non-viable. All very strange, particularly when New Democrats, labour, and civil society had reason to believe the committee's evidence and analysis was flawed and incomplete. It leads one to wonder whether the analysis of postal banking as a viable option for Canada Post conducted in 2016 was influenced by interests other than those of the public good.

Postal banking was part of the fabric of Canadian life for over a hundred years. Just following Confederation in 1867, the federal government passed legislation establishing a post office savings bank in order to provide a savings service to the working classes and small town residents.

The Canadian postal banking system began operations in 1868 with 81 locations and grew quickly to 343 post office savings banks. Within 16 years it had a balance of \$13 million in almost 67,000 accounts. However by the 1890s, Canada's postal banking system faced challenges from chartered banks, which were facing a recession. The banks suddenly became interested in the smaller depositors using post office savings banks and actively worked to undermine postal banking. Gradually the chartered bank lobby was successful in having the interest rate paid on deposits at postal savings banks lowered from 3% to 2.5%, and all but eliminated advertising by postal banks. This was the final straw. The post office savings bank system was closed down in 1969 under the Liberal government of Pierre Trudeau. It was an unfortunate situation.

Much like any business whose bottom line is profit over public service, corporate banks are content to remain in small communities and remote areas as long as the profits generated meet their expectations, but as we have learned with the selling off of public services provincially, federally, and municipally, reliance on a market-driven public service has its downfalls. When we consider access to banking services, history shows us that as soon as profits diminish, even if they still exist, corporate banks deem them not worthwhile and pull up stakes, affecting remote and rural communities, first nations communities, and economically depressed areas.

Private Members' Business

•(1110)

Even a co-op such as Desjardins, a proud Quebec institution, has moved services, leaving not so much as an ATM where it deemed it not worthwhile. Much the same as selling off public resources such as our rail lines, power lines, seniors' services, and highway systems has demonstrated, the end result is a widening of the gap between those who have and those who have not, making life less and less affordable for everyday Canadians.

Every Canadian deserves access to financial services, and never has this been more evident than today, when social benefits are delivered by direct deposit. Lack of access to banking services literally results in an inability to pay the bills.

We heard testimony at the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women earlier this month from Francyne Joe, president of NWAC, who reported that family members of missing and murdered indigenous women in Canada have been unable to attend inquiry hearings because they lack the resources to pay their costs up front and do not have bank accounts for the inquiry to reimburse them. In this very tragic circumstance, lack of access to banking services literally means justice denied to families that have hoped and waited for it for so long. We can do better.

When we view this gap in service through an intersectional lens, we know that women in remote, rural, and economically depressed regions of Canada suffer negative economic and social impacts disproportionately compared to men. Equalization of access to banking services in all these areas would allow women better access to financial autonomy. A postal bank could become part of the transformation of the post office branch into a real centre for delivering community power. A post office location offering banking could help by offering loans for environmental refits for housing and businesses. Better accessibility to these kinds of services would empower women to become equal community partners.

Communities like my own in London, Ontario, have been deeply affected by globalization and unemployment resulting from the government's inability to keep good jobs in Canada. Payday lenders prey on Canadians of low income, charging outrageous interest fees. Postal banking would be a sustainable solution that would provide accessible banking services across Canada where no service is currently available and to those who cannot afford to, or choose not to, use corporate banks. Postal banking could generate income to allow Canada Post to provide increased services, such as the restoration of home delivery to the communities that demand it and count on that service.

Communities like my own have also been deeply affected by the insensitivity of corporate banks to their needs. Just this past year, the Toronto Dominion Bank at the corner of Highbury Avenue and Hamilton Road in London—Fanshawe closed, leaving residents of that community with no banking alternative. The nearest branch to them is over 12 kilometres away. This is a community of seniors and people with limited incomes, and they now have no bank. TD abandoning them puts these people at the mercy of payday lenders. A Google street view search of the location shows a boarded up building where the branch used to be, with a Canada Post outlet in the very same strip. We can and should do better. Let us make that

postal outlet a centre for postal banking for all the people in the neighbourhood.

If passed, my motion would allow for an impartial and objective study on postal banking conducted by a special committee, which would prove what the rest of the world already knows: postal banking works. The committee would also be charged to table a plan for the implementation of postal banking under Canada Post within 12 months of the motion being adopted.

The Liberals claim to know what is best for Canadians, when in fact, they only serve their corporate and powerful friends. Their tax cuts serve the rich. They refuse to close loopholes that allow billions in revenue to be hidden in offshore tax shelters, they have broken their promise on electoral reform, and their infrastructure bank will put public services under the control of private corporations. Liberals claim to have studied postal banking already and found it flawed, chiefly because it would cut into profits for their corporate banking and business friends.

New Democrats know that postal banking is a solution that works. I ask this House to please support my motion and create equal, accessible, and just banking services for Canadians.

•(1115)

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

Madam Speaker, I am a bit surprised by the manner in which the member concluded her remarks. She tried to give a false impression, as if the Liberal government is supporting corporations and not providing tax breaks, when the record will clearly show that nothing is further from the truth. In fact, if anyone has been voting against tax breaks for our middle class and those aspiring to be part of it and supporting lower-income people through the child benefit and so much more, it is the NDP in the House.

Let me get to the subject. With regard to Canada Post, again we hear misinformation. The Liberal Party, prior to the election, said that if we formed government, there would be a moratorium. That moratorium was put in place when we formed government. We are no longer seeing door-to-door delivery continuing to evaporate. Those who are receiving it, continue to receive it.

There was a public task force. First, could the member tell the House what the conclusions were from that public task force on Canada Post, if she is aware of them? Second, has the member approached any other committee with this resolution to see if any other standing committee of the House would be interested in pursuing what she is asking us to do?

Private Members' Business

● (1120)

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Madam Speaker, the only false impression was the one the government created when it led people to believe that if they voted for this government, they would get their home mail delivery back. Sure, they put on a moratorium, but 800,000 people, including seniors and people living with handicaps, cannot access the community mailboxes when the snow is piled high. If anyone knows about piling it high, it is the government. In terms of its so-called tax breaks, those who have the most got the most. Tax havens and loopholes are still there.

In fact, in 2005, there was a study, and that study said that postal banking would be an important thing to pursue. The government squashed it. In 2016, there was another study. I asked for it, and it was all redacted. They are terrified, because their banking friends do not like it.

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Madam Speaker, the reality for so many Canadians is that they do not have access to banking. I think of urban areas, where people who are really struggling financially are working with payday lenders as opposed to banks.

Communities, like the many I serve, that are rural and remote do not have banks. I think specifically of a community in my riding, Gold River, that lost its banking access and then soon after lost its grocery store, and people are now driving about an hour just to go to the bank and do their grocery shopping.

It seems to me that this is a practical solution, something that has worked in other countries. I would like the member to talk about why the motion is so important and why this is really about lifting people out of poverty and giving them opportunities. It is about remembering that small communities deserve it.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for a question that is pertinent and that actually illuminates how important postal banking is for smaller communities. As I said in my remarks, there are communities where people do not have access to government support because government support comes in the form of direct deposits. If there is no bank, access to one's own money becomes impossible. There are communities where people have to go several hundred kilometres to find an ATM, because the banks do not care.

In terms of other countries, France has postal banking and Italy has postal banking, and they are very successful. There are a number of postal banks, including in New Zealand. Even Switzerland has a postal banking system that works very well.

With respect to payday lenders, the vultures are out there everywhere. They will take a \$100 loan and turn it into a \$60,000 debt. It takes a while, but if people do not have the money to pay back the \$100, they sure cannot pay back that long-term loan.

Ms. Yasmin Ratansi (Don Valley East, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the motion before the House calls for the creation of a special committee to conduct hearings and propose a plan for a postal banking system.

On January 24, 2018, the Minister of Public Services and Procurement announced our government's new service-first vision

focused on the renewal of Canada Post. Let me briefly talk about this renewal and the new service-first vision.

Our government is committed to the renewal of Canada Post to make sure that it remains relevant and viable over the long term and that it continues to provide good, middle-class jobs and valued services to Canadians. This renewal is based on a new service-focused vision, in which Canada Post provides high-quality services at a reasonable price to Canadians, no matter where they live. That vision has been reinforced by the decision to terminate the program to convert door-to-door delivery to community mailboxes. As members know, that program was temporarily suspended in October 2015.

Our government also responded to the many concerns faced by seniors and others with mobility challenges vis-à-vis community mailboxes. Canada Post will develop an enhanced accessible delivery program that will ultimately result in improved services for tens of thousands of Canadians.

We have also asked Canada Post to set up a national advisory panel that would include experts and advocates for seniors and people with disabilities as well as Canadians with lived experience, who would provide guidance on improving the existing program.

I also want to reiterate what my colleague said about the importance of new leadership being central to implementing this new vision and renewing this iconic Canadian institution. We know that significant changes are needed to ensure that Canada Post is relevant and financial sustainable over the long run. That is why Canada Post needs to embrace innovation, experiment with pilot projects, adopt best practices, and more fully address market trends, new technologies, and shifts in the needs and expectations of Canadians.

It is about creating a new culture, a new mindset, that encourages greater collaboration and co-operation between Canada Post's management and unions. We know that our chances of success are improved when Canada Post and affected communities, unions, employees, and other stakeholders are engaged in renewal. Collaboration is needed at all levels. It is about a new way of thinking. It is about exploring opportunities to partner across the federal government with other jurisdictions and communities to leverage, for instance, the unique retail network of Canada Post.

This brings me to the issue of postal banking. This motion calls for public hearings on postal banking. Public consultations and engagement with stakeholders were an essential part of the comprehensive, evidence-based review of Canada Post undertaken by the government. As part of this review, postal banking was thoroughly analyzed by the independent task force that was established and by the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates. The independent task force met with unions, municipalities, postal experts, and other stakeholders. It carefully considered postal banking in its review and its discussion paper entitled, "Canada Post in the digital age". We even reviewed the status of postal banking globally.

The independent task force conducted extensive public opinion research in order to get, “a statistically representative view of Canadians and businesses from which conclusions could be drawn”.

• (1125)

To support its fact finding and evidence gathering, the task force also retained the services of experts in areas such as financial analysis and international postal services. For instance, Oliver Wyman, a global management consulting firm, was contracted to identify and assess potential business opportunities, such as postal banking.

The executive summary of the discussion paper prepared by the task force states:

On the issue of postal banking, a comprehensive examination of the proposal was undertaken by third-party experts and informed by the views of Canadians who corresponded or submitted their opinions online, as well as by the presentations of other stakeholders, notably postal unions, that were engaged during the review process.

As I mentioned, the task force conducted public opinion research on postal banking. It found that most Canadians do not feel that postal banking would be a good fit for Canada Post, nor are they likely to use such a service. The task force concluded:

While full-scale postal banking is unlikely to succeed within the Canadian context, a partnership model with banks or credit unions could be considered in corporate post offices in select under-served remote communities...provided financial institutions have an interest in this initiative.

As the vice-chair of the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates, I can emphasize that we also heard significant representation from experts and stakeholders on postal banking. For example, in reference to the research conducted by his firm, Mr. Bruce Spear of Oliver Wyman stated:

By and large, what we found with regard to postal banking was that it required too many capabilities that were non-core to Canada Post and would require a significant amount of risk in terms of getting into the lending side of the business.

The chair of the task force, Madame Françoise Bertrand, also appeared before the committee on September 20, 2016. At her appearance she discussed postal banking. She said that postal banking would be costly to operate because of such considerations as IT and security.

The feedback of these and other experts and stakeholders was reflected in the report and recommendations of the standing committee.

Moreover, I would be remiss if I did not mention the work of individual parliamentarians who hosted town hall meetings with their constituents and provided feedback to the government as part of our review of Canada Post.

Overall, we had broad and inclusive dialogue on Canada Post. The government listened to what we heard and carefully considered the findings and recommendations.

I was one of the MPs who read the 900-page report of the experts and was able to put that into the report that we finally prepared. Therefore, I would ask my colleague who spoke earlier, do we need another committee, another round of public hearings, another study on postal banking when a thorough review has already been done?

I believe there is another way, a more practical and realistic path.

Private Members' Business

I cannot overstate the importance of new leadership in implementing our new service-focused vision for Canada Post. We want to move forward with the long-term renewal of Canada Post.

Canada Post has one of the largest retail networks in Canada, and in some communities, particularly in rural Canada, it is the only federal presence. There are opportunities to leverage that network to help the federal government and other jurisdictions provide improved access to services, especially in rural and remote areas.

Both the task force and the committee highlighted the potential benefits of innovative partnerships, which could potentially include financial service partnerships if a community identifies such a need. We did communicate that to the municipalities.

Our government's new vision for Canada Post is partly based on the development of a stronger and more constructive relationship between the corporation, its workers, and the communities in which it operates. This vision will be pursued by the new leadership at Canada Post, but it will take time.

It is fair to say that all of us want Canada Post to succeed, so let us focus on supporting the new leadership, encouraging more innovation and collaboration, and bringing about positive change.

• (1130)

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Madam Speaker, on a point of order, I request that since the member has made a point of talking virtually in her entire speech about the 2016 report of the task force, that she table it, unredacted, in both official languages.

• (1135)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Does the hon. member have unanimous consent to ask to have that document tabled?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I would mention to members that there are no questions and comments during the rest of private members' business on this topic. The member for London—Fanshawe will have an opportunity to include additional comments at the end of the debate on the motion.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Bow River.

Mr. Martin Shields (Bow River, CPC): Madam Speaker, yesterday's solution to a problem that does not exist: that is what this motion is about. I acknowledge my hon. colleague's good intentions in introducing this motion, but I cannot support Motion No. 166, and here is why.

Private Members' Business

Canada Post provided banking services from 1869 to 1968, for about 100 years. That system was ended under then prime minister Pierre Trudeau who, as we all know, was a great proponent of reducing the role of the government. That his government ended this system should tell us something. It should really give us pause here that a former prime minister who loved to expand the role of the government saw that this system was out of date in the 1960s, yet 50 years later we are debating it again.

Re-establishing a postal bank probably would contravene the Bank Act, the Trust and Loan Companies Act, and the Financial Administration Act. There would be a huge cost to regulatory compliance. That is where this idea really starts running into issues.

Canada Post is a crown corporation. Therefore, it is the taxpayers who would bear the risk of the proposed postal bank's operations. The taxpayers have suffered enough. Taxpayers should not now be called upon to risk their hard-earned money on something that stopped making sense in 1968.

Moreover, Canada already has a robust, stable network of financial institutions. Our banking system is a key pillar of our national economy and is absolutely critical. It is internationally recognized as one of the best in the world. In sharp contrast to financial institutions elsewhere, our banks did not need bailouts during the 2008 crisis. All that needs to be done is to let our banking system continue operating successfully of its own accord. If there is a new market entrant that offers consumers value, that would be great. However, it is not the place for taxpayers to bear the risk for that market entrant. We should not be picking winners and losers in the public and private sectors. Why would we risk taxpayers' money in an industry that is already functioning successfully? We already have the government's infrastructure bank to do that for us.

The Liberal government loves to spend taxpayers' money on any scheme it can find. That is why we went from small deficits that the Liberals promised in the last election campaign to the massive spending we are seeing now. Please, let us not give them any more ideas on how to spend taxpayers' money.

I think Canadians can be excused if they are a bit leery of getting involved in a new government plan. It is a great time to be a lobbyist looking for government hand-outs and a bad time to be a small business owner. Frankly, I am worried that this motion is going to give the government more ideas. Canada needs less government intervention, not more. I know some of my hon. colleagues do not share my views on the role of government, but surely they can agree we should not be intervening where we are not needed. It is a no-brainer. We should stay out of it.

The proposal is a solution looking for a problem. It reminds me of Groucho Marx's remark, "Politics is the art of looking for trouble, finding it everywhere, diagnosing it incorrectly and applying the wrong remedies."

I have heard the suggestion that we need Canada Post banking because financial services are inaccessible in Canada. Really? According to the World Bank, 99% of Canadian adults already have an account with a financial institution. In fact, there are more options for banking than ever before. Banking in Canada and around the world has been revolutionized over the past few decades. Online is

already becoming the preferred method of banking. Smart phones let us use our mobile devices to bank. Canadians are increasingly adopting mobile banking with 31% using it as of 2017. The sector is innovating so quickly that many young Canadians do not even use credit cards. Three of my grandchildren are among them. This is not a market that Canada Post can just awkwardly be inserted into.

In China, 980 million of its population bank online on a cellphone. Recently, I watched a street vendor in China who was selling pieces of watermelon and the payment went from the customer's cellphone to the vendor's cellphone. That is how much it has changed.

● (1140)

With my own experience of post offices, in the 1950s, they were a community centre. People gathered at post offices. It was the only place to get their mail. However, in my riding there is virtually no one doing that anymore. With 40 or 50 years of mailboxes in our neighbourhoods, very few people go to the post office. I am having a hard time remembering the last time I was in a post office. My children give me a hard time about even going to a bank. I show up in a bank once in a while. My children who own businesses and properties do a lot of financial work and never go near a bank. They all do it electronically. Whether approving finances or changing finances, they never go to a bank. Therefore, why would they go to a post office? In my riding, there is no one to run a post office. They are not there.

We are not talking about setting up a shop with a vault in the back. Banking is not conducted like it was portrayed in *It's a Wonderful Life*. It is not that way anymore. It is a fast-paced, complex industry. It certainly is not some kind of silver bullet that will magically solve Canada Post. The government is no George Bailey, and it cannot set up a new building and loan on the main street anywhere.

I know that Canada Post has some serious challenges at times. Currently, two-thirds of people do not receive mail at their door, and the challenge of delivery is interesting. My son, who needed a piece of equipment that is common in Canada, could not find one his community or in Canada. He received it from London in four days, with delivery, and it was not Canada Post. Young people know how to do it. They know where to get things in the world, and it is not through Canada Post.

I understand that Canada Post's traditional business model is suffering and Canada Post managers are looking for ways to innovate. I respect that. However, if there ever was a good time for Canada Post to create a full range of real retail banking, now is not the time. It does not make sense. If the need is not there, success is not going to follow. The banking sector is already providing Canadians with all the services they could ask for; there really is no need. If we want to preserve Canada Post, this is not the way to do it.

Canada Post has its challenges right now because it has not kept up with technological changes. Its operations are expensive. Let us not get it involved in more expensive operations in a very fast-paced, technologically advanced industry. If they think Canadians are losing faith in Canada Post now, they should wait until they are confronted by the inevitable cost overruns and instability of a different bank. Let us not squander Canada Post's remaining viability and the Canadian public's remaining goodwill on postal banking.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am rising on a point of order. There have been consultations, and I believe if you seek it you will find unanimous consent for the following motion:

That the membership of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs be amended as follows: Mr. Kennedy Stewart (Burnaby South) for Mr. David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre).

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

POSTAL BANKING SYSTEM

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am very happy to stand here today as the representative of North Island—Powell River to speak on Motion No. 166. This motion is important to my riding; it is to set a special committee to study postal banking and propose a system of delivery under Canada Post.

I would like to thank the member for London—Fanshawe for her hard work on this important file. I also want to recognize the postal workers across my riding who work hard every day to deliver the mail and make sure that people in our communities are connected, and say a special thanks to the CUPW members.

Private Members' Business

As a representative of a rural and remote community, I am often very disappointed by the lack of services to some of our more remote communities. I think of Holberg, Gold River, Sointula, and Tahsis, communities that are working very hard to be strong in a changing economy. I think of Gold River specifically, which lost access to banking in the community a while back, and soon after lost its grocery store.

If members come to my riding and see the vast numbers of people living in more rural and remote communities, look at the roads and the length of time it takes to get to a community, they will see that it can be a real barrier when there is no access to a bank. People who are struggling financially have to take that long journey to get food and to do their banking. It adds more stress to those communities. I think about how expensive gas is getting as well.

When we talk about what our public services provide, it is about looking at how we make services accessible, how we make sure that people do not get left behind, and how we remember that rural and remote communities have a right to exist. Our job is to look at how everyone across our country is doing and to make sure there are opportunities.

Small communities matter. We know that almost 1,200 communities across Canada have no bank at all and no credit union, but they do have a post office. This is a very important discussion about how we make sure those services are accessible, how we look at those small communities and their vitality, and what we can do to remove some of the burdens that are often placed on those communities.

It is also important to look at how we keep money in the community. Postal banking is working. It is a job. There are some communities that would benefit from having those jobs locally within their community. It is also working in other countries. Some examples are France, New Zealand, and Italy. The model is a little different for each country, looking at the needs they have, but they are successful. They are creating revenue, making sure that the services are more accessible to people across their countries, and to different groups.

Why not have an opportunity to look at creating a revenue stream for Canada Post, as well as looking at the opportunity to create meaningful work in some of our communities that so desperately need them?

Recently I went to Port Hardy and Port McNeill in my riding. I did another round of town halls on the disability tax credit. I have been very proud to do many of them across the riding, and I am looking forward to doing them in several other communities in the next few months. This is very important. One of the challenges that some of our smaller communities have is accessing the ability to save money through this program for their children, for themselves, to look to the future, putting away for their retirement savings. Part of it is their lack of banking services.

Private Members' Business

This is also about looking at how we make sure these services that the federal government provides are delivered in many of the communities that desperately need them. It is wrong to have people who have already faced different challenges also lose this opportunity. We know that a lack of access to banking has a significant impact on the people who are the poorest in this country. If we are talking about improving access for women, and economic independence for them, we need to be looking at how this intersects with that reality.

Too many small communities continue to struggle. We know that what they need is a helping hand so they can look at the opportunities around them. However, if they are struggling with the main essentials of trying to find a way to have a bank, or losing their grocery stores, it makes it that much harder for small business to be successful.

● (1145)

It is about making sure that we are looking at fairness across our country as well. We know that payday lenders across Canada are problematic, because most of the people who access this service are usually low income and they can get further and further into debt. This is also about making sure that we have accessible services to people, that they are walkable. The last member talked about how a lot of post offices are not used in the same way. I have stood in many lineups in the post office in my riding, and it is a very busy place, with a lot of people accessing it. It is also close to downtown and close to buses. It is available for people who need it. This is an important thing to be looking at.

Small communities deserve and need more opportunities to thrive, and this will open many doors. We know that 29 municipalities across British Columbia have supported this type of banking. We know when municipalities are telling us that there is a gap, that there is a need that needs to be met, it is something we need to listen to. We are here in Ottawa. We are not there on the ground every day, as so many municipal leaders are. Working for and listening to municipalities makes plain sense to me.

I also want to briefly mention one of the postal offices in my riding, at the Merville General Store. When I look at this opportunity, I think about that store and how it has not been paid its rent in 53 months from Canada Post. There is a lot of work to do there. We want to make sure that people get paid their rent in a timely fashion. It is \$210 a month to provide access to a service that is much needed in that area and makes sense. It does not make sense that Canada Post is not paying its bills.

There is a lot of work to be done here. We look at the banking opportunities, the realities of rural and remote communities, the realities of people who are struggling in poverty, feeling forced to use payday lenders. When we look at some communities that are very far away from a bank, even if it is in an urban setting, sometimes there are neighbourhoods where people cannot get to banks. We know that online banking is part of that. I appreciate the work being done there. At the same time, I think of so many communities I represent that have no access to Internet, or very limited access.

We have to look at those communities, because they do matter. We need to talk about them. We need to look at their needs and at how

we can alleviate some of the stress, so they have opportunities to do better.

I hope that members in the House will put aside thoughts that are not looking at the needs of many communities across this country, ask this hard question, and let us do the research so we can have a plan that makes sense for everyday Canadians.

● (1150)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Nick Whalen (St. John's East, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the member for London—Fanshawe for initiating the debate on Motion No. 166, which is about a postal banking system.

The motion calls for the creation of a special committee to conduct hearings and propose a plan for a postal banking system.

The government may not have decided where it stands on this issue, but I have. I see at least three reasons why we should reject this motion.

[*English*]

First, the future of Canada Post was studied extensively in 2016. The government has only just tabled its response, which does not include any specific recommendation on postal banking. Second, there is already a committee of the House responsible for Canada Post, which is more than capable of addressing the topic. Third, members of the government operations committee, at the insistence of the Liberal members of that committee, had the opportunity to review postal banking in depth. It determined, in section 4.2 of its report for this 42nd Parliament, that Canada Post should stick to its core competencies.

As that report indicates, we believe in the future of Canada Post, just not necessarily as a bank. As members may recall, the Minister of Public Services and Procurement announced, on January 24, the new service first vision for Canada Post, along with a number of immediate actions in support of that vision. Her announcement followed a comprehensive evidence-based review that included extensive public consultations with Canadians.

An independent task force was established that met with unions, municipalities, postal experts, and other stakeholders. It studied international best practices, analyzed potential options such as postal banking, and compiled this information into a discussion paper on our national postal system in the digital age, at a cost of approximately \$2 million dollars to taxpayers.

Additionally, the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates, of which I was a member, travelled across the country to hear directly from Canadians, communities, associations, unions, businesses, and individuals. We submitted a detailed report and made recommendations to the government. We had 22 days on the road, at a cost of half a million dollars to taxpayers. We also heard from other parliamentarians, whether from personal feedback or town halls that they held in their home ridings.

●(1155)

We just completed the national conversation on Canada Post, which was quite comprehensive. The government listened to what was said and carefully considered findings and recommendations. We heard that Canadians care deeply about Canada Post and its ability to provide the services that are within its core competency. Through this review, one thing became abundantly clear: The core value of Canada Post is a service that all Canadians enjoy, expect, and appreciate. That is why the government's position is to renew Canada Post.

[Translation]

The government wants to reorganize Canada Post to ensure its continued relevance and long-term viability and to ensure that it continues to sustain middle-class jobs and provide valuable services to Canadians.

The new vision, which puts service front and centre, is key to renewing this iconic institution. Guided by the new vision, Canada Post will provide high-quality, reasonably priced services to Canadians, no matter where they live.

[English]

We also know that significant changes are needed to ensure the long-term relevance and financial stability of Canada Post. That is why, as part of the renewal, the government has asked Canada Post to embrace innovation, experimentation, and pilot projects; to adopt best practices; and to address market trends, new technologies, and shifts in the needs and expectations of Canadians.

The digital transformation occurring right now in the postal service industry is also occurring in the banking industry. It may be unreasonable to expect Canada Post, given its core competencies and the difficulties it is having in postal services, to also try to innovate, develop, and champion banking, when there is already a very competitive and stable banking market within the country.

We also expect Canada Post to explore partnership opportunities that could help the federal government and other jurisdictions leverage Canada Post's large retail network to provide access to government services, especially in rural and remote areas, and improve public services to Canadians.

[Translation]

As I said earlier, the government not only announced a new way forward for Canada Post, but also took immediate steps in support of that vision.

First, Canada Post permanently terminated its program to convert door-to-door delivery to community mailboxes. We made that promise to Canadians, and we kept it.

[English]

Second, after listening to the concerns faced by seniors and others with mobility challenges vis-à-vis community mailboxes, Canada Post will develop an enhanced accessible delivery program. This program will improve service for tens of thousands of Canadians. A national advisory panel will include experts as well as Canadians with lived experience who will provide guidance on improving the existing program.

Private Members' Business

Third, we have asked Canada Post to better promote its remittance services, which are used by Canadians to send money overseas to support family members.

Fourth, in line with the renewed focus on service, the government will reclassify the Canada Post Corporation under the Financial Administration Act so that it can reinvest its profits into service and innovation.

Finally, to fulfill the government's new vision, we need new leadership. The appointment of Jessica McDonald as chair of the board of directors is the first step. It is also part of a broader renewal of the board and a wider change in leadership at Canada Post that will support greater collaboration, diversity, and broader perspectives. An improved relationship between labour and management at Canada Post is something we heard about extensively in our consultations, and that would be a benefit not only to the organization itself, but also to its morale and its ability to deliver the services that Canadians deserve and expect.

I will quote from the discussion paper of the task force, which said:

According to experts and stakeholders, Canada's financial environment is not conducive to the establishment and operation of full-scale postal banking. Postal banking is not likely to succeed in Canada as a result of the existence of a mature and competitive banking environment, as well as the extensive market coverage of not-for-profit credit unions in which more than 10 million Canadians have accounts.

As part of its review, the task force conducted public opinion research to gather feedback from Canadians, including on the issue of postal banking. Here are some of those findings.

Some 60 per cent of surveyed Canadians think that having "Canada Post open a bank that offers a complete line of banking services" would be a poor fit with Canada Post's business, versus 38 per cent who believe that the idea has potential.... [A]mong Canadians that seem to like the idea of postal banking, ultimately, only 7 per cent claim that they would actually use postal banking services.

●(1200)

[Translation]

The Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates also analyzed the topic of postal banking. It found that 99% of Canadians have bank accounts, and the majority of these Canadians, or 55%, use the Internet for most of their banking transactions. This committee, of which I was a member, also looked at whether Canada had done its due diligence in reviewing the possibility of postal banking, and we found that Canada Post's decision not to pursue this solution was reasonable. The committee recommended that Canada Post focus on its core competencies to help Canada meet the challenges of the 21st century.

It is fair to say that the possibility of postal banking has been adequately examined, and Canadians were widely consulted on this topic between June and November 2016. Is it really necessary to do this work all over again, hold almost the same hearings, and create another committee on top of the existing standing committee? I do not think so.

Privilege

[English]

Canada Post has one of the largest retail networks in Canada, and in some communities, particularly in rural Canada, Canada Post is the only federal presence. This does not mean that Canadians, even rural Canadians, do not have access to banking services, because they do. However, there are other ways the assets of Canada Post can be leveraged, and our committee recommended that they be leveraged in such a fashion as to allow better access to public government services through these locations. We think this is a better fit.

It is essential that the new leadership at Canada Post be given sufficient time to implement our new service-first vision and consider innovative approaches to the long-term sustainability of Canada Post. This should be done before Parliament undertakes another expensive comprehensive review.

[Translation]

The Speaker: The time provided for the consideration of private members' business has now expired, and the order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the Order Paper.

* * *

[English]

PRIVILEGE

ACCESS TO INFORMATION ON PRIME MINISTER'S TRIP TO INDIA

The Speaker: Before we go to debate, I have noticed that the hon. member for Durham wishes to add to the arguments in the question of privilege he raised previously, to which he has already added arguments once.

As I said on Thursday, each time arguments are added, of course, they have to be considered and the process has to be gone through. I know the member is eager to have a ruling, and I am eager to provide a ruling. I am prepared to do so in the very near future. Therefore, I clearly hope that the member will have something significant to add. It would be important because I think he will know that page 146 of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, third edition, states:

A Member recognized on a question of privilege is expected to be brief and concise in explaining the event which has given rise to the question of privilege and the reasons that consideration of the event complained of should be given precedence over other House business.

The next page states, "When satisfied, the Speaker will terminate the discussion."

I hope that the member will be giving me something meaty and substantive to add to his previous arguments so that I am not called upon to indicate I have heard enough.

The hon. member for Durham.

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate your reference to the rules of this place, because that is very important to what I am going to say. My additional representations on my question of privilege of March 2 are based in large part on the submissions made by the deputy House leader on March 20. Therefore, I am trying to take a substantive approach to his response to my privilege motion.

At the outset, I want to thank everyone. I tried to raise a number of these points during our long period in the chamber last week, but I did not have the opportunity to do so. I said I would bring these forward at the first opportunity after the vote series. However, I would be remiss if I did not thank you, Mr. Speaker, as well as everyone else in the Chair and all the table officers, for your tremendous efforts last week. I know that parliamentary democracy is sometimes grinding and tiring, and I appreciate everyone's efforts, including those of Christianne in the library, who helped me with some of the references to previous speakers' rulings that the deputy House leader of the Liberal government brought forward in his rebuttal of my question of privilege.

I will try to be succinct, but it is very important for me to address and distinguish all the decisions he brought forward, because none is germane. It also seems that he did not understand the core elements of my motion.

Very briefly, my parliamentary privilege as an individual MP was sacrificed or fettered, as was the collective privilege of the House, specifically the privilege of the House of Commons to call witnesses and institute inquiries. Those elements of privilege of the House, collectively, are fundamental and well documented. My individual privilege is not just about me as an MP and my right to free speech and inquiry, which I mentioned. I wear an additional hat as the foreign affairs shadow minister. Since the Atwal affair stems from the Prime Minister's trip to India, the international negative headlines that stemmed from it, and the allegations levelled by the government at the Indian government, it falls squarely into my responsibilities. Much like my friend the deputy House leader, who is an MP for Winnipeg North and has an additional hat of responsibility, as an individual MP I have that additional hat.

It appears he believes that I cited the Milliken decision in the Afghan detainee documents case because it was directly relevant to certain elements of this case. I cited the Milliken decision because the Afghan detainee decision of the Chair was fundamental in that it showed that the unconditional authority of the executive, the Minister of Public Safety or the Prime Minister and his office, to censor information is not acceptable. What that decision meant, for purposes of my question of privilege, is that MPs are entitled to all information, and safeguards can be done, such as in camera and other things. However, that was the fundamental element of the Milliken decision I was relying upon, not because of other elements of that decision. I thought I would reiterate that.

The deputy House leader for the government had four or five direct decisions from previous Speakers. I will briefly refute them. He put those forward in response, but none is actually relevant to my question of privilege. The fact that we have spent hours in this place debating our basic request to have the same briefing as the one provided to journalists demonstrates that, as per the Milliken decision, we are entitled to that information, even if it is classified. It should not have been classified, because it could not be going to journalists if it was. We are entitled to that, and the decisions my friend the deputy House leader cited are just not on point.

Privilege

The first was a decision from your predecessor, Mr. Speaker, who is now the leader of my party. I do not think I can say his name, although he was a fantastic Speaker, and is a great leader of our party.

● (1205)

The June 13, 2012, decision was cited by the member. The decision was brought by an opposition member who was trying to assess the impact of legislation, Bill C-38, and was unable to get satisfactory answers. It was being cited as a means to dismiss my motion.

I will direct you, Mr. Speaker, to that case and quote from the decision. It states:

In the case before us, the opposition House leader has acknowledged that information was unsuccessfully sought through various means including written questions, questions posed during question period and questions posed in committee. I cannot presume to judge the quality of the responses that have been received.

There are many decisions from that Chair, going back to the early days of our Parliament, that clearly say that the accuracy or quality of a response is not subject to privilege. In that case, the quality of a responses was not a breach of the member's privilege. That is what the decision says. It can easily be distinguished from this case, because we cannot assess any quality since there has been an outright refusal to provide the same briefing.

Therefore, it is not about judging the quality of the response, but whether we are entitled. As I will outline to refute several other cases he has made, we have been denied this at committee, in the House, and in question period. On all three of these elements of fundamental proceedings of Parliament we have been 100% stymied. It is not about assessing the quality. That first decision of the previous Chair occupant from June 13, 2012, in no way touched on why my individual privilege was fettered, and the collective rights of the House.

The second decision my friend, the deputy House leader for the government, cited to refute my point with respect to parliamentary privilege was another decision by the previous Speaker. It is from December 4, 2014. That one related to an inquiry from the member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley with respect to the launching of an economic update of the government and it being done outside of the confines of Parliament. It is quite regular that economic statements or events surrounding the minister are not always delivered in the House. They can be delivered at Canadian club luncheons and events across the country. Also, it was an economic update, not a budget.

In that decision the Speaker said:

That is not to say, however, that every proceeding or activity related to delivering or accessing information by members implicitly involves their parliamentary duties.

In that case, the question of privilege brought by the member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley was that his privilege as a member was violated because the minister at that time delivered the economic statement to a private audience of financial professionals and others. This did not meet the threshold for violating the individual privilege of that member. The Chair said that he could find no cases of privilege or points of order in relation to updates happening outside of the House.

It has no application here because, while the briefing by the national security adviser with journalists did happen abroad, the attempts for parliamentarians to inquire, to call witnesses at committee, and to ask questions in the House during question period have been stymied by the government's consistent refusal with respect to Mr. Jean. It does not relate to the fact that Mr. Jean's briefing was held elsewhere. My friend the deputy House leader seems to have conflated the two issues. Therefore, the second case he brought forward is not applicable.

● (1210)

The third case to refute my question of privilege, from Speaker Parent on October 9, 1997, was cited as well in his submission of March 20. That case involved the MP for Wild Rose in Alberta. It related to the MP being in his constituency and attending a meeting on a first nations reserve. At one point in the meeting, government officials from the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development asked the member to leave the room because some items would be discussed of which he was not entitled to be a part.

When the House resumed and constituency week was over, the member of Parliament for Wild Rose stood in the House and said that his privileges were violated because he was not entitled to that departmental briefing to the full extent. The departmental officials asked him to leave the meeting and he felt that violated his privilege as a member.

There have been some Speakers' decisions, including this one, that have said the constituency affairs of a member of Parliament, which is what I think all of us believe is a fundamental aspect to our job, does not involve or export the privileges from the chamber.

This is the precedent that the Speaker's decision of 1997 provides to us, that some of the privileges granted to members in the House in a collective sense or an individual sense cannot be ported with us to our riding even if government officials are in an MPs riding for a briefing. The finding in the end was that there was no breach of parliamentary privilege because the member was not "participating in a proceeding of Parliament".

This is the critical element of what my friend the deputy House leader seems to miss with all of these decisions he is putting forward. He is suggesting that the need to have Mr. Jean does not involve the proceeding of Parliament, thinking that because Mr. Jean provided this briefing to journalists abroad or outside of Parliament somehow it does not apply to a proceeding of Parliament.

We certainly know that the first vote last week before the cavalcade of votes that followed related to the request to have Mr. Jean appear before a proceeding of Parliament, a parliamentary committee. In fact, the opposition day motion that day was a proceeding of Parliament. The question period responses by the minister and the Prime Minister were a proceeding of Parliament.

Privilege

The fourth decision that he cited, which I am responding to in an effort to show that it can be easily distinguished, was a May 15, 1985, decision of Speaker Bosley. It related to a grant program at the time called "Challenge '85". MPs were trying to find out whether grant applicants in their ridings were successful in obtaining grants under Challenge '85. I am trying to be brief, so I will not relate to the Liberal government's problems with the Canada summer jobs program, but it came to mind when I read this decision.

In this case, the Speaker found that there was no question of privilege violating the individual rights of MPs to find out the status of their grant applications because "actions or inactions" of a government to update an MP or provide the yes or no to a grant application was a decision of that department. It is not a proceeding of Parliament.

Much like the previous case, finding out whether an important group in one's riding received funding for a grant program does not relate to the MP's privileges as a member in the proceeding of Parliament. Once again, it was a constituency-based issue and that was how it was distinguished. However, that does not apply to this case. All aspects of the request for the national security adviser to appear before a committee, the opposition day motion, all of those things are proceedings of Parliament.

• (1215)

There was another case cited previously, Speaker Parent's decision of November, 1999. This focuses on looking at what is a proceeding of Parliament, and it acknowledges that question period, committees, and those sorts of things are proceedings of Parliament. With respect to privilege, it identifies the categories of individual and collective privilege.

I will highlight a very important quote from that decision because, as I said, my March 2 question of privilege showed that both individual and collective rights were violated. Speaker Parent said:

As for the rights and powers of the House as a collectivity they may be classified as follows: the regulation of its own internal affairs, the authority to maintain the attendance and service of its members, the power to expel members guilty of disgraceful conduct, the right to institute inquiries and to call witnesses and demand papers, the right to administer oaths to witnesses, and the authority to deal with breaches of privilege or contempt.

Former Speaker Parent then goes on to cite Maingot in *Parliamentary Privilege in Canada* to highlight that in exercising their functions as members, anything they do with respect to committee and other things are proceedings of Parliament.

As I said, my friend, the deputy House leader for the government, seems to suggest a number of cases where MPs were demanding information in their ridings, the status of grants, whether an answer or a response from the government was accurate or fulsome enough. None of that applies here.

In this case, in committees of Parliament, in the House, and in question period, we have been seized for weeks with respect to the issue of Mr. Jean, the national security adviser, and whether members of Parliament, both myself both as an MP and the shadow minister for foreign affairs, or my colleague, our public safety shadow minister, who has been trying to call Mr. Jean at committee, or the responses we have been receiving from members of the executive, our individual and collective rights for proceedings of

Parliament, such as question period, debate, and committees, are all being impeded by the government's consistent refusal to provide Mr. Jean under the same circumstances that the executive provided him to select members of the press gallery. Therefore, we have a double standard here or some have suggested a cover-up in respect to our rights to have the same amount of information.

The Minister of Public Safety, again on the weekend, in an interview with CTV *Question Period*, refused to provide the same briefing that journalists received to—

• (1220)

The Speaker: The hon member from Durham is getting into debate now. I talked about the need to be concise when referring to our manual of procedures in the House. In relation to that, he has had in the range of 24 minutes today on this in addition to what he had previously.

Although I must admit that in my law practice, having not been in court very often, I do enjoy and admire the work of an experienced litigator who shows his legal advocacy skills very well. Of course, we are not in a court and the nature of the argument is a bit different and does not need to be quite as extensive as in court. However, it does get into debate.

Therefore, I have heard enough on this subject. I look forward to coming back to the House very soon with my ruling on this matter.

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Mr. Speaker, may I have 30 seconds?

The Speaker: The hon. member for Durham has asked for 30 seconds. I think I will need a timer for that.

The hon. member for Durham.

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Mr. Speaker, why this is so important is that not only are there two different explanations for the invitation of Jaspal Atwal in the government itself, such as the suggestion on the line between a non-classified briefing and a classified briefing, but we do not believe there is anything classified in Mr. Jean's briefing to journalists. This is why. The Security of Information Act requires public officials to ensure that their communications or confirmation of information at section 13(1) cannot include special operational information of any kind. We do not believe there is anything Mr. Jean said that could be justified under the Security of Information Act as classified.

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for the addition to his addition.

*Government Orders***GOVERNMENT ORDERS***[English]***FIREARMS ACT**

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.) moved that Bill C-71, An Act to amend certain Acts and Regulations in relation to firearms, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased today to begin debate on Bill C-71. This is important legislation that prioritizes public safety and effective police work, while treating law-abiding firearms owners and businesses fairly and reasonably. With this bill, we are upholding the commitments that we made to Canadians during the last election. To be clear, that includes our commitment not to reinstate a federal long gun registry. As we heard a couple of weeks ago at a policy summit here in Ottawa, many Canadian communities have been facing a steady increase in gun violence over the past five years.

Crime rates generally in Canada have been on the decline for decades, and of course that is a very good thing. However, offences involving firearms are bucking the positive trend. They have become more prevalent since 2013. There were almost 2,500 criminal incidents involving firearms in Canada in 2016, and that was up by 30% since 2013. Gun homicides are up by two-thirds. Cases of intimate-partner and gender-based violence involving firearms, as reported to police, are up by one-third. Gang-related homicides, a majority involving guns, are up by two-thirds. Since 2013, break-ins for the purpose of stealing guns are up by 56%. These are realities that we need to face.

Also by way of context is this. The majority of firearms owned by Canadians are non-restricted. They are typically long guns, like hunting rifles and shotguns, used in a manner that is fully compliant with the law. In 2016, however, 31% of all gun-related homicides involved these types of firearms that do not need to be registered. Furthermore, while cities like Toronto, Vancouver, Edmonton, Ottawa, and Regina have been particularly hit by violent gun crime, in my home province of Saskatchewan more than 60% of such crimes actually happen outside the major urban centres. In the Atlantic provinces, there is a similar pattern, where 56% of violent gun crimes occur outside the cities. Hard evidence shows a gun violence issue that is serious, appears to be worsening, and is not confined to big cities or to particular weapons. Bill C-71 would help in five important ways.

First, it would enhance background checks for those seeking to acquire firearms. Right now, when a person applies for a licence, there is a mandatory look back over the immediately preceding five years to see whether the applicant has engaged in violent behaviour or whether he or she has been treated for a mental illness associated with violence. That five-year limitation would be removed by Bill C-71, so the applicant's full record as it relates to violence and criminal behaviour can be taken into account. This is in fact a measure once proposed in a private member's bill introduced in Parliament by former Conservative MP and cabinet minister, James Moore. As he said at the time:

...if a person has ever committed a violent crime in their life never does that person get to own a gun. If a person has ever beat his wife or ever committed rape

or ever committed murder and is released from jail, never in his life does that person get to own a gun in Canada. This is effective criminal justice and this is something the Liberals should put into law.

Those are the words of the Hon. James Moore, and the provision that he was recommending is in fact included in Bill C-71. It is also important to underscore that when it comes to mental illness the background check that we are talking about involves only mental illnesses associated with violence. We all have friends and family who have dealt with mental health issues, and in the vast majority of cases there is no violence associated with it at all, so those people would not be affected.

The second important way that Bill C-71 would make our communities safer is by enhancing the usefulness of the existing licensing system.

● (1225)

Since 2012, when a person acquires a non-restricted firearm, there has been no obligation for them to demonstrate that they are authorized to do so. To be clear, vendors can check voluntarily, but there is no legal requirement to do so. In other words, a person could apply for a firearms' licence, undergo a background check, be denied because of a history of violence, and then go on to buy a shotgun anyway, because the seller does not actually have to check whether they have a licence or not.

Let me provide another practical illustration for why this provision should be mandatory. Picture a small firearms shop where a customer has shopped for many years. In 2016, that customer was one of hundreds of people who committed violence toward his partner with a firearm present. The court ordered him to forfeit his firearms and his licence. Today, a few years later, he drops into the usual shop looking to buy a rifle. The person behind the counter currently has the option of verifying whether the customer's licence is valid or not, but they are not obligated to do so. Having sold several firearms to this same customer over the years, the sales clerk decides that he knows the customer well enough and does not have to run a check against the licence.

Bill C-71 will ensure that the salesperson is required to make that call to the firearms program. This is just basic common sense. The process for doing so will be efficient and straightforward. The RCMP will operate a call centre, as well as an online portal that will be open 24 hours a day. The verification will take about three to five minutes, and for transactions involving non-restricted firearms, no information about the firearm itself will be sought or retained. The call is to verify the validity of the licence, not to identify a non-restricted firearm.

Third, Bill C-71 will support police officers investigating gun-related crimes and crime-related guns by requiring commercial retailers to apply good, common business practices in maintaining adequate business records of their inventories and sales. Most, in fact, already do so for economic, safety, or liability reasons, and because it may have a bearing on such practical things as their insurance.

Government Orders

Their records would be private and not accessible to governments, but police would be able to gain access given reasonable grounds and with judicial authorization as appropriate. This would help police trace guns discovered at a crime scene, detect straw purchasing schemes, and identify trafficking networks.

In the last few days, we have heard from some folks who have been raising concerns about this being some kind of new long gun registry, and that is simply not the case. According to A.J. Somerset, a firearms expert, a hunter, and a former member of the Canadian Armed Forces, “The sales records are maintained by the retailers. So the government does not have access to them, so they can't be treated as a registry. In fact, it's going to be exactly the same system that exists federally in the United States, and nobody complains there is a registry in that case.” In fact, the requirement to keep business records has existed in the United States since 1968.

The co-owner of High Falls Outfitters, a firearms retailer in Belleville, Ontario, says that while the long gun registry tracked “where guns are kept, the home, the addresses, all these different things.... All they are asking for now is for store owners to keep records of who bought the gun, and under what PAL (Possession Acquisition Licence). It just gives the police a starting point when they have to investigate a crime.”

The fourth important public safety measure included in this bill has to do with ensuring the impartial, professional, accurate, and consistent classification of firearms by RCMP experts. Parliament, of course, will always control the definitions that create the various classes of firearms. As is the case with many other laws and regulatory frameworks, the rules will be written by the elected officials in this House and then interpreted by law enforcement.

● (1230)

Currently, as we all know, there are three classes of firearms defined by Parliament in the Criminal Code: non-restricted, restricted, and prohibited. Within that frame, we will rely on the technical expertise of the RCMP, not political considerations, to determine which guns belong in which class. This means that we are repealing the authority the last government gave itself to overrule RCMP determinations.

When we repeal that power, we will automatically invalidate two decisions made by the previous government to assign a lesser classification to two particular groups of firearms, one Swiss and the other Czech. These are firearms that the RCMP, applying the definitions established by elected officials, believe to be deserving of a higher classification than the previous government gave to them. In the interests of fairness, we will grandfather the ownership of these particular firearms so innocent third parties are not put offside with the law through no fault of their own.

Finally, Bill C-71 would bolster community safety in relation to restricted and prohibited firearms, mostly handguns and assault rifles, by requiring specific transportation authorizations to be obtained for moving those types of guns through the community, with the key exception of transportation between a residence and an approved shooting range. This is an important tool for police because it helps them determine whether a person is taking their restricted or prohibited firearm to somewhere it should not be.

As with verifying a licence, the process for obtaining an authorization to transport is simply a matter of calling the hotline or logging in to the online portal. This legislation would implement practical measures, all of which are directly connected to public safety outcomes. That is why the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police says it is “encouraged by the positive direction taken by [the government] towards sensible firearm legislation enhancing the tools available to #policing to ensure public safety”.

There are four other matters, which are not in Bill C-71, that I look forward to discussing with my provincial and territorial counterparts as well as with the House of Commons Standing Committee on Public Safety and the Canadian firearms advisory committee.

One was raised with me by the mayor of Prince Albert, Greg Dionne, who is concerned that insufficient commercial storage rules allowed the thieves in that city to snip one cable and steal 24 handguns from a local gun shop and those restricted weapons are now in illegal circulation. It is certainly worth examining whether the current after-hours commercial storage regulations are appropriate.

Second, at the suggestion of Poly se souvent, I would like to look into whether it is reasonable for commercial firearms manufacturers to promote the sales of their wares, namely restricted and prohibited weapons, in a manner that particularly glorifies violence and simulates warfare. Is such promotion consistent with public safety?

Third, as raised by the mayor and the police in Toronto, do we need a mechanism to identify large and unusual firearms transactions, especially those involving restricted and prohibited guns, which may be indicative of some illicit straw purchasing scheme, gang activity, or a trafficking operation?

Fourth, as is done in the province of Quebec already, should other provinces consider requiring medical professionals to advise provincial authorities about persons who have diagnosed conditions that are likely to put the lives of other people in danger?

The pros and cons of these and other questions will be given very careful future consideration. As we examine these matters, our priorities will always be protecting people and communities, supporting the police, and ensuring fair and reasonable treatment for firearms owners and businesses.

● (1235)

Those are the very same priorities that guided us as we developed the legislation which is now before the House in Bill C-71, and they will continue to guide us throughout the parliamentary study of the bill ahead. However, as that study unfolds, as members of Parliament consider the details, if they come up with good and useful ideas that can improve the legislation, we are always open to interesting, useful, new suggestions.

Government Orders

•(1240)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have a question for my hon. colleague. He said that we are debating a bill that is missing a few matters.

Why is the minister in such a rush to introduce a bill that is so flawed?

[*English*]

Hon. Ralph Goodale: Madam Speaker, we worked very carefully with a great number of people across the country to prepare the legislation. We listened very carefully to ideas, suggestions, criticisms, and comments. The legislation has been prepared to accomplish the three objectives that I mentioned: support public safety, assist the police, and make sure that we are being fair and reasonable in the treatment of firearms owners and firearms businesses.

On the basis of all of that good work, the legislation is ready to go. It responds very directly to the statistics that indicate gun violence unfortunately has increased in this country since 2013. We do need to deal with that negative trend.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Beloeil—Chambly, NDP): Madam Speaker, needless to say, this has been a divisive issue within our country. The Liberals and Conservatives have deliberately tried to turn communities and Canadians against one another.

I congratulate the minister on his efforts to come up with a more sensible approach. That said, despite the positive steps, we do still have concerns about certain aspects, particularly retailers keeping records, which is already common practice among most businesses. How is this process going to be standardized? What kind of consultation will be done?

This bill calls for a standardized process for record keeping. That is appropriate, and we support it. However, I wonder if the minister could explain how the government plans to determine best practices and standardize the process among all businesses.

[*English*]

Hon. Ralph Goodale: Madam Speaker, I welcome the comments by the hon. member, and I also welcome his suggestion.

As the member indicated, there are a great many well-established retailers, large and small, that already, simply as a matter of good business operations, keep records of their inventory and of their sales. They do so in a variety of ways. Some of the larger retailers do it online through a computer system. Others do it manually and enter information into a ledger.

We are certainly happy to work with the retail community to make sure that the necessary business records are in fact kept, but that is accomplished in a manner that is efficient from the point of view of the business operators themselves. I think looking at the best practices of the operators who already keep those records is probably the very first and best place to start, because that common business practice that is already in use is something that should inform the standardized requirements.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Michel Picard (Montarville, Lib.): Madam Speaker, as a member from Quebec, I still recall, with great sadness, the tragic events at the Polytechnique and Dawson College. I personally have met with representatives of victims of the Polytechnique tragedy.

What practical measures can we emphasize in order to demonstrate that Bill C-71 will help respond to the concerns of the groups representing victims of those sad events, while also preventing future potential tragedies?

•(1245)

[*English*]

Hon. Ralph Goodale: Madam Speaker, every provision in the legislation is aimed at helping to reduce the tragic situations that the member has referred to.

Every year on the sombre anniversary dates, we all gather from all political parties to share the memories and grief, and to turn our minds to how, in reasonable and practical ways, we can make our society safer.

Improving background checks will help to make our society safer. Making sure that licences are valid when transactions occur will help to make our society safer, as will making sure that the business records are kept. While they are not generally available to government, they will be available to police forces on reasonable grounds and with the appropriate judicial authorization to pursue criminal activity with firearms.

We will have a consistent, appropriate, and professional classification system that will ensure that firearms are in fact properly classified in the three different classes that presently exist. Where a restricted or prohibited weapon is being transported, except in the case where the transportation is between a residence and a registered shooting range, the transportation will require a specific authorization so that public safety authorities like the police in local communities can know—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Unfortunately, I do have to cut the minister off to allow for other questions.

Mr. Larry Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Madam Speaker, I appreciate that we all have a responsibility and a duty to make things safer. You probably heard me, and a lot of other people—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I want to advise the member that he is to address the question to the Chair and not to the minister.

Mr. Larry Miller: Madam Speaker, the minister knows that a lot of people have criticized this bill, including members of his party, I hear. The bottom line is that everyone is concerned, including members of his own caucus. The minister made a statement quite some time ago to deal with illegal guns and the fact that a lot of gangs acquire them, etc. We all know that this bill is not addressing that.

Government Orders

In his speech the minister mentioned what sounded like a case that happened in Prince Albert, where somebody broke in and cut the cable on guns that were stored legally. Does the minister think that is never going to happen? In a perfect world, I guess it would not, but is the minister suggesting that there be logging cables through the guns? We know that this is not dealing with gang crime and illegal guns. What is the minister's response to that?

Hon. Ralph Goodale: Madam Speaker, as the hon. gentleman would know from studying our platform in the last election, and I am sure he has studied it in great detail, there are a number of provisions that we recommended at the time which are in the process of being implemented. The amendments contained in Bill C-71 are part of that package.

The various items I was referring to in response to the previous question will all be of assistance in helping to make our society safer. Specifically with respect to illegal guns being imported across the border, we have provided, and will provide more, resources to the Canada Border Services Agency to help the agency be more effective at the border in interdicting illegal smuggling of firearms.

We are also working with local communities and provinces, providing \$100 million a year in new funding to support activities specifically aimed at gang activity using guns. That money could be used in a variety of ways, depending on local circumstances, which will not all be the same, in supporting the integrated enforcement teams that have proven to be very effective in a number of communities in ferreting out gang activity, and then marshalling a full-court press in order to deal with that activity.

There is no one single solution. It is a complex collection of things, all of which are contained in our package. The legislation is part of it, but not all of it.

• (1250)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Before I resume debate, I see there is a lot of interest in speaking to this issue. I would ask members that during the question and comment period they try to keep the preamble short when asking the question to allow the member time to answer. The answer should be within the same time limit of the question that was asked. In 10 minutes, we should have at least five questions asked.

[*Translation*]

Resuming debate. The hon. member for Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles.

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am extremely pleased to be rising in the House today to speak on Bill C-71. I cannot remain silent on this subject, because I see that the Liberals are once again stubbornly determined to bring back a bill that feeds their obsession with reducing crime by constantly going after honest citizens. I cannot believe they still have not learned from their past mistakes. I will explain what I mean for the benefit of those under 35 or new Canadians who have only been here a few decades, since they may not know what I am talking about.

Back when Jean Chrétien was prime minister, his Liberals introduced the Canadian firearms registry. I can tell you that not only was this idea poorly conceived, it was also a direct attack on law-

abiding Canadians. Even worse, when the initiative was first introduced, the minister said it would cost about \$2 million. The Liberals said they would take care of that, and that is when they created the registry and started going after honest citizens. They said it would not cost much, just \$2 million. We know what happened next. Instead of \$2 million, the infamous registry ended up costing \$2 billion. The Liberals of the day created this initiative in an amateurish way. Worse still, they never apologized to Canadians for spending so much public money on an initiative that, in the end, was nothing but yet another attack on law-abiding citizens.

The Conservatives of Canada believe that the safety of Canadians must be the top priority of any government. Our position is very clear in that regard. Canada's Conservatives put the safety of Canadians first. I would not want the government members, Liberal members, to ever question that.

We cannot trust the Liberals when it comes to the firearms legislation. Rather than cracking down on criminals who use weapons to commit violent crimes, they are treating law-abiding gun owners like criminals. It is important to understand that. The Liberals should be going after criminals, but instead they are treating upright citizens like criminals. That is not right. When we were in office from 2006 to 2015, we worked hard to keep Canadians safe. We kept the promises that we made.

For example, we passed the Common Sense Firearms Licensing Act, which simplifies the firearms licensing regime, while strengthening firearms prohibitions for those convicted of domestic violence offences. We passed the Tackling Violent Crime Act, which provides for mandatory prison sentences for serious firearms offences and stricter bail provisions for those accused of serious offences involving firearms. We passed the Act to amend the Criminal Code regarding organized crime and protection of justice system participants, which provides police officers and justice officials with important new tools to help them fight organized crime, including new sentences for the reckless use of a firearm. We also funded initiatives across the country to advance Canada's crime prevention and community protection objectives under the national crime prevention strategy.

Government Orders

The Conservatives have a long and successful track record when it comes to security and safety. The list goes on. We created the northern and aboriginal crime prevention fund as part of the national crime prevention strategy in order to meet the specific needs of indigenous and northern communities when it comes to crime and community safety. We also created the youth justice fund in December 2006. The guns, gangs, and drugs component of this fund was introduced to put a focus on the rehabilitation of young offenders. The fund responds to youth involved in the justice system and involved in gun, gang and drug activities. We also created the youth gang prevention fund in 2006 to support community groups that work with troubled youth in order to prevent them from joining gangs by addressing the risk factors associated with gangs.

In other words, we kept our promises. We worked for law-abiding citizens, not against them. Let no one doubt our determination to fight crime.

• (1255)

The Liberals' Bill C-71 is further proof that this government, whose imagination is petering out after only two years in office, is just winging it.

Halfway through its first term, the government is waffling. By that, I mean the government cannot make up its mind and makes decisions based on which way the wind is blowing. The Liberals are also cowardly. For example, this bill does not address the criminal or unauthorized possession of firearms, nor does it have anything to say about gang violence.

The minister keeps trying to tell us all kinds of wonderful things, but the fact is that Bill C-71 does not have the answers. In his speech, the minister even said a lot was missing from the bill, so when I say they are "winging it", I am talking about how they are already scrambling to fill in those gaps. They just introduced the bill. They want us to talk about it, but they admit it is missing important elements. Once again, they are listening to the Conservatives and then reacting.

The Liberals believe that the way to fix gun violence and gun crime is to go after law-abiding citizens without dealing with street gangs or organized crime. There are some very intelligent people across the way. We are not going to insult their intelligence. I just cannot believe that such intelligent people can act this way, but that is a matter for another day.

For the most part, this bill does little to nothing to improve public safety. However, it imposes a number of new conditions on law-abiding gun owners. We cannot say it enough: it is always honest folks, sport shooters and hunters who get punished. The Liberals always go after those types of people. On this side of the House, we know that law-abiding citizens are not part of the problem. Under the leadership of Stephen Harper, we dealt with criminals, terrorists, and those who promote violence. Those are the people we need to be focusing on.

On the other side of the House, we have a government that made election promises. Once in power, however, it forgot about its commitment to Canadians, and hoped that they had already forgotten what was promised. For example, some of the Liberals' promises concerning the gun registry were broken or are yet to be fulfilled.

First, they promised to give the provinces and territories \$100 million per year to combat illegal activities involving firearms. There has been no mention of that. Where is the money? Where is the Prime Minister and his grand speeches?

The Prime Minister is a big talker. He is like Obama, who made grand promises that never amounted to anything. The Canadian public is starting to notice this problem, but we will talk about that another time.

The Liberals have yet to implement the marking regulations on imported firearms, even though they promised to do so as soon as they took office two and a half years ago. Two and a half years is a long time.

What is this party's leadership doing? They seemed to have all the answers during the campaign but now that they are in power they seem mostly confused. I have an explanation for why that is. There are agencies and specialists that are really talented at coming up with marketing ideas. They suggest saying this or that and predict that people will react like lemmings or sheep.

The Liberals ran a great campaign. They had a great marketing plan. When a party gets elected, it is the MPs, and not the marketing agency reps, who get to sit in the House. These MPs then find it hard to implement policy because they do not know what the marketing plan was about. At least, that is the impression we get. They had great marketing, but nothing concrete behind it. Again, who is paying for this? Canadians are the ones feeling the impact of the government's failings.

Canada is now emerging from a long night in which everyone learned the truth about a certain gifted public speaker who, in the end, had nothing to share with Canadians.

The Liberals have also forgotten their promise to invest in technologies that would help customs officers detect and intercept illegal arms from the United States.

Furthermore, thousands upon thousands of foreign nationals are crossing illegally into Canada from the United States through places like Quebec. Instead of trying to contain this crisis, the Liberals seem to be trying to accommodate it. I am not allowed to say that there are not many people here to listen to me, but it does not matter. Normally, they would react by saying that I am totally wrong.

• (1300)

Those watching may not know this but Quebec is currently dealing with a problem, a crisis, namely illegal immigration. You may hear that we should be using another word, but I say it is illegal. The Government of Quebec is asking to be reimbursed the \$125 million it has spent on this. The government is refusing, saying that it is not so bad and that everything is just fine. Sure, everything is fine. How disheartening. There comes a time when enough is enough.

The Prime Minister told people to come here because Canada is a country of refuge and that everything is great here, so people are coming. In fact, at least 50 to 100 people a day continue to enter this way.

Government Orders

Quebec is left footing the bill. The Prime Minister does not see a problem with that. He turns a blind eye and walks away. People are entering Canada illegally, but that is fine. Promoting Quebec and Canada as beautiful places to see is part of this marketing plan I mentioned earlier. However, this plan is not panning out in real life. These policies have a cost and will result in social problems, but the Prime Minister prefers to turn a blind eye. This issue is also causing chaos at the border.

Indeed, chaos seems to follow the Prime Minister around. As we saw in last week's headlines, we can no longer say "mother" and "father". We have to say "parent one" and "parent two". We no longer have the right to say someone is a man or a woman. No one knows anymore. This is plunging society into chaos. People identify as a man or a woman. Parents are saying that they cannot tell their kids that they are their mother or father, but rather parent one or parent two. The next time they are having an argument, a parent will say that he is parent one and the other is parent two. Come on. This is becoming ridiculous.

We have been seeing nothing but this sort of thing from the beginning. The minister said earlier this was not about re-establishing the long gun registry. When you read Bill C-71, it is obvious that they are being very careful. It is very subtle, which is why we, the Conservatives, are going to keep a very close eye on this.

Under this legislation, gun control would be achieved through merchants. The onus will be on firearms dealers and retailers to keep a registry, and they will also be tasked with maintaining the records afterwards. This is an insidious way of bringing back the registry. The government can deny it, but clearly, this is about putting everything in place to eventually bring back a registry.

At this point, the Prime Minister needs to decide where the real threat is. Is it street gangs or farmers? Is it sport shooters or organized crime? That is the real question.

To most Canadians, the answer is obvious. When you get up in the morning and think about it, you imagine a hunter with his firearm, or a farmer who needs firearms to keep animals from attacking his livestock. There is nothing unusual about that.

When people get up in the morning, they see that the government and the Prime Minister are saying these people are the ones they are going after. The government says that it will go after criminals and street gangs later. As the minister finally said earlier, some elements will be added to the legislation later, since the government is not ready. Honest Canadians are once again getting up in the morning and wondering what on Earth they did to become targets yet again. This is how it goes.

Eventually, the Prime Minister will have to make a decision. Does he have advisers around him who are smart enough to explain how this works in real life, in the lives of Canadians? Canadians get up in the morning and all they hope is to live a good, honest life. These are the people that the government is always going after. It needs to recognize this and stop. At some point, the government needs to stop doing this.

I am going to talk about another issue that was not addressed. There is nothing in the bill about an issue that we are just starting to hear about in the news. It is a little more complicated and involves

life, criminals, the modern world, and technology. This morning, I was reading an article about the dark web. Not many people, including myself, know much about the dark web. I know that it exists, but it is complex and involves technology. This morning, journalist Jim Bronskill explained that criminals are using the darker corners of the Internet, in a similar manner as pedophiles. The same principle is used for guns: there are computer protocols that allow users to carry out transactions in hidden parts of the Internet.

● (1305)

We have also heard about cryptocurrencies such as Bitcoin, which are almost impossible to trace. Criminal gangs use them to buy guns, which they are smuggling in ingenious ways. For example, they will hide a handgun in an Xbox console to get it through customs. People who buy guns on the Internet in this way do not have a licence. There is a whole criminal structure to the Internet, and the RCMP is sounding the alarm.

Police officers grappling with this type of crime and border services officers know that there is a problem. We need to look into this aspect and pass legislation that will address these problems. We would have no problem backing the government on that because we want to go after the criminals. However, we heard nothing about this, and there is nothing in Bill C-71 to deal with this problem.

Not only does Bill C-71 include no legislation that would tackle criminals, but its preamble contains misleading statements, such as the alarming statistics the minister mentioned earlier.

At the summit, the minister used 2013 as a benchmark. However, what the minister failed to mention is that the crime rate has remained fairly consistent over the past 20 years, except for in 2013, when it was particularly low. In 2014, it returned to a level comparable to that of the past 10 to 20 years. It was likely the marketing firm that decided to use data from 2013, to make people believe that there had been a dramatic increase in crime. The reality is that criminals probably stayed out of trouble that year because the Conservatives scared them. This is a matter of inappropriate marketing designed to frighten law-abiding citizens.

I will have to hurry up or I am going to run out of time.

During his summit on gun and gang violence, the minister heard from many experts in the field, but the bill in no way reflects their comments and concerns. In his speech, the minister talked about issues that are not covered in the bill, such as insufficient commercial storage rules. He talked about how a thief stole 24 handguns from a gun shop in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, but Bill C-71 does not address that.

The proposed change requiring firearms dealers to keep records for 20 years after the sale of a firearm is a burden for business people. I imagine the members opposite will someday realize that criminals could not care less about these rules. Criminals do not buy their weapons in gun shops. I mentioned the dark web, which is one of the ways they acquire guns.

Government Orders

We see this as yet another bill that will just annoy law-abiding people and will do nothing to target criminals, which is deeply disappointing because I think that is the most important issue here.

Let us not forget the 1993 firearms registry, which was supposed to put a dent in crime. It was useless.

I have a far more complicated problem. The government wants to stick to its agenda and act like nothing is wrong. Let us not forget that the Prime Minister's blatant and shameless lack of transparency forced us to hold a marathon voting session that lasted more than 22 hours. No one across the way had the courage to talk to the Prime Minister and have him listen to reason.

Canadians are not asking for anything complicated. They are asking for an hour-long meeting with Daniel Jean at the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security, so that Mr. Jean can give the same briefing he gave to the media. It is not complicated. Anyone can see that. Members of the House represent the people and the people want to be informed.

Therefore, seconded by the hon. member for Oxford, I move:

That the debate be now adjourned.

• (1310)

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

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

And five or more members having risen:

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Call in the members.

Before the Clerk announced the result of the vote:

• (1350)

[English]

The Speaker: Order. The hon. member for Winnipeg North and parliamentary secretary to the government House leader's vote will not be counted because he left his seat during the vote to come and speak to the Chair.

The hon. member for New Brunswick Southwest is rising on a point of order.

Ms. Karen Ludwig: Mr. Speaker, I did not hear the House call for those on this side who were opposed to the motion.

The Speaker: This is not a private member's bill. Therefore, the Chair called first for those in favour and then for those opposed.

Do I assume that the hon. member for New Brunswick Southwest wishes to have her vote counted as opposed to the motion?

Ms. Karen Ludwig: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

(The House divided on the motion, which was agreed to on the following division:)

(Division No. 638)

YEAS

Members

Aldag	Alghabra
Alleslev	Amos
Anandasangaree	Arseneault
Arya	Ayoub
Badawey	Bagnell
Baylis	Beech
Bennett	Bibeau
Bittle	Blair
Boissonnault	Bossio
Bratina	Breton
Brisson	Caesar-Chavannes
Carr	Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)
Casey (Charlottetown)	Chagger
Cormier	Cuzner
Dabrusin	Damoff
DeCoursey	Dhaliwal
Di Iorio	Drouin
Dubourg	Duclos
Duguid	Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Dzerowicz	Easter
Ehsassi	El-Khoury
Ellis	Erskine-Smith
Eyking	Eyolfson
Fergus	Fillmore
Finnigan	Fisher
Fonseca	Fortier
Fragiskatos	Fraser (West Nova)
Fraser (Central Nova)	Fuhr
Gameau	Gerretsen
Goldsmith-Jones	Goodale
Graham	Grewal
Hardie	Harvey
Hébert	Hogg
Holland	Housefather
Hussen	Iacono
Joly	Jones
Jordan	Jowhari
Khalid	Khera
Lambropoulos	Lametti
Lapointe	Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)
LeBlanc	Lebouthillier
Lefebvre	Leslie
Levitt	Lightbound
Lockhart	Long
Longfield	MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Maloney	Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)
May (Cambridge)	McCrimmon
McDonald	McKenna
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)	McLeod (Northwest Territories)
Mendicino	Mihychuk
Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Sœurs)	
Monsef	
Morneau	Morrissey
Murray	Nassif
Nault	Ng
O'Connell	Oliphant
Oliver	O'Regan
Ouellette	Paradis
Pescholido	Peterson
Petipas Taylor	Philpott
Picard	Poissant
Qualtrough	Ratansi
Rioux	Robillard
Rodriguez	Rogers
Romanado	Rudd

Government Orders

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
Tootoo	Vandal
Vandenbeld	Vaughan
Virani	Whalen
Wilkinson	Wilson-Raybould
Wrzesnewskyj	Yip
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NAYS**Members**

Aboultaif	Albas
Albrecht	Allison
Angus	Arnold
Aubin	Barlow
Barsalou-Duval	Beaulieu
Benson	Benzen
Bergen	Bernier
Berthold	Bezan
Blaikie	Blaney (North Island—Powell River)
Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis)	Block
Boucher	Boulerice
Boutin-Sweet	Brassard
Brosseau	Brown
Cannings	Caron
Carrie	Choquette
Clarke	Cooper
Deltell	Diotte
Doherty	Donnelly
Dreeschen	Dubé
Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)	Dusseault
Duvall	Egliński
Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)	Falk (Provencher)
Fast	Fortin
Gallant	Garrison
Généreux	Genus
Gill	Gladu
Godin	Gourde
Hughes	Jeneroux
Johns	Kelly
Kent	Kitchen
Kusie	Kwan
Lake	Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Leitch	Liepert
Lloyd	Lobb
Ludwig	MacGregor
MacKenzie	Maguire
Malcolmson	Marcel
Masse (Windsor West)	May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
McCauley (Edmonton West)	McColeman
McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)	Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound)
Moore	Motz
Nater	Nicholson
Nuttall	O'Toole
Paul-Hus	Poilievre
Ramsey	Rankin
Reid	Sansoucy
Saroya	Shields
Shipley	Sopuck
Stanton	Stetski
Strahl	Stubbs
Sweet	Thériault
Tilson	Trost
Trudel	Van Kesteren
Van Loan	Vecchio
Viersen	Warawa
Warkentin	Waugh
Webber	Weir
Wong	Yurdiga— 116

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

* * *

FISHERIES ACT

BILL C-68—TIME ALLOCATION MOTION

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.) moved:

That, in relation to Bill C-68, An Act to amend the Fisheries Act and other Acts in consequence, not more than one further sitting day shall be allotted to the consideration at second reading stage of the Bill; and

That, 15 minutes before the expiry of the time provided for Government Orders on the day allotted to the consideration at second reading stage of the said Bill, any proceedings before the House shall be interrupted, if required for the purpose of this Order, and, in turn, every question necessary for the disposal of the said stage of the Bill shall be put forthwith and successively, without further debate or amendment.

[*Translation*]

The Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 67.1, there will now be a 30-minute question period. I invite hon. members who wish to ask questions to rise in their places so the Chair has some idea of the number of members who wish to participate in this question period.

The hon. member for Cariboo—Prince George.

[*English*]

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, once again we are seeing the government shut down debate specifically on a bill that is so fundamental and would impact coastal communities and the economic viability of Canadians from coast to coast to coast.

I have one question. Why is the minister and the government shutting down debate on this important bill?

● (1355)

The Speaker: Before I call upon the hon. Minister of Fisheries, I want to indicate that at two o'clock we will be interrupting this question and answer period for question period.

The hon. Minister of Fisheries.

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I hope you will agree with me that it is somewhat ironic to have a Conservative member stand in this House and object to the use of time allocation or shutting down debate.

One of the reasons our government committed to Canadians in the 2015 election to restore the lost protections and bring modern safeguards to the Fisheries Act was that the previous Conservative government evacuated the protections from the Fisheries Act by burying it in an omnibus bill, with no debate at all, with time allocation at every stage. Not only are we reinstating those protections, but we are also looking forward to listening to Canadians and parliamentarians as we improve this important legislation.

Statements by Members

Mr. Fin Donnelly (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in listening to the official opposition and the government, I do not know which is worse in terms of what we are talking about in delaying this. The government side points to the official opposition members and says that they are, but we have been waiting almost three years for this legislation to come forward. There are many Canadians who want to give input on this important bill, but to now ram it through, and with time allocation to close off debate, is just not appropriate.

It is unfortunate that we have had to wait this long. We welcome the legislation. We welcome the changes. We want to get to that point, but we need to have a good process. This is not the way to do it. I hope the minister takes that into account for future changes in restoring environmental protections in this country.

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for Port Moody—Coquitlam for his and his party's initial support of this legislation. We look forward to working with them and other parliamentarians in committee to see if the legislation can be improved.

As I said when I spoke in this House, as we did with respect to the Oceans Act, Bill C-55, we are constantly looking for suggestions from Canadians, from other parliamentarians in this House and in the other place, for constructive ways we can strengthen this legislation. That is a process we look forward to having in committee. That is why we think it is important for this legislation to progress to committee where the committee can hear from Canadians, environmental groups, associations representing fishers and harvesters around the country. Of course, we look forward to working with parliamentarians as the legislation gets scrutinized in committee and comes back to this House.

I said the same thing in the other place when I had the chance to go to question period there, and it is something that I am happy to repeat here today.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*Translation*]

ARNAUD BELTRAME

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, GPQ): Mr. Speaker, on March 23, in France, Lieutenant Colonel Arnaud Beltrame went into a supermarket in Trèbes to trade places with the last hostage being held by a terrorist claiming to be a member of Daesh. After almost three hours of negotiations with the terrorist, Arnaud Beltrame was murdered in cold blood. He sacrificed his life to save another, responding to a gesture of hatred with a pure gesture of heroism. He responded with complete selflessness, the utmost generosity, and great humanity to the despicable evil of terrorism. Arnaud Beltrame will not be forgotten.

On behalf of the Quebec caucus and myself, I would like to extend our most sincere condolences to his wife Marielle, his daughter, and his friends and colleagues.

Arnaud Beltrame died on March 23, 2018. To the whole world, a hero was born that day.

[*English*]

SUMMER STREET INDUSTRIES

Mr. Sean Fraser (Central Nova, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to celebrate the 50th anniversary of Summer Street Industries in New Glasgow, Nova Scotia. This organization is celebrating 50 years of helping adults with intellectual challenges live full and happy lives, including some personal friends and former classmates of mine. The organization began with a small group of parents who came together to help nine young adults, has grown to provide a wide range of programs, and now helps over 200 clients today.

Summer Street Industries provides people in my riding with the opportunity to volunteer or work in the community, learn life skills, and explore personal interests. The organization also partners with local businesses and social enterprises to provide work and training through its employment program. The importance of creating opportunities for people with intellectual disabilities cannot be understated.

I commend the team of people at Summer Street. They are committed to the well-being and interests of each of their clients. Every year, Summer Street celebrates with its annual events, including its awards ceremony, prom, golf scramble, and the wine and cheese session. I would like to congratulate those at Summer Street for their 50 years of contributions to our community. Here is to looking to the next 50.

* * *

● (1400)

[*Translation*]

FUNDRAISING EVENT

Hon. Steven Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to tell you about a courageous young boy from Honfleur named Dérek, who has the dedicated support of his parents, Marie-Lou and Jérémie, and his little sister, Allison. Dérek is only two years old, but was diagnosed with leukemia a few months ago. Despite several rounds of chemotherapy, Dérek has relapsed twice. Specialists are now considering an experimental stem cell transplant in Memphis, Tennessee, hoping that will beat the disease.

Last Saturday I attended a fundraising event organized by the mayor of Honfleur, Luc Dion, and his municipal team to help Dérek. There was a massive outpouring of support. The room was packed. Over 300 people came out to say, “We are here for you and your family, Dérek”. As soon as he is strong enough, Dérek and his family will head to the United States for at least five months.

I am touched and impressed by Dérek's courage and by the immediate support offered by the Honfleur and Bellechasse community. My message today is to say, “thank you, and we, too, are here for you”.

*Statements by Members**[English]***ORGANIZATIONS IN DON VALLEY EAST**

Ms. Yasmin Ratansi (Don Valley East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to highlight and congratulate two exceptional organizations in my riding of Don Valley East.

The first is the Songwriters Association of Canada, an organization that helps protect the intellectual property rights of music creators in Canada. I was pleased to meet and congratulate its members on receiving a grant of \$80,000 through the Canada music fund, to enhance their ability to compete in domestic and international markets.

The second is Clear Blue Technologies, a local innovator of clean technology, which received \$400,000 in funding to scale up its activities for its solar- and wind-powered control systems. With customers in 33 countries, 20 U.S. states, and eight Canadian provinces, Clear Blue Technologies is playing an important role in shaping Canada's future economy by developing sustainable and renewable sources of energy.

Our government is proud to support these local innovative organizations. I wish them continued success, both here at home and around the world.

* * *

PAT HORGAN AND JUDE SCHOONER

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Elisabeth Kübler-Ross said:

The most beautiful people we have known are those who have known defeat, known suffering, known struggle, known loss, and have found their way out of the depths. These persons have an appreciation, a sensitivity, and an understanding of life that fills them with compassion, gentleness, and a deep loving concern. Beautiful people do not just happen.

In my riding, we have lost too many beautiful people. Today, I want to speak of two of them, Pat Horgan and Jude Schooner. Pat Horgan loved the true north island. He travelled between the communities, always looking for ways to help. With charm, humour, and principle, he lived by the creed that if one person is left behind, we are all left behind. Jude Schooner was the mayor of Tahsis. She loved her community and fought tirelessly for it. Her heart was big, full of kindness and generosity, and everything she did was with dedication and action. I am so proud to have called them my friends.

I thank Shirley, Kelly, Patrick, Sarah, and Aidan, and I thank Scott and Ben for sharing them with us. They were beautiful people, and their lives were such gifts to us all.

* * *

*[Translation]***GORD DOWNIE**

Mr. Randy Boissonnault (Edmonton Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, like many of us, I was moved by the many tributes paid last night to Gord Downie, a true Canadian legend.

[English]

From *Ahead By a Century*, to *Secret Path*, Gord and the Hip had the unique ability to tell stories that capture the essence of the Canadian spirit. As a student, I used to listen to them play at the

Dinwoodie Lounge at the University of Alberta. They left an indelible mark on Canada's music scene that will continue to inspire artists here and around the world for generations.

[Translation]

Gord entrusted Canadians with a mission: to shine a light on the issues facing Canada's indigenous peoples and take concrete action towards meaningful reconciliation.

[English]

As the Junos honoured Gord as the 2018 artist of the year, there is no better way to keep his memory alive than for all Canadians to come together to work toward this shared goal.

● (1405)

[Translation]

Thank you to the Junos for using their platform as an opportunity to remind people of the issues facing indigenous peoples. I encourage everyone to learn more about the work being done by the Gord Downie and Chanie Wenjack Fund to achieve Gord's objectives.

* * *

*[English]***CANADA REVENUE AGENCY**

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is that time of year; it is tax season. While few Canadians relish the process of filing their taxes, almost all Canadians know it is their responsibility to do so accurately and on time. The problem is that accountants from across Canada say that under the revenue minister, accuracy and timeliness at the CRA have never been worse.

The call centre is a shambles. It routinely hangs up on people or gives them the wrong information. She has targeted restaurant servers, retail workers, diabetics, single parents, and parents of autistic children, while making big promises and delivering virtually nothing in the fight against international tax cheaters. Routine corrections and minor adjustments now take up to 18 months, and accountants say the appeal process is increasingly bogged down with sloppy or incompetently done audits.

It is time for the minister to stop patting herself on the back and start delivering on her promises to make the CRA more client friendly.

*Statements by Members***SOMALILAND**

Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to bring awareness to Somaliland, an autonomous region of north-western Somalia with nearly four million residents. In the recent Somaliland elections, Muse Bihi Abdi was elected as president, the first Somaliland president to be voted in with a very good majority.

The state introduced legislation to address gender-based violence, intending to significantly reduce the rising sexual violence rate. Somalilanders are optimistic that the new president will strengthen the region's democratic credentials and set itself on a more prosperous path.

I would also like to thank the Somali-Canadian community in Ottawa for all of its hard work and contributions to the community, and for continuing to help foster the relationship between Canada and Somalia, including Somaliland.

* * *

JUNO AWARDS

Ms. Kamal Khera (Brampton West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am not sure if you or my colleagues in the chamber caught the Junos last night but, let me say, Canadians can be proud of our world-renowned musicians.

I am very honoured to recognize our hometown hero, Brampton native Jessie Reyez, for taking home the breakthrough artist of the year award at the Junos. Jessie's performances are nothing short of breathtaking. At just age 27, her mastery of soul and R and B is one of a kind. From nearly giving up on music a few years ago to now touring Europe and performing at South by Southwest, Jessie is another example of the hard work and determination of Canada's artists.

I cannot say enough about how proud I am of Jessie and of all of our musicians and creators. I thank all of our artists at the Junos yesterday, the fans, and the industry that continues to help them reach the stars.

* * *

FIREARMS

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as Conservatives, we will always support sound policy that ensures the safe storage and handling of firearms, screens licensed owners of firearms, classifies firearms based on function, and targets the criminals who commit gun crimes. Unfortunately, the Liberals' new backdoor gun registry in Bill C-71 fails to stop the criminals who use guns to commit violent crimes. Again, the Liberals are treating law-abiding firearms owners as criminals. Their legislation has no new measures to combat gang violence in our cities, gun violence on our streets, or crime in our rural communities.

The Liberals are re-establishing a federal registrar to keep records on law-abiding firearms owners. Registrars keep registries. What the Prime Minister fails to understand is that gangs, thugs, and gun runners do not register their firearms.

I fought against the original long-gun registry for almost two decades, and I will continue to oppose the Liberals' new ill-advised and unnecessary backdoor gun registry.

[Translation]

LAURENTIDES—LABELLE NEWSLETTER

Mr. David de Burgh Graham (Laurentides—Labelle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very proud to announce that the most recent edition of my newsletter was sent to over 69,000 households in Laurentides—Labelle last week. When the House announced that we would soon be able to have our householders printed in colour, I immediately signed up for the pilot project. The newsletter is a way to initiate conversations with constituents, acknowledge the contributions of those who make a difference in the riding, and build a better partnership between my region and the federal government.

I humbly acknowledge the work of my team and the Hill's Printing and Mailing Services. I would particularly like to recognize Samuel St-Amand, Kim Lanctot, and Sara Drouin. Thanks to them, my riding is once again leading the way. The people of Laurentides—Labelle are the first in Canada to receive an improved householder printed in colour. I have already received very positive feedback about this.

* * *

● (1410)

[English]

WORLD TUBERCULOSIS DAY

Ms. Yvonne Jones (Labrador, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to mark the occasion of March 24, which is recognized as World Tuberculosis Day.

TB is a treatable and curable disease. However, it continues to claim the lives of more than 1.7 million people worldwide. Indicators show that it is nearly 300 times higher for Inuit than for non-indigenous Canadians.

I am pleased to recognize our government's commitment to eliminating TB across Inuit Nunangat regions, as announced by the Minister of Indigenous Services last week, ensuring that these communities have the resources to combat this disease.

For too long, people in the north and Inuit people have needlessly suffered from a curable and treatable illness. Today, I also wish to recognize my constituents across Labrador, and the many families who continue to deal with this significant problem.

I encourage people to be tested, to follow treatments, and to work together to combat and eradicate this disease.

* * *

PURPLE DAY

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as members know, today, March 26, marks Purple Day. Started in 2008 by Cassidy Megan of Halifax, it has grown into an international event.

Statements by Members

On this day, people around the world are wearing purple to increase awareness of epilepsy, a chronic neurological disorder that affects over 50 million people worldwide.

My riding of Oshawa is well served by Epilepsy Durham Region, which serves all eight municipalities with a staff of only two and a dedicated team of volunteers. This incredible organization promotes independence and quality of life for families and those affected with epilepsy. With no local specialized medical care, Epilepsy Durham Region provides education, peer-to-peer support, and employment support to people living with epilepsy.

A proud member of the Canadian Epilepsy Alliance, CEO Dianne McKenzie and her organization deliver all their services to Durham region without access to government funding. I applaud the outstanding work of Epilepsy Durham Region. On behalf of my colleagues in this House, I want to thank Dianne, Chelsea and their team.

Happy Purple Day, everyone.

* * *

GREEK INDEPENDENCE DAY

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos (Saint-Laurent, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this past Sunday, March 25, Greeks and philhellenes across the country and around the world participated in marches to celebrate Greek Independence Day.

[*Translation*]

On March 25, 1821, the Greek War of Independence began with the insurrection of such revolutionaries as the heroic Theodoros Kolokotronis, Laskarina Bouboulina, and Rigas Feraios, who said, "It's finer to live one hour as a free man than forty years as a slave and prisoner".

[*English*]

The Greek Canadian community has contributed greatly to Canadian society, making Canada more prosperous, culturally diverse, and inclusive.

On behalf of the Government of Canada and of Saint-Laurent, please accept my very best wishes for this important national celebration.

[*Member spoke in Greek*]

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PENSIONS

Mr. Scott Duvall (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government needs to understand that pensions are deferred wages. Denying workers the pension money they have earned is theft, plain and simple.

Thousands of Canadian workers who have lost hard-earned benefits and pensions due to Canada's inadequate bankruptcy and insolvency laws know this all too well. Why does it happen? It is because the law allows it to happen.

No one can blame workers for being skeptical of the government's commitment to addressing retirement security and their weak-kneed promise to obtain feedback through further conversation. How much

more evidence-based feedback does the government need than the thousands of Canadian workers who have lost health care benefits and value from their pensions?

The government must get serious about changing Canada's inadequate bankruptcy and insolvency laws, and make the changes presented in my private members bill, Bill C-384. Those changes would go a long way to helping protect the well-being and retirement security of Canadian workers. As I have travelled across the country in recent months, Canadian workers have made it clear that they want action, not more conversation. End the pension theft.

* * *

[*Translation*]

NATIONAL SECURITY ADVISER TO THE PRIME MINISTER

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I voted for 21 hours because I am sick of hypocrisy.

I voted for 21 hours because I believe in freedom of speech.

I voted for 21 hours because Canada deserves better.

I voted for 21 hours because I am proud to stand up.

I voted for 21 hours because Parliament belongs to the people.

I voted for 21 hours because the House of Commons is the place where Canadians' representatives speak out.

I voted for 21 hours because the Liberal government needs to be accountable to parliamentarians.

I voted for 21 hours because the Prime Minister's Office does not have all the rights.

I voted for 21 hours because the government does not work for the Prime Minister.

I voted for 21 hours so the national security adviser would be free to speak to Canadians.

I voted for 21 hours so that the truth would triumph over the Liberals' skulduggery.

I voted with my colleagues for 21 hours because the official opposition and its leader are an amazing team and there are only 13,762 hours left to turn this Liberal government into a Conservative government.

* * *

•(1415)

[*English*]

PURPLE DAY

Mr. Darren Fisher (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today is Purple Day, a day dedicated to increasing awareness about epilepsy.

Each year over 15,000 Canadians are diagnosed with epilepsy, but due to the stigma surrounding it many people are reluctant to seek care. That is one of the reasons why a good friend of ours, Nova Scotia's Cassidy Megan, created Purple Day, to help people with epilepsy know that they are not alone and to help others understand more about the disorder.

Now, due to Cassidy's hard work, over 100 countries celebrate Purple Day and everyone can show their support by wearing purple every March 26.

I would like to finish by reading this quote from Cassidy Megan:

Epilepsy is a part of you but it doesn't define you. Everybody has a voice, continue to use yours to speak out and spread awareness for epilepsy. Don't fear it, own it and tell your story. Together we are erasing the stigma of epilepsy.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last week the Liberals spent over 20 hours voting to protect the Prime Minister by preventing his national security adviser from providing information to parliamentarians. The Prime Minister is hiding something. Let us not be mistaken. The PMO set up and facilitated the briefing whereby the India conspiracy theory was floated out.

My question to the Prime Minister is this. Did he know that Daniel Jean was going to be briefing the media about the Atwal affair?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the leader of the official opposition has been offered a classified briefing from the non-partisan professional public service, but for reasons known only to him, he refuses to accept that briefing.

I ask the opposition leader that he accept that classified briefing from officials, and then we can talk.

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I asked the Prime Minister a question, and we would like an answer. Daniel Jean did not decide of his own volition to go out and talk to the media. He was instructed by the Prime Minister's Office to go out and float a theory that somehow India was involved in the Atwal affair.

Therefore, I ask the Prime Minister, was he aware that Daniel Jean, his national security adviser, was going to be giving a briefing to the media about the Atwal affair, yes or no?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, all Canadians understand that when it comes to security and intelligence issues there is, from time to time, a need to keep classified information classified. However, the leader of the official opposition is a member of the Privy Council and as such could receive classified briefings. We have offered, repeatedly, for the leader of the official opposition to receive a classified briefing. Instead, the official opposition prefers to play petty politics rather than know the truth.

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are asking for the same briefing that the media received. If the

Oral Questions

Prime Minister is somehow suggesting that the media are members of the Privy Council, I suggest he check his notes once again.

I will go back to my original question and ask for an answer. Was the Prime Minister aware on February 22 that his security adviser was going to go out to the press gallery and tell them that India was involved in setting up Jaspal Atwal to be at his event, yes or no?

• (1420)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think Canadians are puzzled to know that the leader of the official opposition was offered—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. We need to hear the questions and the answers. I know members will want to hear both.

The right hon. Prime Minister has the floor.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, I think Canadians are wondering why the official opposition leader was offered a classified briefing on classified information, and instead of learning the truth, instead of being willing to learn about what actually happened and what good work the security officials and intelligence officials are doing, he chose to play partisan politics instead. That is what Canadians are wondering.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my question today for the Prime Minister is very simple. I hope he will answer it clearly and honestly for the benefit of all the Canadians tuning in this afternoon.

Was the Prime Minister aware that his national security adviser, Daniel Jean, was going to give a media briefing during his recent trip to India? Yes or no?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition was given the opportunity to attend a classified briefing session with a non-partisan professional public servant, but for reasons known only to him, he is refusing to find out the truth. The opposition leader should accept the classified briefing, and then we can talk.

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will repeat my question, which is very straightforward and has nothing to do with the Prime Minister's last four answers.

Was the Prime Minister aware that his national security adviser, Daniel Jean, was going to give a media briefing during his recent trip to India, yes or no?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians understand perfectly well that, when it comes to security and intelligence issues, there is sometimes a need to keep classified information classified. We offered the opposition leader an opportunity to receive a classified briefing, but he refused. Opposition members even spent 21 hours voting because they wanted to talk about this instead of firearms. We know why: opposition members want to weaken our gun laws.

*Oral Questions***TAXATION**

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this government brags about combatting tax evasion, but the reality is just the opposite. The figures from the Canada Revenue Agency speak for themselves.

In 2010-11, the criminal investigations program opened 167 tax evasion cases. In 2016-17, just 75 cases were opened. This is half as many cases leading to criminal charges, even with the release of the Panama papers and the paradise papers.

While the big fish continue to make it out relatively unscathed, the small fish are the ones being targeted.

When will the Prime Minister fix his net and go after the real fraudsters?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have invested nearly \$1 billion in the fight against tax evasion and tax avoidance.

More than 1,000 audits are under way abroad, along with 40 criminal investigations connected to foreign transactions. So far, we have imposed \$44 million in sanctions on those who promote tax avoidance schemes, and we have announced more than \$90 million over five years to manage the other cases that were reported through our country's and other countries' improved risk assessment systems.

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the numbers confirm that the small fish are getting caught while the big ones are getting away.

It is tax season right now, and while most Canadians will pay their taxes, others are going to try to come up with ways to engage in tax evasion or aggressive tax avoidance.

Does the government believe that the Canada Revenue Agency has the means to deal with the situation? Contrary to what the Prime Minister claims, the government has not invested a trillion dollars in the program to combat tax evasion and tax avoidance. It has invested \$15 million. Those numbers come from the CRA.

The government leaves the KPMGs of the world alone, but goes after servers' tip money, and that is unacceptable.

Will the government commit to spending the money it promised?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in budgets 2016 and 2017, we allocated nearly \$1 billion to combat tax evasion and tax avoidance. We take this very seriously and we will continue to ensure that everyone pays their fair share of taxes. We have done a great deal to improve our tax system to ensure that everyone pays their fair share of taxes. That is a priority for Canadians and it is a priority for this government.

* * *

• (1425)

[English]

PRIVACY

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the ability of third party actors to distort the Facebook platform to undermine elections has created international outcry, but the comfy, cozy relationship between the Liberal Party, Facebook, and the key

players in the scandal is disturbingly symbiotic. Kevin Chan from Facebook comes from the Liberal war room. Christopher Wylie comes from the Liberal war room, not to mention the donations from the head of Facebook to the Prime Minister.

For the Prime Minister, how can Canadians trust that he is going to put their interests ahead of the interests of his friends at Facebook and the Liberal war room?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government has always been unequivocal that the protection of Canadians' data and personal information is of the utmost importance. Social media platforms have a responsibility to ensure the continued protection of our democratic process. While some platforms have begun to take initial steps to address these issues, it is clear that much more needs to be done. The Privacy Commissioner has already begun an investigation into this matter and we have faith in the officers of Parliament and their ability to conduct investigations in the best interests of Canadians.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, let us talk about another major Liberal donor and another man from the Liberal war room. Jeff Silvester is the owner of AIQ, which has been identified as having played a role in undermining the Brexit vote. In fact, Christopher Wylie, another Liberal, is on record as saying that AIQ's work in the U.K. vote was "totally illegal".

My question is for the Prime Minister. Will he assure the House that his party will not block any efforts to have Jeff Silvester brought, by subpoena if necessary, to testify about the role of his company in undermining the Brexit vote?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada's democracy is the foundation of the rights and freedoms we cherish, and we take threats to our democracy very seriously.

Our government is committed to ensuring that Canadians can continue to trust in our democratic institutions. We continue to closely monitor foreign threats, including those that may affect the 2019 election.

At the Minister of Democratic Institutions' request, the Communications Security Establishment released a report last July on cyber-threats to Canada's democratic process. The minister will continue to lead our government's efforts to address threats to Canada's democratic institutions.

*Oral Questions***PUBLIC SAFETY**

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in a weekend interview, the public safety minister said that the public safety committee could not call the national security adviser because that meeting would contain classified information. Today, the Prime Minister suggests only privy councillors can get the same briefing as reporters because of classified information.

Is the Prime Minister telling Canadians that the national security adviser revealed classified information to journalists?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for the official opposition to fully understand the situation, it is important for those in the opposition who have the necessary security clearance to be privy to certain classified details. That can only be done in the appropriate circumstances, where the classified information remains classified.

Members of the Privy Council are entitled to that information, and the offer has been made. It is rather odd that the official opposition does not seem interested in getting the facts.

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the entire House was seized with this matter last week because the official opposition only wanted a briefing from the national security adviser of the same level he gave journalists. Now the minister is saying that the only kind of briefing we can receive needs to be in confidence because of classified information.

If we only want what was given to journalists, is that minister confirming that the national security adviser to the Prime Minister revealed classified information to journalists?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am confirming no such thing. The fact is that the Prime Minister has made an offer to the Leader of the Opposition. The Leader of the Opposition should accept that offer, and then further things can be discussed.

• (1430)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we will try another way. We will play lie detector with the government.

Jasper Atwal said that he was invited by the Liberal government. The member for Surrey Centre confirmed that he invited Jasper Atwal. The Prime Minister said that India's government conspired in the Atwal affair to make him look bad. India's government denied that it had anything to do with the invitation to this convicted terrorist. The Minister of Global Affairs said that inviting Jasper Atwal was an honest mistake.

Someone is not telling the whole truth. Who is it?

[*English*]

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me repeat what the Prime Minister said to the opposition a few moments ago. The Leader of the Opposition should accept the offer of a classified briefing from impartial government officials, and then further things can be discussed.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what is so secret about what the national security adviser told journalists that he has to talk about it in private with the Leader of the Opposition? That is unacceptable.

The Prime Minister's trip to India with his family, five ministers, and 14 MPs cost taxpayers a fortune. The international media called this mission a diplomatic disaster.

What is the Prime Minister hiding? Why is he stopping Daniel Jean from giving his version of the facts to Canadians, the opposition, and all of us in the House?

[*English*]

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the answer is in plain sight. The Prime Minister has offered the leader of the official opposition the classified briefing. He should accept that briefing, and then other things can be discussed. However, it appears that the opposition is more interested in being willfully blind.

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the official opposition has been asking for the same briefing that was provided to the media on February 22. We have not asked for a super secret briefing that can only be heard by members of the Privy Council. The national security adviser surely did not ensure that the members of the media he gave the briefing to were sworn in as members of the Privy Council.

When can we get the same briefing that was offered to the media and when will the Liberals stop hiding behind this big leap of the Privy Council secret briefing?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition needs to be properly informed of all the appropriate classified information. Once he has that knowledge, then other things can be discussed.

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC): Mr. Speaker, once again we have the Liberals caught with two conflicting stories. Either the national security adviser gave an unclassified briefing to the media or he gave a classified briefing to the media which requires this to remain confidential.

Did the national security adviser give a classified briefing to those who were not entitled to receive it?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the opposition simply refuses to listen. The offer has been made to provide the Leader of the Opposition with all the details in a classified briefing. Once that has been done, then other things can be discussed.

The question is this. Why does the official opposition decline to be informed? It is as if it wants to be wilfully blind.

The Speaker: Order, please. The member for Calgary Signal Hill and others have fabulous voices, but I would rather hear them when they have the floor. I would ask them not to interrupt throughout answers.

[*Translation*]

The hon. member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie.

*Oral Questions***PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT**

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, do you know what it means to jerk someone around?

According to the *Canadian Oxford Dictionary*, it means to “deal with unfairly; deceive or mislead”. This is exactly what the Prime Minister is doing to Davie shipyard workers. In January, he suggested that Quebec would be awarded contracts for the four icebreakers needed by the Canadian Coast Guard. It is now the end of March, the government has been waffling, and no contract has been signed.

When will they stop twiddling their thumbs? When will the Liberal government take action, sign the contracts, and get the Davie shipyard workers working?

Hon. Carla Qualtrough (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have said many times in the House, we are negotiating with Davie shipyard regarding the Canadian Coast Guard's icebreaker needs. We will continue our negotiations. We are doing the necessary checks, and the process is ongoing.

•(1435)

Ms. Karine Trudel (Jonquière, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals have lost the benefit of the doubt on the icebreaker file. Yesterday, we learned that talks with Davie have stalled and that there is a secret plan to acquire a new fleet of icebreakers for Canada.

We need these contracts and those ships, both for the jobs they provide and to ensure reliable icebreaking services for regions like Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean. The government needs to stop messing around when it comes to regional development.

Could the minister tell us where these talks stand, and will he promise to make his secret plan public?

Hon. Carla Qualtrough (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said, we are continuing our discussions with Davie shipyard. We are not going to do our negotiating here in the House.

* * *

[English]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Glen Motz (Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the embarrassment of the India trip continues with the Prime Minister's cover-up. Liberal ministers are now hiding behind false claims of classified national security.

As a professional public servant, we know the national security adviser would never reveal classified information to the press. Canadians are therefore confused as to why the Prime Minister is preventing the national security adviser from testifying to members of the House.

If there really is nothing to hide, will the Prime Minister finally commit to Daniel Jean's appearance before committee?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have offered a full classified briefing to the Leader of the Opposition. The Leader of the Opposition has refused. The Leader of the Opposition does not want to know the truth. He wants

to continue playing politics so he can play politics, so he can delay discussion about an important gun bill that would keep our communities safe.

The Leader of the Opposition does not want to know the truth. He wants to play politics. We are busy protecting Canadians.

[Translation]

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Atwal affair has not been cleared up since the Prime Minister's disastrous trip to India, because he still refuses to answer our questions on this matter. We know that Daniel Jean is a professional public servant who did not provide any classified information to the media at a briefing on February 22. We are therefore asking that he be allowed to answer our questions, but the Prime Minister still refuses to let that happen.

Since he did not provide any classified information, why does the Prime Minister refuse to allow Daniel Jean to give the same briefing to the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security?

[English]

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has made a complete offer to the Leader of the Opposition to have him briefed on all the classified details of this matter by the independent and impartial officials of the Government of Canada. The Leader of the Opposition should accept that offer and then further things can be discussed. However, if the Leader of the Opposition will not accept the offer, it is clear he does not want to be informed and is just playing politics.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I cannot imagine a Canada where better is possible when Liberal MPs and the Prime Minister are engaged in an active cover-up by not allowing Canadians access to the same information given to the media.

What is the Prime Minister and every single Liberal sitting in the House trying to cover up? Why are they muzzling a top respected civil servant?

Does the Prime Minister actually believe a non-partisan senior level public servant would divulge classified information to journalists? If so, what investigation has he launched into Mr. Daniel Jean?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one minute the opposition members pretend to defend Mr. Jean; the next minute they are attacking Mr. Jean. The fact is that they are playing politics with this issue. If they wanted to get to the bottom of this whole situation, they would accept the offer of a classified briefing so they could know the facts. If they would rather not know the facts, then they are being wilfully blind and they are just trying to play a cheap political trick.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a briefing cannot be both classified and non-classified. I have a very simple question. Was the information given to the media by Mr. Jean classified or not, like the Minister of Public Safety just said?

Oral Questions

● (1440)

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the offer has been made. It is up to the Leader of the Opposition to either accept the offer of a classified briefing and receive all the necessary information so he can be informed, or I suppose he can reject that offer. If he rejects the offer, clearly he prefers to be wilfully blind and prefers to play politics with the situation rather than getting the facts.

* * *

HOUSING

Ms. Sheri Benson (Saskatoon West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, when the Liberals unveiled their national housing strategy, the Prime Minister very clearly stated, “Housing rights are human rights”, just days after they voted down our bill on the right to housing. Now they talk about a rights-based approach to housing. However, even the UN special rapporteur on housing has concerns that the government will not recognize that “housing is a human right unto itself.”

When will the government stop using the “right to housing” as an empty slogan and actually recognize this fundamental human right in law?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on November 22, we announced the first-ever national housing strategy. On November 22, we also announced the largest investment in the history of this government, of this nation in housing. On November 22, we also announced that these investments would reduce homelessness and take 500,000 Canadians out of housing that was either unaffordable or inadequate, and that would be based on the right to housing.

[Translation]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, contrary to what they tried to make us believe, the Liberals never intended to recognize the right to housing. To no one's surprise, the government has embarked on another series of directed consultations, in which we are told that their so-called rights-based housing strategy is based on many things, except the implementation of the right to housing. If the government truly believes that housing is a right, will it at least have the courage to incorporate it into our human rights legislation?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to quote Ms. Farha, who said the following at the launch of the national housing strategy on November 22:

[English]

What makes this a truly historic moment is the government's acknowledgement that housing is a human right and its intention to recognize this through a rights-based housing strategy as well as in legislation

This was a historic moment. We are going to build history in the next 10 years, while taking hundreds of thousands of Canadians out of housing need.

* * *

HEALTH

Mr. Terry Sheehan (Sault Ste. Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in my riding of Sault Ste. Marie, I have heard from many constituents who

have been personally impacted by the opioid crisis. It is a crisis that has been taking too many lives across this great nation.

Our government has taken bold action on the crisis through legislation, investments, and numerous other measures. Could the Minister of Health please update the House as to what our government is doing to address this national crisis, which is destroying many lives in this country?

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Sault Ste. Marie for his hard work in his community.

We are in a national public health crisis when it comes to the opioid situation, and I am proud to say that our government is building on past investments. In budget 2018, we invested \$231 million to help support additional measures to face this epidemic. While I am disheartened that last week the Conservative Party voted against measures with respect to reducing stigma and providing support to those in need, this morning I had the pleasure of announcing that we have made it easier for patients to access opioid substitute therapy.

I will continue to work hard to turn the tide on this national health crisis.

* * *

[Translation]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, while the Prime Minister was teaching drama, I was working as a journalist. For 20 years, I attended more than my share of technical briefings, and it is made quite clear at those meetings what is secret and what is not.

On his trip to India, Daniel Jean gave a technical briefing to journalists. They published the information regarding the conspiracy.

Why is the Prime Minister refusing to give all Canadians access to the information that was given to journalists?

[English]

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the offer has been made to the leader of the official opposition to be fully briefed about all the classified details of the situation. He should accept that offer so that he can be fully and completely informed. If he accepts the offer, which I hope he does, then other things can be discussed.

● (1445)

[Translation]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister is an honourable man who has been in politics for 35 years. He knows he is in trouble.

Daniel Jean, a senior official, gave journalists information that was then published. All we want is for Canadians to have access to that information. It is clear and simple.

Oral Questions

Why are the minister and Prime Minister refusing to give all Canadians the information that was shared with journalists in India? It is clear—

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness.

[English]

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. gentleman said that the journalists have published all the information, and that is correct. The fact of the matter is that the Prime Minister has offered to the Leader of the Opposition complete details on this situation, the classified information, so that the Leader of the Opposition can be fully informed of all the relevant facts and circumstances.

Why would a person interested in discovering the truth of the whole story turn down the information?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, did the national security adviser provide classified information to journalists?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the information that the opposition is craving is the information that the Prime Minister has offered to the Leader of the Opposition. He has offered him a full classified briefing so that he can know all the facts. He should accept that offer. If he turns it down, if he declines to have all the facts, one can only conclude that he prefers to be wilfully blind to the circumstances and play politics with the situation.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, did the national security adviser give classified information to journalists?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again, the opposition is clearly determined to play politics with the situation and would rather not be informed of the facts in order to be wilfully blind. That is not acceptable. They need to accept the offer that was made by the Prime Minister, receive the information in an appropriate way, and then further things can be discussed.

* * *

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last October, I asked the Minister of Foreign Affairs if she would stand up for the B.C. and Canadian wine industry in the face of U.S. demands for greater market access under NAFTA. Our wine industry creates over 37,000 jobs across Canada and is our highest value-added agricultural product, but over the last 20 years, the market share of Canadian wine has been almost halved while the U.S. share has more than doubled.

Will the Prime Minister state in the House that he will not trade away the thousands of jobs in our wine industry at the eleventh hour of NAFTA talks?

Hon. Andrew Leslie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs (Canada-U.S. Relations), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the U.S. also has measures in place to promote and protect its own wine industry, including limited points of sale.

American wine already does very well in Canada, and the U.S. is our largest supplier. The minister has discussed this with Premier

Horgan. We will continue to work closely with the provinces and territories on this issue.

The priority of the government is to look out for the interests of Canadians, including job creation and trade opportunities in various and all sectors. We are always going to stand up for Canadian industry and defend our wine producers and workers.

Ms. Tracey Ramsey (Essex, NDP): Mr. Speaker, earlier this month, the Liberal member for Hamilton East—Stoney Creek and co-chair of the steel caucus said on national television that the American threats to Canadian steel and aluminum were a ploy, and that everybody knows it is a joke.

The potential impacts are far too serious for us to dismiss them as a joke.

Last week, I requested an emergency debate on tariff threats from the Trump administration. With the May 1 deadline now looming, when exactly will the government act to protect these Canadian industries and the workers whose jobs depend on them?

Hon. Andrew Leslie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs (Canada-U.S. Relations), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government has worked hard to secure an exemption for Canada from tariffs on both aluminum and steel.

We are going to continue this good work until the prospect of these duties is fully and finally lifted. Our priority is to get the best deal for Canadian workers and their families. As the Prime Minister said to the steel and aluminum workers a couple of weeks ago, “We had your backs [then] and we always will.”

* * *

● (1450)

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a very simple and straightforward question.

Did the national security adviser give classified information to the media, yes or no?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the opposition is clearly playing political games with a very serious situation.

The fact of the matter is that last Friday the opposition threw away an entire question period. It filibustered in unnecessary votes for hours on end. It has twice cancelled debate on the firearms legislation, which is designed to make Canadians safer in their communities.

The opposition is not at all interested in the public interest of Canada. It is interested in silly political games that simply do not stand the test.

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have a question.

Oral Questions

Did the national security adviser provide classified information to the media, yes or no?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me return the favour. Will the Leader of the Opposition accept an offer for a full classified briefing on all the facts of the situation so he can be informed, or does the Leader of the Opposition prefer to be wilfully blind and play politics?

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, does my hon. colleague not know that it is not polite to point?

Can the minister answer this question, yes or no? Did the national security adviser provide the media with classified information?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is abundantly clear that the opposition is not interested in real information. It is not interested in facts and figures. It wants to obfuscate and play games with a very serious situation.

The fact of the matter is that the offer has been made. The opposition should accept that offer and become informed. If it declines to be informed, clearly the opposition is trying to be wilfully blind and just play a political game.

* * *

[Translation]

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Mr. Pierre Breton (Shefford, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, beginning on April 1, the Canadian Agricultural Partnership will provide financial support for strategic initiatives and business risk management programs in the agriculture and agrifood sector for five years. This agreement is guaranteed to drive growth.

Can the parliamentary secretary to the minister tell us how this will benefit farmers and businesses in my riding, Shefford, and everyone else in Quebec?

Mr. Jean-Claude Poissant (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Shefford for his excellent work as a member of the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food.

A few days ago, the minister was proud to join Quebec's Minister Lessard in announcing a \$293-million investment in cost-shared strategic initiatives in Quebec as part of the Canadian Agricultural Partnership. This investment will help Quebec producers innovate and make the targeted investments that best meet their unique needs.

Our government will continue to stand up for Quebec producers and help create growth and opportunities in this sector.

* * *

[English]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be asking a question and I am looking for an answer, not another question. Did the national security adviser give classified information to journalists?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, will the Leader of the Opposition accept the full classified briefing so he can be informed, or does he just want to continue a silly political charade?

* * *

[Translation]

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this government is again neglecting farmers and food processors, especially as it updates the Canadian organic standards.

By requiring the industry to bear the cost of consultations, this government is putting at risk the organic sector, which is made up by very young businesses for the most part.

When will this government take responsibility and fund each step of the current and future reviews of organic farming, as is the case in the United States and Europe?

Mr. Jean-Claude Poissant (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this budget builds on budget 2017 and describes agriculture as a key economic sector for Canada.

We are investing over \$150 million in protein industries superclusters, \$100 million in agricultural science and innovation, and \$75 million in promoting trade. We are contributing to and funding the development of new organic standards.

* * *

● (1455)

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos (Saint-Laurent, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, innovation is changing how we live and work, creating new opportunities and new challenges for Canada and our G7 partners.

Montreal will be hosting G7 labour ministers later this week in my riding, Saint-Laurent, to kick off this year's G7 meetings.

[English]

In a global environment where innovative countries are leading the way and job growth is dependent on our ability to adapt, can the parliamentary secretary update the House on what he hopes to get out of these G7 meetings?

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Saint-Laurent for hosting the important G7 ministerial meetings in Montreal.

Points of Order

Globally, we have entered an innovation race. To ensure our success, we must invest in new industries and in our people. That is why we are making smart investments in skills training and post-secondary education, creating nearly 60,000 paid internships and teaching digital literacy to young Canadians. We also know that we cannot afford to leave half of our population behind. That is why we are addressing pay equity and women's entrepreneurship, and we are committed to getting more women in STEM.

* * *

[Translation]

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Hon. Steven Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Mr. Speaker, negotiations have been slow and difficult and are stagnating. No agreement can be reached on a price or timeline. What a mess.

The Prime Minister himself is the one who gave his word on January 19 in Quebec City regarding four icebreakers for the Davie shipyard. Whether for the aluminum smelter in Saguenay, the Port of Montreal, or the Arctic, there is a shortage of efficient icebreakers like the *Aviq*, even though a solution is easily within reach.

When will the Prime Minister put the Davie shipyard workers back to work?

Hon. Carla Qualtrough (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have identified the needs of the Canadian Coast Guard regarding the icebreakers. Discussions and negotiations with the Dave shipyard are on-going in order to meet those needs. We are pursuing our discussions and doing our due diligence. We will not comment further at this point, but we continue our discussions.

* * *

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Carles Puigdemont, who was democratically elected president of Catalonia, was arrested in Germany.

Spain is responding to public protests with violence. By greeting these attacks on democracy with deafening silence, Canada is condoning the violence.

Mr. Puigdemont was arrested for giving his people a democratic choice over their political future.

Will Canada step up and denounce this attack on democracy?

Mr. Matt DeCourcey (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we continue to follow the situation closely, and we hope for a peaceful solution to this ongoing debate that is in accordance with the laws and the Spanish constitution.

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, Carles Puigdemont, the former president of the Catalan state, was arrested by German authorities. Five more elected representatives were also imprisoned by Spain to prevent Catalonia from naming a successor.

Will Canada call on Germany and Spain to release these political prisoners and denounce this attack on democracy?

It is up to the 7.5 million Catalans to choose their future. It is not up to a handful of despots. Democracy is freedom.

Mr. Matt DeCourcey (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I just said, we continue to follow the situation closely, and we hope for a peaceful solution to this ongoing debate in accordance with the laws and the Spanish constitution.

The Speaker: The hon. member for Hochelaga on a point of order.

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet: Mr. Speaker, given that the government has begun a new round of consultations on a human rights-based approach to housing, I rise today on a point of order to seek the unanimous consent of the House to table, in both official languages, the brief I submitted for the consultations on a national housing strategy that reflects the will of these groups, calling for just such a human rights-based approach, formally recognizing the right of every person to housing, incorporating that principle into our human rights legislation, and taking the necessary measures to eliminate the obstacles preventing the full implementation of that right.

• (1500)

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

Some hon. members: Yes.

Some hon. members: No.

* * *

[English]

POINTS OF ORDER

DECORUM IN THE HOUSE

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, you may have noticed in question period that occasionally I attempted to gesture to you. I would like to explain. The Standing Orders make it clear that we are not supposed to heckle in this place. It would be a fool's mission to try to get the volume down all the time. However, I do not recall the disrespect toward the Prime Minister and the front benches in the 41st Parliament that I am seeing in the 42nd Parliament. When I cannot hear the Prime Minister's answers, even with my earpiece in, I would ask the hon. members on the opposition benches to at least show the courtesy of not heckling so loudly that other members cannot hear the answers.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order.

I thank the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands for her intervention. I regret that some members felt it necessary to make the point she was making by heckling while she was making her intervention, which is regrettable.

The hon. member for Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères on a point of order.

Routine Proceedings

[Translation]

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval: Mr. Speaker, I believe that if you seek it, you will find unanimous consent for the following motion: That the Government of Canada intervene with the German and Spanish governments to call for the release of the following political prisoners: Carles Puigdemont, Jordi Turull, Raül Romeva, Carme Forcadell, Dolors Bassa, and Josep Rull.

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

Some hon. members: Yes.

Some hon. members: No.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to 14 petitions.

* * *

TSILHQOT'IN CHIEFS

The Speaker: Pursuant to an order made earlier this day, I now invite hon. members to rise while our distinguished guests enter the chamber and take their seats.

Our guests from the Tsilhqot'in first nation are Chief Joe Alphonse, Chief Russell Myers Ross, Chief Francis Lacey, Chief Victor Roy Stump, Chief Otis Guichon Sr., Chief Jimmy Lulua.

The right hon. Prime Minister.

[Translation]

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Today, we come together in the presence of the Tsilhqot'in chiefs to fully acknowledge the actions of past governments committed against the Tsilhqot'in people, and to express the Government of Canada's profound regret for those actions.

• (1505)

[English]

We also come together out of recognition and respect for the Tsilhqot'in Nation, a vital partner in Canada's ongoing nation-to-nation effort toward reconciliation.

Today we honour and recognize six Tsilhqot'in chiefs, men who were treated and tried as criminals in an era when both the colonial government and the legal process did not respect the inherent rights of the Tsilhqot'in people and the Tsilhqot'in Nation.

As the government and the people of Canada continue to come to terms with our colonial past, it is essential that we recognize and support the implementation of the rights of the Tsilhqot'in, and all indigenous peoples, enshrined in our Constitution. The recognition and implementation of indigenous rights can wait no longer. Neither

should the Tsilhqot'in people continue to wait for an apology that is long overdue.

[Translation]

Long before the arrival of Europeans, the Tsilhqot'in people cared for and protected their homelands. In the spring of 1864, the Tsilhqot'in chiefs led a war party in defence of those homelands.

[English]

The chiefs were attempting to repel a colonial road crew that wanted to build a road through Tsilhqot'in territory without any legal agreement with the Tsilhqot'in Nation. The rights of the Tsilhqot'in people to their land and their right to maintain and uphold their cultural and legal traditions were not considered by the colonial government of the day.

As settlers came to the land in the rush for gold, no consideration was given to the needs of the Tsilhqot'in people who were there first. No agreement was made to access their land, and no consent was sought.

At the same time, along with settlement, came smallpox, which devastated indigenous communities across the continent, including the Tsilhqot'in. Some reliable historical accounts indicate that the Tsilhqot'in had been threatened with the spread of the disease by one of the road workers, and so faced with these threats, the Tsilhqot'in people took action to defend their territory.

After convening a council to declare war, they attacked the road crew near Bute Inlet and removed all settlers from their lands before taking refuge in their territory beyond the reach of the colonial militia.

[Translation]

Not long after, one of the leaders of the colonial militia, Gold Commissioner William Cox, sent the Tsilhqot'in chiefs a sacred gift of tobacco and, with it, an invitation to discuss terms of peace. Head War Chief Lhats'as'in and his men accepted this truce.

[English]

Instead of being welcomed as leaders and respected warriors, they were arrested, imprisoned, convicted, and killed. On October 26, 1864, five Tsilhqot'in chiefs were hanged for murder: Head War Chief Lhats'as'in, Chief Biyil, Chief Tilaghd, Chief Taqed, and Chief Chaysey. They are buried in Quesnel, B.C. Later, Chief Ahan was also hanged. He is buried in New Westminster, B.C.

• (1510)

[Translation]

Today our government acknowledges what the colonial government of the day was unwilling to accept: that these six chiefs were leaders and warriors of the Tsilhqot'in Nation, and that the Tsilhqot'in people they led maintained rights to land that had never been ceded.

Routine Proceedings

[English]

Even though the colonial government did not recognize these rights, the chiefs acted in accordance with their own laws to defend their territory, their people, and their way of life. They acted as leaders of a proud and independent nation facing a threat from another nation. When they came to meet with colonial officials, they did so on a diplomatic mission, expecting to be treated with dignity and honour. Their capture and arrest by the colonial government demonstrated a profound lack of respect for the Tsilhqot'in people, as did the refusal to recognize the Tsilhqot'in as a nation. Those are mistakes that our government is determined to set right.

We now understand that the treatment of the Tsilhqot'in chiefs represented a betrayal of trust and injustice that has been carried by the Tsilhqot'in people for more than 150 years even as they have continued to fight for and achieve recognition as the owners and caretakers of their land.

Today the Tsilhqot'in people, including the descendants of those six chiefs, continue to live on and care for Tsilhqot'in lands. They have never stopped fighting to preserve their territory and their culture right up to the historic Supreme Court of Canada decision of June 26, 2014, which recognized aboriginal title to the Tsilhqot'in Nation.

The Tsilhqot'in people and their leaders continue to show the same commitment to their land and to their nation that their chiefs did in 1864, pursuing government-to-government discussions with the Government of British Columbia and the Government of Canada with the goal of reconciliation and recognition as a self-determined first nation.

In February 2016, the Tsilhqot'in Nation and British Columbia signed the Nenqay Deni Accord, a significant step toward this goal. Less than a year later, in January 2017, we signed a letter of understanding between the Government of Canada and the Tsilhqot'in Nation, marking another step toward reconciliation and recognition of our new nation-to-nation relationship.

We know that the exoneration and the apology we are making today on behalf of Canada cannot by itself repair the damage that has been done, but it is my sincere hope that these words will allow for greater healing as Canada and the Tsilhqot'in Nation continue on a shared journey toward reconciliation.

At the same time, we would do well to acknowledge that for the Tsilhqot'in people the events of 1864 and 1865 are not confined to history. As a people, in particular the mothers who have passed this history down through generations, the Tsilhqot'in have carried these events with them for more than a century and a half.

The actions of the government of the day have had a deep and lasting impact on the relationship between the Tsilhqot'in nation and Canada. Think of all we might have gained if proper relations between our nations had been established and maintained. Think of what it might have meant for the Tsilhqot'in people to have true self-determination over their own future. Think of the economic opportunities that might have been realized. Think of what Canada would gain had we been open those many years ago to learning about the rich culture and traditions of the Tsilhqot'in people and

finding for it a lasting place within the fabric of Canada. For the loss of that time and opportunity, we are truly sorry.

• (1515)

[Translation]

As much as it is within our power to do so, we must right the wrongs of the past. As an important symbol of our commitment to reconciliation, we confirm without reservation that Chief Lhats'as'in, Chief Biyil, Chief Tilaghd, Chief Taqed, Chief Chayses, and Chief Ahan are fully exonerated of any crime or wrongdoing.

[English]

In the words of Chief Lhats'as'in, "They meant war, not murder." We recognize that these six chiefs were leaders of a nation, that they acted in accordance with their laws and traditions, and that they are well regarded as heroes of their people.

[Translation]

I very much look forward to visiting the declared aboriginal title lands of the Tsilhqot'in Nation this summer, at the invitation of the Tsilhqot'in leadership, to deliver this statement of exoneration directly to the Tsilhqot'in people, who have fought so long and so hard to have the commitment and sacrifice of their war chiefs recognized.

[English]

Acknowledging and apologizing for past mistakes is an important part of renewing the relationship between Canada and the Tsilhqot'in Nation, but more hard work lies ahead to continue to work together in positive ways that affirm the government's respect and recognition of the rights of the Tsilhqot'in people, to build a partnership that will support the Tsilhqot'in people as they continue to preserve and strengthen their culture and traditions, and govern and care for a territory as a flourishing nation, and to embrace the Tsilhqot'in Nation and its rich contributions to the country we all call home, to live up to the spirit of co-operation between our peoples, which has always been the unique strength and promise of Canada from its earliest days.

As we honour the courage and sacrifice shown by the Tsilhqot'in chiefs 154 years ago, we fulfill that strength and that promise, and we do it as we always should have, in partnership, with respect, together.

Sechanalyagh.

• (1520)

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of Canada's Conservatives to mark a sombre milestone in the history of British Columbia and that of Canada. We hope that today's apology and exoneration will address some of the pain that still exists within the hearts of the Tsilhqot'in people.

Here in 2018, we may ask ourselves what an apology can achieve. Moments such as this cannot change behaviour from another era or fix the past. We can, however, recognize the clear lasting and profound impact that former actions have had and the scars that have not been healed.

Routine Proceedings

We join in apology and recognition today to acknowledge how our shared history can create understanding in the present and co-operation in the future.

More than 150 years ago, before Confederation, and at a time when Canada was a land equally steeped in opportunity and in conflict, the Tsilhqot'in people found themselves face to face with newcomers to their homeland. As has happened so often throughout history, collisions between indigenous people and new settlers can lead to misunderstanding, fear, and violence.

The Tsilhqot'in, facing a new presence on their homeland that was accompanied neither by meaningful outreach nor diplomacy, did as many of us would have done. They sought to protect their communities. Open war was declared and the pivotal moment in the conflict saw confrontations between the Tsilhqot'in and a group of workers near Bute Inlet. The Tsilhqot'in began a campaign to remove settlers from their lands, lands that had been arbitrarily declared open and free for access by arriving European peoples.

As the war dragged on, an agreement was struck between the Tsilhqot'in and colonial representatives to meet to discuss diplomatic terms. In a clear act of betrayal, the Tsilhqot'in leaders, who had arrived unarmed to the meeting, were arrested and taken into custody. They were tried for murder.

On October 26, five of the Tsilhqot'in chiefs were hanged and a sixth in the following year. They were Chief Lhats'as'in, Chief Biyil, Chief Tilaghd, Chief Taqed, Chief Chayses, and Chief Ahan.

The purpose of today's ceremony is to mark the exoneration of the Tsilhqot'in chiefs. Neither criminals nor aggressors, they may be regarded by all as having done what many of us would have considered normal and just: defended their lands, their communities, and their families, defended their way of life.

Canadian governments of all kinds can demonstrate a record of continued progress in relations between indigenous people in Canada. Certainly, we were proud of some of the strides that we made as the last government in terms of a relationship with first nations, Inuit, and Métis. Those strides often came with a sorrowful and respectful recognition of wrongdoing on the part of Canada and our forebears.

None, of course, better exemplifies this commitment than the apology to the former students of the residential schools. There was also the historic creation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the apology for relocation of Inuit families to the high Arctic, and the honouring of Métis veterans at Juno Beach, among other milestones, but the work clearly has not ended and it must continue.

It is appropriate that we work today toward a better understanding between the Tsilhqot'in Nation and Canada. The Tsilhqot'in people of today contribute to the shared prosperity of beautiful British Columbia, a place so many of us are proud to call home. Their historic suffering has been recognized and remembered by successive provincial governments.

As the words inscribed on what is today the site of the execution of those Tsilhqot'in chiefs tells us, we must "honour those who lost their lives in defence of the territory and the traditional way of life".

We recognize the inconsolable grief that has echoed through their nation and reverberates even today.

The Supreme Court of Canada's decision of 2014 recognized aboriginal title for the Tsilhqot'in Nation, an important moment for their nation, but one that also recognized them as a centuries long steward of their beautiful land.

I personally have enjoyed first-hand the majesty of the territory, mountains, rivers, and valleys, the abundant wildlife, and of course, the unique and fascinating wild horses. As the wildfires ravaged through the land last summer, we can understand what a significant impact it was to the Tsilhqot'in people, another loss to overcome.

• (1525)

Conservatives also hope that today's apology is an important step for an improved relationship so that all residents of the Tsilhqot'in can live side by side in harmony and enjoy mutual prosperity.

We thank and honour the presence of the Tsilhqot'in Nation here in the House of Commons today. This is a place where we can help define Canada for this generation and the next. We hope that today and in the future it can also be a place that the Tsilhqot'in can regard as a place of progress, reconciliation, and co-operation.

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, New Democrats welcome and support today's apology and exoneration. We join the government in acknowledging the harm done to the Tsilhqot'in people prior, during, and since the Tsilhqot'in war of 1864-65. In particular, we want to express our support for the exoneration of the six Tsilhqot'in chiefs who were deceived with the false promise of a truce, only to be wrongfully arrested, tried, and hanged as criminals.

Chief Joe Alphonse said, speaking of today's exoneration, that:

If you come into Tsilhqot'in territory you had to have Tsilhqot'in permission. And when the Waddington road-building crew came in, they didn't get that permission. And when they took our women, abused our women, we declared war on them.

The Tsilhqot'in people took justified action to defend their territory, and they were met not only with violent escalation but with dishonour. This was a critical event in the Tsilhqot'in war and a blight in the history of British Columbia. More than that, the violation of the Tsilhqot'in people and land is part of Canada's legacy of empty indigenous-colonial violence that still continues today.

[Translation]

Well before the Europeans arrived, the Tsilhqot'in Nation lived in the heart of western Canada's mountains and rivers in what is known today as British Columbia. Well before colonization, these communities shared a common history and culture as they took care of their land.

As in other parts of Canada, colonization spread over the lands of the Tsilhqot'in Nation, lands stolen without any negotiation or form of diplomacy.

Routine Proceedings

Smallpox came to this region, as it did to the rest of Canada, and spread to the indigenous people who had no immunity against the illnesses brought by the Europeans. Some historical accounts indicate that this may have been intentional. Also, as in other parts of Canada, women were abused.

The Tsilhqot'in had to take action to defend their people and their lands. The Chilcotin War was declared 154 years ago. In the spring of 1864, the crew of a road construction company was attacked. Colonists, who had illegally settled on the Tsilhqot'in Nation's lands with the support of the colonial government at the time, were hunted.

Over the summer, the chiefs were invited to negotiate peace, but they were betrayed. Instead, they were shackled, put behind bars, and later led to the gallows. Their fate was sealed in advance. They were found guilty of murder and sentenced to hang. Six chiefs of the Tsilhqot'in Nation were hanged.

[English]

Four years ago, the Government of British Columbia fully exonerated the Tsilhqot'in chiefs for action taken in defence of their laws and territories in 1864. On behalf of New Democrats, I echo the B.C. government's words when I say that these chiefs were not criminals. These chiefs were not outlaws. These chiefs were proud leaders engaged in the defence of their lands and of their people.

On this day of apology and exoneration we also want to honour the many Tsilhqot'in historians, activists, advocates, and knowledge keepers who have continued in the face of overwhelming odds to honour the past and fight for a more just future. This day is a small vindication of their struggles. May it be the first of many more to come.

It must be said that this apology and this exoneration are long overdue. As was noted in the letter of understanding between the Tsilhqot'in and Canada, we recognize that reconciliation begins with truth telling and healing, so let us continue telling the truth here today.

We believe in justice for indigenous peoples. We believe in reconciliation. We believe it is time to act, because indigenous communities cannot wait another 150 years for hope. Even these lands on which we stand today, these lands on which I rise in this hallowed chamber, are the unceded lands of the Algonquin people.

• (1530)

Unless we continue to tell these hard truths and truly address the violence of Canada's ongoing colonial history, we will never be able to heal the trauma left in its wake. Reconciliation will be nothing more than a cruel deception like the one that stole the lives of six Tsilhqot'in chiefs 150 years ago.

[Translation]

It is time to put words into action when it comes to reconciliation. Indigenous peoples have suffered under colonial rule for 150 years. The next 150 years should be focused on nation-to-nation reconciliation, respect for the earth, and respect for cultures. The Tsilhqot'in Nation and the indigenous peoples of Canada have human rights and it is time they were upheld. We cannot continue to ignore the voices of those who walked this land before us.

[English]

Fighting against fishing rights on the Nuu-chah-nulth territory on the west coast of British Columbia is wrong. Fighting survivors of residential schools, like the ones from St. Anne's, is wrong. Leaving 81 first nation communities on long-term boil water advisories is wrong. Failing to appropriately address the housing crisis gripping first nation communities from coast to coast to coast is wrong. Failing to reform a justice system that disproportionately incarcerates indigenous people and exonerates their killers is wrong. A society that turns a blind eye to indigenous women being murdered and going missing at an alarming and disproportionate rate is wrong.

Real change cannot be all talk.

[Translation]

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples must have force of law in Canada. On that note, I would once more like to honour my colleague, the member for Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, for leading the charge, especially on getting this Parliament to recognize indigenous languages. This is an essential part of reconciliation.

Today is probably the first time some MPs have ever heard of the Tsilhqot'in nation and the events of 1864-65. I myself only learned about the Tsilhqot'in war and the hangings of six chiefs of the Tsilhqot'in nation while preparing this speech. I am not alone in my ignorance in Canada. We still know far too little about those who came before us. We know even less about those who protected the land that is now our shared home. We have a duty to remember. We have a duty to be curious. We have a duty to learn.

We have a duty to pass on the history of the first nations, the Inuit people, and the Métis. To do so, we need to make time. We need to make time in the calendar and take the time to learn more and better our understanding.

That is why we support the bill introduced by the member for Desnethé—Mississippi—Churchill River to make National Indigenous Peoples Day a statutory holiday in Canada.

• (1535)

[English]

Following the recommendation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, National Indigenous Peoples Day should be an opportunity to honour the many contributions indigenous peoples have made to this land and reflect on the many challenges they still face today. A statutory holiday would offer a public opportunity to better understand and ensure Canadians recognize our common history and the legacy of the treaty relationship, which remains a vital component of the reconciliation process. This day would allow us to take stock of our dark history, like the hanging of six chiefs from the Tsilhqot'in Nation.

Routine Proceedings

Today's apology of the Government of Canada and the exoneration of the Tsilhqot'in chiefs are welcome. It is a step in the right direction, and it will hopefully provide some closure, comfort, and peace to the Tsilhqot'in Nation. However, the legacy after the apology will be in the concrete actions the government, and the ones after it, take to build a true nation-to-nation relationship with first nations, Inuit, and Métis. We cannot continue along the same path we have so unjustly walked for centuries.

To the members of the Tsilhqot'in Nation and other indigenous representatives in the House today, I want to thank them. I want to thank them for their strength in the face of colonialism. I want to thank them for their determination to see justice done. I want to thank them for their courage in the face of horrendous acts of violence, ignorance, and denial, and I want to thank them for their patience with our young country as we strive to be better.

During my preparations for this speech, Chief Roger William explained that the Tsilhqot'in do not apologize the same way the English or French do. To apologize, a person must admit that they did wrong.

We know we have much to do so that we can all stand on equal footing, but today I look up to all Tsilhqot'in.

[Member spoke in Tsilhqot'in]

[English]

We did wrong and we will do better.

[Translation]

The Speaker: Does the hon. member for Mirabel have the unanimous consent of the House to speak on this matter?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Simon Marcil (Mirabel, GPQ): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to rise briefly on behalf of my Groupe parlementaire québécois colleagues. The exoneration of the Tsilhqot'in chiefs is of great symbolic significance. The events of 1864 paint a telling portrait of colonialism at the height of its greed, set against the backdrop of the gold rush. I will not go into great detail about these events, but I would like to emphasize the major lack of comprehension surrounding this crisis.

When the workers who were hired to build a road through the Tsilhqot'in Nation's territory were killed in 1864, colonial forces set out in search of those they perceived as murderers. The important thing to note here is that the authorities had no idea what had happened when they made the decision to send a militia to avenge the workers.

Correspondence from that period indicates that no one understood the reason for the crisis. There was no indication that the construction workers had never sought or obtained permission from the Tsilhqot'in to build anything on their land. There was no indication of the fact that the arrival of the white man had come at a heavy cost for the Tsilhqot'in Nation, who lost half of its population to smallpox. It was not until the Tsilhqot'in chiefs were lured into peace negotiations, ambushed and subsequently sentenced to death that possible explanations came to light for the first time.

I wish I could say that this was merely representative of a bygone era when communication between speakers of different languages was all but impossible in a vast and little-known land. However, even now in the House, people talk about nation-to-nation relationships as though it were the most cutting-edge concept ever.

Establishing egalitarian relationships with others who share the same territory is not innovative, visionary, or bold. It is sensible. It is basic respect. No relationship works without respect. Let us keep that basic fact in mind as we go forward.

In closing, I would like to thank the Tsilhqot'in Nation representatives who are here with us today. May the tragedies that have afflicted your nation build a path to a better future for your people and all indigenous communities in Quebec and Canada.

• (1540)

The Speaker: Does the hon. member for Manicouagan also have the unanimous consent of the House to give her speech?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mrs. Marilène Gill (Manicouagan, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to have this opportunity to respond to the Prime Minister's statement because today is a great day for the Tsilhqot'in Nation, whose war chiefs are being exonerated by the federal government over 150 years after the events we talked about earlier.

On behalf of the Bloc Québécois, I would like to begin by applauding the government's decision as well as the collaboration among the chiefs, the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs, and all parties in the House in organizing this ceremony. The presence of Tsilhqot'in Nation representatives in this symbolic place is a testament to everyone's commitment to righting past wrongs.

What is the significance of today's gesture, and what must be done going forward? The Bloc Québécois hopes that relations with indigenous peoples will be respectful. We believe that acts of reparation such as the exoneration of the six Tsilhqot'in warrior chiefs, who were arrested as a result of a cowardly ruse and then sentenced to death by hanging, is a humble first step in the right direction. Many more symbolic acts will have to be carried out, including exonerations. I am thinking of Mistahimaskwa, also known as Big Bear, and several members of his band, who were found guilty of treason in 1885. I am also thinking of Pitikwahanapiwiyin, or Poundmaker, who was also found guilty of the same charges in the same era. I am thinking of Louis Riel, who was hanged on November 6, 1885, under outdated legislation on high treason. This was a dark day in the history of Canada, and it has permanently scarred the collective consciousness of the Métis nation and the Quebec nation.

The men I just mentioned fought for their nation. We hope that the government will support reconciliation by exonerating them as well. They are heroes who were unfairly condemned, just like the Tsilhqot'in chiefs: Grand Chief Lhats'as'in, Chief Biyil, Chief Tilaghd, Chief Taqed, Chief Chayses, and Chief Ahan.

Routine Proceedings

In closing, Canada will have a great deal of work to do to make amends for its colonial past and to improve the living conditions of indigenous peoples. They can always count on the Bloc Québécois to listen to their concerns and to support them, because we hope to have a positive and constructive effect on relations with indigenous peoples. We want to end colonialism. We want to make amends. We are also committed to being an ally in the House and elsewhere.

Tshinashkumitin, meegwetch, sechanalyagh.

[English]

The Speaker: Does the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands also have the unanimous consent of the House to present her comments?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, it is indeed an enormous honour to stand here today on the traditional unceded territory of the Algonquin peoples, to whom we say *meegwetch* for their generosity. Across this country, indigenous peoples have allowed us settler culture people to share a territory. Historically, we have not done it in ways that make us proud, which is what brings us here today.

In the tradition and language of the indigenous peoples, whose great honour it is for me to stand here as the member of Parliament for Saanich—Gulf Islands, and the WSÁNEC, in Sencoten, I raise my hands to the chiefs of the Tsilhqot'in, who are here today, and say *hiswke siam*. We hold them in honour and respect and are deeply honoured by their presence in this chamber today. In their own language, *hunelht'ah*. It is a great honour and privilege to participate in being able to say that after all these years, more than 150 years of injustice toward six individual chiefs who stood on behalf of their nations against aggression, in the way that national leaders do, they are now exonerated of the wrongful charges and the horrific murder of six Tsilhqot'in chiefs in that time of the 1864 Tsilhqot'in war.

I appreciate that the Prime Minister referenced the most recent history and the landmark case of the Supreme Court of Canada in 2014. I know Chief Joe Alphonse fought hard on that one, which was a long battle to have the land rights of the Tsilhqot'in recognized in the Supreme Court of Canada. The affront that caused that Supreme Court decision goes all the way back to 1983, 31 years before the unanimous Supreme Court decision written by former chief justice Beverley McLachlin. The affront to territory, to land rights, was in granting logging permits to carrier lumber, with no consideration that this was territory on which carrier lumber and the British Columbia government had no right to log. That 31 years of patience finally resulted in a unanimous Supreme Court of Canada verdict which said clearly that title is title. We are now in a period of trying to right the wrongs.

Certainly, the 1864 Tsilhqot'in war was replete with wrongs. The actions of the chiefs at the time were prompted by not just the presence of a road crew but the actions of that road crew with respect to abuse and sexual violence against young indigenous women of the Tsilhqot'in Nation, and the abuse of their own indigenous workers on the work crew, who were poorly treated and not paid. Ultimately, as is reported in history, when four bags of flour were stolen, the retaliation by the road crew was to distribute smallpox-infected blankets to cause biological warfare against the Tsilhqot'in Nation.

We know now, as others have said, how exactly wrong that period in our history was, and how long the full legal exoneration of the Tsilhqot'in leadership of that period was in coming, and of course an apology from the Government of Canada, for which I thank the Prime Minister from the bottom of my heart. This is long overdue. However, that does not take away from the fact that this is an important day. It is also important that all parties agreed to the unusual ability for us to have on the floor of our chamber the current Tsilhqot'in leadership. This is very important.

I will turn back to the words of Chief Lhats'as'in, who said, "We meant war, not murder." We can say back to him now, through the veils of history and time, perhaps reaching him somewhere, that in this settler culture Canada, in this I hope post-colonial era, when he said, "We meant war, not murder", we say now that we mean reconciliation, peace, respect, and we mean, at long last, a nation-to-nation relationship based on mutual respect and stewardship of our land with the leadership of indigenous peoples.

I again say, *hiswke siam, meegwetch, hunelht'ah.*

• (1545)

The Speaker: I thank the Right Hon. Prime Minister, the hon. member for Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, the hon. member for Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, the hon. member for Mirabel, the hon. member for Manicouagan, and the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands for their eloquent words today.

Pursuant to order made earlier today, I now invite Peyal Lacey of the Tsilhqot'in First Nation to perform a traditional drumming ceremony.

[Performance of traditional drumming ceremony]

• (1555)

The Speaker: I now invite honourable members to rise while our distinguished guests leave the chamber.

[Translation]

I wish to inform the House that because of the ministerial statement, government orders will be extended by 44 minutes.

* * *

[English]

INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

Mr. Geng Tan (Don Valley North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1), I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian parliamentary delegation of the Canada-China Legislative Association respecting its participation in the co-chair's annual visit to China from May 19 to August 26, 2017, and the 21st bilateral meeting held in China from August 16 to August 26, 2017.

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1), I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, three reports of the Canada-United States Inter-Parliamentary Group.

The first concerns the Pacific NorthWest Economic Region's 27th annual summit held in Portland, Oregon, U.S.A., from July 23 to July 27, 2017.

Government Orders

The second concerns the 71st annual meeting of The Council of State Governments' southern legislative conference held in Biloxi, Mississippi, U.S.A., from July 29 to August 2, 2017.

The third concerns the United States congressional meeting held in Washington, D.C., United States of America, from November 27 to November 29, 2017.

* * *

[*Translation*]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 57th report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs regarding Bill C-377, an act to change the name of the electoral district of Châteauguay—Lacolle. The committee has studied the bill and has decided to report the bill back to the House without amendment.

• (1600)

[*English*]

The committee agrees that the riding of Châteauguay—Lacolle's name be changed as presented.

[*Translation*]

I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 58th report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

Pursuant to Standing Order 91.1(2), the Subcommittee on Private Members' Business met to consider the item added to the order of precedence on Tuesday, March 20, 2018, in substitution of Bill C-385.

[*English*]

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

[*Translation*]

Hon. Larry Bagnell: Mr. Speaker, I presented the two reports.

[*English*]

While I am on my feet, I move:

That the House proceed to orders of the day.

The 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: On division.

(Motion agreed to)

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

FISHERIES ACT

BILL C-68—TIME ALLOCATION MOTION

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

Mr. Mel Arnold (North Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC): Mr. Speaker, once again the government is showing that it is not willing to be open and transparent. Early in 2016, when I foresaw what the Liberals were going to try to do with this legislation, I submitted an Order Paper question, asking the government to provide proof of any loss of protection or harm caused by the 2012 legislation. There were no answers from the government, no proof of harm, no loss of protection.

Therefore, why are the Liberals now limiting debate on the legislation, limiting our parliamentary ability to do our job and to proceed with debate on this important legislation? Why is the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard not confident in the legislation and so afraid to have it fully debated in the House?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in fact, not only are we fully confident in the legislation and proud of the amendments we have proposed to the Fisheries Act, we look forward to having the legislation thoroughly analyzed and scrutinized in the House of Commons Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans. We hope the committee will hear from Canadians, from those interested in offering suggestions of how the legislation perhaps could be improved.

The only thing we are seeking to do is restore the loss of protections deleted in the legislation in 2012 and incorporate modern safeguards. That is a commitment we made to Canadians in the election of 2015, and we think this legislation is exactly how that should be done.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I want to say on the record parenthetically that I find the use of time allocation, as happening almost on a daily basis these days, to be quite shocking. I know that when in opposition, the Liberal Party promised not to use time allocation. It seems things were so bad under the previous government that being less bad is good enough for the Liberals. I do not think that is good enough really. However, I cannot resist the opportunity to ask the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard a question about his quite excellent legislation.

I am glad Bill C-68 is before us. We need it desperately. However, is he open to an amendment on a particular section that I was pleased and surprised to see, which is the barring of taking cetaceans into captivity? Would the minister be open perhaps to adding language so the bill that is now stuck in the Senate, Bill S-203, could have key elements incorporated into Bill C-68, in other words not just capturing but keeping or importing?

• (1605)

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Saanich—Gulf Islands for her support of the legislation. As I have said many times, we would be open to working with her and with all members of the House with respect to specific suggestions that would improve the legislation.

Government Orders

I agree with the member that the inclusion of the provisions around taking of cetaceans for captivity was inspired by the work done by the Senate, by Bill S-203, and former senator Wilfred Moore from the province of Nova Scotia. My colleague from Saanich—Gulf Islands, having studied law at Dalhousie University as did Senator Moore, would understand the importance of getting the right balance in legislation that keeps up with what we think is the widely held sentiment of Canadians.

With respect to the member's specific suggestion of those amendments, I would be happy to work with her to see how the intent of Bill S-203 and the substantive elements of that bill could be incorporated into amendments in the Fisheries Act. I look forward to having that conversation with her and with any other colleague.

Mr. Fin Donnelly: Mr. Speaker, I echo my colleague's comments about the procedure and the way in which this bill is moving forward. I find it is very unfortunate that we are using time allocation to pre-empt the process of full and rich debate that we need to have in the House.

On the substantive side of the bill, I express my support, and the New Democrats do support elements of bringing back the protections of HADD, the harmful alteration, disruption, and destruction of fish habitat. The minister is open to amendments and welcomes them. Would he be open to protecting environmental flows for fish, which is an important element and is a real problem, not only with allocation of water in different provinces and territories but with the changing climate? Determining those flows and preserving those flows for fish is incredibly important. Could he comment on that?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Port Moody—Coquitlam for his insight into this legislation. I think we have a lot more in common around this bill and the things we think are important to protect. There are perhaps a few areas where we may not be exactly of the same mind.

With respect to the importance, I know West Coast Environmental Law and a number of groups have talked to me and have done excellent work on what is a fairly new area around protecting environmental flows with respect to fish and fish habitats. It certainly had not been something, as I understood, that might have been contemplated 20 or 40 years ago when the House or our previous Parliament would have been ceased with amendments to the Fisheries Act. I have said publicly, and I will say it again, that I would be happy to work with him and other colleagues if they have specific suggestions of how we can better strengthen those provisions.

It is time that concept be incorporated into what is important environmental legislation, the Fisheries Act. I would welcome the chance to work with colleagues on those improvements.

Mr. Ken McDonald (Avalon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the minister knows, I sit on the Standing Committee of Fisheries and Oceans. We studied this and heard from witnesses and groups from coast to coast. An overwhelming theme was to replace the lost protections due to the changes in 2012. However, as well, I wanted to administer a comment about the restoration of those protections. An overarching theme we heard from witnesses from my home province of

Newfoundland and Labrador was the incorporation of owner/operator into the Fisheries Act itself.

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Avalon for his advice and for his insight into the fishery industry in his province of Newfoundland and Labrador. I have had the privilege to work with him. In fact, we met two fishers from his constituency who were in Ottawa last week. It is an opportunity for me to work with a colleague who is committed to the sustainable growth of the fishing industry in his province of Newfoundland and Labrador. There was a number of very innovative ideas of how we could improve the livelihood of the women and men who depended on that resource.

One of those elements for our government was incorporating the principle of owner/operator and fleet separation in the legislation, giving those long-standing policies force of law in Atlantic Canada and in Quebec. On the east coast of Canada, these policies have been part of the economic survival and economic future of coastal communities and those dependent on those resources. We want to ensure that the real ownership of these fishing licences remain in the hands of professional harvesters, professional fishers, not in the hands of some corporations that seek indirectly to do what they cannot do directly. We are very proud of that improvement. Again, we will work with colleagues who have ideas on how we can strengthen that.

Some colleagues from other parts of the country have talked to me about this policy and how it could in fact apply to their areas. We look forward to those conversations as well.

• (1610)

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are giving the Minister of Fisheries this question period because the government has moved to shut down the debate in the House. He keeps on saying how he would love to work with his colleagues and hear from his colleagues. He has a funny way of showing it when he cuts off the debate and limits it to one further day, with so few members having been able to participate in the debate.

It is somewhat deliciously ironic that when the member was the house leader for the Liberal Party when it was the third party, he used to rail against the member for York—Simcoe any time he tried to manage a debate in the House of Commons. Then it was terrible. Then it was the Conservatives shutting the place down, padlocking Parliament, and silencing democracy. However, today it is necessary to move it to committee as soon as possible.

Why was time allocation so bad when the Conservatives did it, but so good when his colleagues in the Liberal Party do it today?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend from Chilliwack—Hope for his passion in resisting these parliamentary procedures that would, in fact, bring legislation to committee.

In the last Parliament, when we were the third party in opposition, as the hon. member properly noted, I used to think that notes were left in the desk to my right or written perhaps on the lid of the desk from the former Conservative House leader.

Government Orders

Our commitment was to restore lost protections and incorporate modern safeguards in the Fisheries Act. We think we have found the right balance in the legislation in these amendments. We do not pretend there are not ways that perhaps it could be improved. I have had conversations with colleagues from the Conservative Party, from the New Democratic Party, and with colleagues in my own caucus.

As we have seen in recent days, the Conservative commitment to having constructive debate on legislation should perhaps be taken with a grain of salt in light of the events of last week and earlier today. We thought it was time to get the legislation to committee and allow it to do its important work.

We look forward to those conversations with colleagues at committee. Perhaps our colleague from Chilliwack—Hope will come to those committee sessions. I hope to be invited to attend the committee meetings and we can continue this important conversation there.

Mr. Fin Donnelly (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member for Chilliwack—Hope makes a good point, but from this perspective it is hard to take when we hear a member from the previous government, and we know how many times the Conservatives invoked time allocation, say the government is using the same tactics. It is unfortunate and it is at times hard to know who is worse. That is what Canadians are seeing when they look at how we are making legislation.

On the substantive part of the bill, the minister referenced owner/operator on the east coast in the Atlantic provinces and Quebec. However, on the west coast where there is now a real movement to have owner/operator adjacency looked at, would he be open to incorporating those principles that he and his father fought so hard to incorporate? Would he consider having that on the west coast and having a serious consultation, opening it to those who want to comment on the west coast? Is he open to those ideas and amendments?

•(1615)

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: Mr. Speaker, my colleague referenced owner/operator. As I said in my response to my colleague from Avalon, this policy has been an essential part of the economic opportunities afforded to coastal communities on the east coast in Atlantic Canada and in Quebec. We have been encouraged by representatives of fish harvesters from all provinces on the east coast to strengthen these measures. I hope the amendments we propose in Bill C-68 are part of that work.

With respect to the west coast, I, too, like our colleague from British Columbia, have met with representatives of fish harvesters on the west coast, including indigenous communities. They have talked to me about the importance of them gaining greater ownership of the instruments that will allow them to be much more in control of the economic development of their communities. It is certainly true of indigenous nations, and they have different rights to access the fish than perhaps others

However, I would be wide open to having a conversation with my colleague from Port Moody—Coquitlam, but also other colleagues from British Columbia, including those in my own caucus, about how some of the benefits of this policy could be applied to British Columbia. I do not pretend that it is as simple as installing those

provisions directly in the legislation, but he talked about a consultative process. The legislation is deliberately designed to be permissive so should British Columbia and the industry there want to look at this kind of legislative instrument, the provisions in the bill would be there, and we would look forward to those conversations.

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is very rich that the minister stands here today and talks about our first nations. We just had an incredible ceremony for the Tsilhqot'in Nation in my riding. He talks about Bill C-68, his ministry, and how he and other ministers are willing to engage with first nations. The Liberals have a lawsuit with one of the largest first nations in the province of British Columbia, the Lax Kw'alaams, specifically over Bill C-68, and the other bill, Bill C-55, the lack of consultation, of listening, and the first nations assertion that the government is taking its direction from foreign ownership third party groups.

I want to offer the minister another chance to clarify his comments. We are standing today because the government is shutting down debate, not allowing the 338 members of Parliament from all sides to stand and voice their concerns for Bill C-68. Indeed, those who have some serious issues like the Lax Kw'alaams have now launched a lawsuit against the government.

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: Mr. Speaker, we certainly recognize the importance of consultation with indigenous nations as we develop amendments to something as important to these communities, and to the people in these indigenous nations, as the Fisheries Act.

Two weeks ago, in my hon. colleague's province of British Columbia, I had the opportunity to meet with representatives of four of those indigenous nations. I am proud that over 200 indigenous groups submitted suggestions and ideas for amendments to the Fisheries Act during the consultative process our department undertook.

Some of the essential elements of Bill C-68 are deliberately designed to enhance that nation-to-nation partnership with indigenous people. For example, we are proposing new provisions in the Fisheries Act that would require the minister to consider adverse effects that decisions made under the act may have on the rights of the indigenous people of Canada. As affirmed by section 35, the minister would be obligated to consider, when making decisions related to fish habitat protection and pollution prevention, provisions in the act related to the traditional knowledge of the indigenous people of Canada. There are provisions to protect the confidentiality of the traditional knowledge provided to the government, except under very specific circumstances. There are provisions that would enable the minister to establish advisory panels, which would obviously include representatives of indigenous nations.

We think the legislation would modernize the nation-to-nation relationship our government is seeking to have with indigenous nations, which begins with the recognition of rights. That is something my colleagues, the Minister of Justice and the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, have talked publicly and to the government about for many months. We think the legislation goes exactly in that direction.

Government Orders

•(1620)

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau (Berthier—Maskinongé, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would just like to say how frustrating it is having time allocation brought forward on an important piece of legislation we have been waiting years to have come before the House and to have debate on it completely muzzled. It is not healthy for our democracy. We were all sent here to represent our constituents, and they expect us to be a strong voice for them here in Parliament.

I remember during the election the Liberals saying that they would be different. They were going to be better and would work with other parties. They are doing the exact same thing the Conservatives did. Even the minister acknowledged that notes were left on his desk from the former Conservative House leader. It is very frustrating, because he says again and again that they are going to work with opposition members and consult with us, but here he is forcing time allocation on an important bill. How can he justify that?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: Mr. Speaker, I share her concern. The New Democratic Party says that this has taken a great deal of time and that it is anxious to get this legislation before Parliament and before Canadians. I have had this conversation with my colleague and friend, the fisheries critic for the New Democratic Party.

We brought this legislation in at the earliest opportunity, having widely consulted with Canadians. For example, over 170 meetings were held with indigenous groups. We received over 200 submissions. I personally received hundreds of letters. A total of 5438 e-workbooks were completed by Canadians online and submitted to our department. The fisheries and oceans committee had extensive consultations in its review of the changes made to the 2012 Fisheries Act. The committee heard over 50 witnesses and had 188 written briefs submitted. It had over 15 meetings.

We think it is important for this legislation to be before the standing committee, where members can hear from Canadians and hear from those who have shared with our government so many positive, interesting, and innovative ideas for strengthening this legislation.

We look forward to working with all colleagues in the legislative process, both in this House and in the other place. I had the opportunity to share that exact sentiment with a number of senators last week.

Mrs. Bernadette Jordan (South Shore—St. Margarets, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as a member of the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans, I am quite happy to see this legislation come forward. One thing I thought was great is that every recommendation we put forward in our report on the Fisheries Act was accepted by all parties on the fisheries committee.

We heard from lots of people. We heard from over 50 people who appeared before committee. There were lots of submissions.

I would like to ask the minister if he could address some of the consultations he heard. We just heard that he has had many of them. Did they come from right across the country? How did he go about determining what was going into the bill?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank our colleague from South Shore—St. Margarets for her work on committee and for her advocacy on issues important to all

Canadians, such as the very difficult question of abandoned derelict vessels. Her views have been shared with our caucus and our government consistently and have led to some of the significant improvements we have made. We have more work to do, and we will continue to do that work with all members of the House of Commons.

One of the things our colleague from South Shore—St. Margarets has talked to me about consistently is improving small craft harbours, which are important economic engines not only in her communities in Nova Scotia but right across the east coast, the west coast, and obviously, Canada's north.

Her specific question on consultation is important. One of the things we did when we were contemplating amendments we were going to propose to the Fisheries Act was to be inspired by the reaction of Canadians to the 2012 changes, which were included in omnibus budget legislation and were pushed through the House of Commons in record time, without adequate scrutiny.

We took two years to listen to Canadians. We received thousands of submissions from across the country. Those changes and the work of the standing committee informed the amendments we made. We are proud of these changes we are proposing to the Fisheries Act.

•(1625)

Mr. Mel Arnold: Mr. Speaker, I am glad the minister brought up the committee study that was done on the proposed changes to the Fisheries Act. I am just wondering why he ordered the committee to finish its study prematurely, before the submissions forwarded from first nations were received by the committee. The committee had to finish drafting its report before those submissions were received, submissions that were paid for with millions in government funds. The submissions were not provided to committee so that they could be considered in its deliberations. The minister is doing the same thing by cutting debate short on this legislation so that we cannot fully debate the bill.

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: Mr. Speaker, there appears to be some confusion. Perhaps the member is remembering when the previous Conservative government ordered committees to shut down hearings, cancel meetings, or cut off witness lists. A Conservative colleague from his own province prepared a rather extensive workbook on how to disrupt committees. Members who were in the last Parliament would remember that important work done by the Conservative Party. It was sort of a how-to manual on disrupting or vandalizing committee hearings.

My colleague has perhaps confused what happened in the last Parliament. I do not order a committee to do anything. I look forward to working with members of parliamentary committees. If colleagues on that committee decided to hear certain witnesses or decided on a certain work plan, perhaps he should address those questions to his colleagues who were on that committee. I do not sit on that committee, and I certainly do not vote on that committee. I certainly would not purport to, in his words, order colleagues on a parliamentary committee to do anything. I look forward to working with them. That is something the previous government perhaps struggled with.

Government Orders

Mr. Fin Donnelly: Mr. Speaker, I will concede that my colleague from Cariboo—Prince George, the Conservative fisheries critic, makes a good point. He talked about indigenous people in court. The 'Namgis first nation was in court last week about salmon aquaculture.

I will acknowledge that the government has included traditional knowledge in the bill, which is important to look at, but it does not talk about free, prior, and informed consent or recognize how UNDRIP, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, would be incorporated into the legislation. I wonder if the minister could talk about that.

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: Mr. Speaker, I have taken note of this obviously important court case in the province of British Columbia. It is difficult to comment on matters that are before the court and may come back to the court.

We look forward to working with indigenous peoples and the Government of British Columbia with respect to the issue of aquaculture.

* * *

NATURAL RESOURCES

Hon. Jim Carr (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I am tabling the government's responses to Questions Nos. 1484 to 1500.

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Order. 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 Durham, Canada-India Relations; the hon. member for Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, National Defence; and the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands, the Environment.

It is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put the question necessary to dispose of the motion now before the House.

• (1630)

[*English*]

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 Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): All those in favour of the motion 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:

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Call in the members.

• (1710)

(The House divided on the motion, which was agreed to on the following division:)

(*Division No. 639*)

YEAS

Members

Aldag	Alghabra
Alleslev	Amos
Anandasangaree	Arseneault
Arya	Ayoub
Badawey	Bagnell
Baylis	Beech
Bibeau	Bittle
Blair	Boissonnault
Bossio	Bratina
Breton	Brisson
Caesar-Chavannes	Carr
Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)	Casey (Charlottetown)
Chagger	Cormier
Cuzner	Dabrusin
Damoff	DeCoursey
Dhaliwal	Dhillon
Di Iorio	Drouin
Dubourg	Duclos
Duguid	Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Dzerowicz	Easter
Ehsassi	El-Khoury
Ellis	Erskine-Smith
Eyking	Eyolfson
Fergus	Fillmore
Finnigan	Fisher
Fonseca	Fortier
Fragiskatos	Fraser (West Nova)
Fraser (Central Nova)	Fuhr
Garneau	Gerretsen
Goldsmith-Jones	Goodale
Graham	Grewal
Hardie	Harvey
Hébert	Hogg
Holland	Housefather
Hussen	Iacono
Joly	Jones
Jordan	Jowhari
Khalid	Khera
Lambropoulos	Lametti
Lamoureux	Lapointe
Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)	LeBlanc
Lebouthillier	Lefebvre
Leslie	Levitt
Lightbound	Lockhart
Long	Longfield
Ludwig	MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Maloney	Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)
May (Cambridge)	McCrimmon
McDonald	McKenna
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)	McLeod (Northwest Territories)
Mendicino	Mihychuk
Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Sœurs)	
Monsef	
Morneau	Morrissey
Murray	Nassif
Nault	Ng
O'Connell	Oliphant
Oliver	O'Regan
Ouellette	Paradis
Peschisolido	Peterson
Petitpas Taylor	Picard
Poissant	Qualtrough
Ratansi	Rioux
Robillard	Rodriguez
Rogers	Romanado
Rota	Rudd
Ruimy	Rusnak
Sahota	Saini
Sajjan	Samson

Government Orders

Sangha	Sarai
Scarpaleggia	Schieffe
Schulte	Serré
Sgro	Shanahan
Sheehan	Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)
Sidhu (Brampton South)	Sikand
Simms	Sohi
Sorbara	Tabbara
Tan	Tassi
Tootoo	Vandal
Vandenbeld	Vaughan
Virani	Whalen
Wilkinson	Wilson-Raybould
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NAYS

Members

Aboultatif	Albas
Albrecht	Allison
Anderson	Arnold
Aubin	Barlow
Barsalou-Duval	Beaulieu
Benson	Benzen
Bergen	Bernier
Berthold	Bezan
Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis)	Block
Boucher	Boulerice
Boutin-Sweet	Brassard
Brousseau	Brown
Calkins	Cannings
Caron	Carrie
Chong	Choquette
Clarke	Cooper
Davies	Deltell
Diotte	Doherty
Donnelly	Dreeshen
Dubé	Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)
Dusseauult	Duvall
Eglinski	Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)
Falk (Provencher)	Fast
Finley	Fortin
Gallant	Garrison
Généreux	Genuis
Gill	Gladu
Godin	Gourde
Hoback	Jeneroux
Johns	Kelly
Kent	Kitchen
Kusie	Kwan
Lake	Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Laverdière	Leitch
Liepert	Lloyd
Lobb	MacGregor
MacKenzie	Maguire
Malcolmson	Mathysen
May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	McCauley (Edmonton West)
McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)	Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound)
Moore	Motz
Nater	Nicholson
Nuttall	O'Toole
Paul-Hus	Poillievre
Quach	Raït
Rankin	Reid
Saganash	Saroya
Shields	Shiple
Sopuck	Sorenson
Stanton	Stewart
Strahl	Stubbs
Sweet	Thériault
Tilson	Trost
Trudel	Van Kesteren
Van Loan	Vecchio
Viersen	Wagantall
Warawa	Warkentin
Waugh	Webber
Weir	Wong
Yurdiga — 119	

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried

* * *

[Translation]

OCEANS ACT

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill C-55, An Act to amend the Oceans Act and the Canada Petroleum Resources Act, as reported (with amendments) from the committee.

The Speaker: There being no amendment motions at report stage, the House will now proceed without debate to the putting of the question on the motion to concur in the bill at report stage.

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.) moved that Bill C-55, An Act to amend the Oceans Act and the Canada Petroleum Resources Act, be concurred in.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.

(Motion agreed to)

[English]

The Speaker: When shall the bill be read the third time? By leave, now?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Translation]

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.) moved that Bill C-55, An Act to amend the Oceans Act and the Canada Petroleum Resources Act, be now read the third time and passed.

[English]

Mr. Terry Beech (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege to rise in the House today to speak for a second time to Bill C-55, following the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans' review and analysis of this bill. We thank the committee members for their careful study of this legislation and their thoughtful amendments.

Bill C-55, An Act to amend the Oceans Act and the Canada Petroleum Resources Act, puts forward provisions that show Canadians our commitment to be responsible stewards of our ocean resources for future generations. Since 2015, we have made excellent progress in achieving our domestic and international marine conservation targets. We have kept our promise of protecting 5% of our marine and coastal areas by the end of 2017. In fact, we are now at 7.75%, up from less than 1% in 2015. Meeting this target has put us on track to reach our international target of 10% by 2020. I know that Canadians are proud of this achievement because it means hundreds of thousands of square kilometres of new protections. In fact, we are up to 446,000 square kilometres to date. To get to 10%, our government is following a clear plan, which is based on science, indigenous knowledge, consultations, and collaboration.

Government Orders

Bill C-55 is an important piece of that plan. It currently takes approximately seven to 10 years to officially designate an Oceans Act MPA. Our partners agree when we say that this is too long for a sensitive marine or coastal area in need of protection to go without. Establishing interim protection would address this gap, while still allowing for the necessary ecological, economic, social, and cultural analysis, as well as consultation and collaboration efforts with all of our various partners.

This bill would require the application of the precautionary principle when deciding whether to designate new MPAs. The precautionary principle means that the absence of scientific certainty should not be used to postpone decisions where there is a risk of serious or irreversible harm. Under this legislation, incomplete information or a lack of absolute certainty could no longer be used as a justification for avoiding the establishment of an MPA where science tells us there is a need for action and where there is a need for protection.

The precautionary principle would be used judiciously. As we know, it is a matter of concern to some industry stakeholders. We have heard the concerns that science resources may be insufficient to conduct the necessary work within the five-year period subsequent to the ministerial order, or that the precautionary approach could provide an excuse for not doing the scientific analysis at all. This, of course, is not true. Our commitment to science and information gathering remains strong. We agree that our foundational principle of science-based decision-making must not be compromised in any way.

In addition, Bill C-55 would update, modernize, and strengthen enforcement powers, fines, and penalties, effectively bringing the Oceans Act in line with Canada's other environmental laws. Such changes to the act would support the people who manage and monitor MPAs. Enforcement officers, for example, would get the tools and authority they need to better protect MPAs, which in turn would improve the effectiveness of the MPAs. These changes would expand and modernize the tool kit for enforcement officers designated by the minister, which may include indigenous people or provincial and territorial partners.

Bill C-55 also proposes amendments to the Canada Petroleum Resources Act that would complement the freeze-the-footprint process of the interim protection MPAs. These changes would provide the competent minister with the authority to prohibit authorized oil and gas exploration or development activities, for example seismic testing, drilling, or production within a designated marine protected area.

During their review of Bill C-55, my colleagues in the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans have heard from many different witnesses and experts on the proposed amendments and what they think should be included in Bill C-55. I would like to take this time to talk about what we have heard through the standing committee on Bill C-55. Several witnesses expressed concerns that the proposed changes may short-circuit the collection and analysis of reliable scientific data or deprive Canadians of the opportunity to meaningfully contribute to the creation of interim protection MPAs. Our commitment to science and to working with our partners remains unwavering. As is our current practice, collaboration is essential to advancing our marine protection work.

●(1715)

We are working with the provinces and territories, indigenous groups, industry, and other environmental stakeholders to establish networks of MPAs and will continue to do so under this new option for interim protection marine protected areas.

Our government knows that the effective management of Canada's oceans depends on an in-depth understanding of the marine environment. We gain this understanding through peer-reviewed science, the traditional knowledge of indigenous peoples, and through information shared by the fishing industry and local communities. By balancing the collection of information and consultations with our partners with the precautionary approach, interim protection marine protected areas will offer the needed protections to our important ocean seascape and resources, while still being shaped by science and consultation.

We have heard the call for stronger conservation standards. While Bill C-55 is a targeted response to the length of time that it takes to designate MPAs, we know that it is important to continue the conversation on conservation standards. That is why we have established a national advisory panel that will provide the minister with advice and recommendations on protection standards for future marine protected areas. The panel is to report back with their recommendations. It is essential that we come to the right answers to these questions together, in order to properly protect our oceans for long-term sustainability.

The issue of economic fairness was also raised by a few indigenous groups and fishers during the standing committee's hearings. These are concerns that the new powers proposed could deprive rights holders and others of their dependence on marine resources for sustenance and livelihood.

I want to emphasize that the ministerial order provision is not meant to close the door on economic opportunities. We are committed to working in full transparency with our partners to ensure that our oceans and marine resources support a long-term sustainable economy. In fact, we are of the view that provisions like this will actually make for more abundance so that future generations can have more economic opportunities.

Lastly, we have heard from some of our indigenous partners that we need to renew our relationships to ensure that their voices are being heard. We are open to conversations on co-management, and providing a greater role for indigenous partners in the management of our oceans. We are committed to reconciliation and are striving to work more closely with indigenous groups, including Inuit communities, to inform the process and make the most of their traditional knowledge.

Government Orders

We have listened to many important proposed amendments to Bill C-55 and the committee has worked diligently to reflect carefully on all of them. We particularly support the proposal made by the member for Nunavut, supported by the member for Northwest Territories, which amends the bill to ensure that our approach to interim protection MPAs is consistent with land claims agreements. We understand that conservation is integral to the indigenous way of life, but a balance with sustainable use is necessary to ensure that our communities are able to continue to thrive. As I have said, interim protection MPAs will not be established without constructive conversation, and it will be a collaborative effort.

We are not looking to move ahead without our partners, but to offer protection where it has been identified by our partners as necessary to ensure the long-term health of the marine environment. Bill C-55 is a powerful step toward better protection for our oceans, advancing reconciliation and moving towards a nation-to-nation dialogue, and continuing to work together on the shared objectives that Canadians care deeply about. We have a shared duty to protect our oceans for generations to come, and this bill helps us do that.

• (1720)

Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my thanks to my hon. colleague for his remarks, although he somewhat misrepresented the amount of marine protected areas accomplished under the previous Conservative government and that were in the process when the Liberal government came to power.

Previous changes to the Fisheries Act under the Conservative government provided for predictability, certainty, and timely review for those covered by the act. Conservatives have long supported protection of our lakes, oceans, and our fisheries. However, one of our many concerns with the bill is that it undermines transparency in that it gives the minister the power to withhold information from certain proponents.

What happened to the Liberal commitment to greater transparency?

Mr. Terry Beech: Mr. Speaker, I would like to start by addressing the statement that we misrepresented the actual progress that has been made with regard to marine protected areas. Up until the last election, less than 1% of our oceans and marine ways were protected, despite the fact that we are five years into a 10-year commitment to get to a protection level of 10%. Our government has doubled down our efforts and now has reached a point of 7.75% protection, representing hundreds of thousands of square kilometres of new protection, which I know for a fact Canadians are proud of.

Also with regard to transparency, what we will see, not just in the changes to the Oceans Act in Bill C-55 but also in the changes in Bill C-68 to the Fisheries Act, and Bill C-69, is that our government is sticking to and increasing our commitment to provide transparency. In the Fisheries Act, for example, a registry is being created. This is to make sure Canadians have all the tools they need to understand what the government is doing so that they can hold us to account. It is also to make sure people who are doing projects, whether big or small, have certainty around timelines and the like. That is the kind of transparent work that our government continues to do on these important bills.

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the member about some of the amendments the NDP proposed in committee on Bill C-55. It included the establishment of no-take zones. What is the point of having a marine protected area if we do not have some of it established as a no-take zone? What are we protecting it against? I wonder if he could comment on why those amendments were not adopted by the Liberals in committee.

• (1725)

Mr. Terry Beech: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question from my friend and fellow basketball player. I think he will also find it somewhat humorous that I just fell victim to the chair that tears the pockets open, so I will be doing some sewing after this session is over.

The minister was very well received globally in Malta when he first stated that we were going to establish an expert panel to provide feedback to us on what minimum standards for a marine protected area could look like. This was very well received not just here in Canada from coast to coast to coast but also within the international community.

I just returned from the World Ocean Summit. I was there along with the Minister of Environment and Climate Change. There were various partners, other countries, other nations that have taken leadership roles in MPA, such as those in Latin America and Mexico. They have been very excited, seeing that not only have we said Canada is back but our actions are representing that fact. Canadians can be proud of the global leadership we are taking on this file and others.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, the hon. parliamentary secretary knows I support Bill C-55. I am very pleased to see the amendments to the Oceans Act. I am also very grateful that amendments I made in committee were accepted by the committee and supported by the government.

Certainly, we know it takes a long time to establish national marine protected areas. By way of example, in my riding, what is still called the southern Strait of Georgia national marine conservation area, or as we call it the Salish Sea, was initially put forward so long ago, in the 1970s, that it was endorsed by Jacques Cousteau. We await the creation of this protected area. I wonder if the hon. parliamentary secretary can shed any light on how he sees the timing for the Salish Sea national protected area, adjacent to the Gulf Islands National Park Reserve.

Mr. Terry Beech: Mr. Speaker, I would like to start by congratulating and thanking the member opposite for her great work on the bill. We appreciate her amendments and her feedback throughout.

I appreciate the comments she makes about the timeliness of these protections. The average time it has taken for previous marine protected areas to go through has been somewhere between seven to 10 years. The way we propose to address that time crunch, all those years where critical habitat might not be protected, is to implement this new tool called interim protection MPAs.

Government Orders

How this would work is that within the first 24 months, when a number of consultations are going on and science is being conducted, when we first realize and identify the protections that need to occur, there would be an ability to put in an interim protection. It would freeze the footprint. This would mean that existing activities would be able to continue, and there is a definition I could get into about what qualifies as an existing activity, and then the minister would have up to five years to implement the full marine protected area. Hopefully, that will help solve problems like the very long process that has been witnessed in other projects, like in the Salish Sea.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the parliamentary secretary for fisheries and oceans, and formerly the parliamentary secretary for science, could help to bridge the investments that budget 2018 has in science, the \$3.8 billion going into research, where scientists will be working on fisheries and oceans research around protected areas. How do those two areas fit together?

Mr. Terry Beech: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for that question and also for the great work he has done on his sub-caucus. I participated in many of the sessions and it has been a great way to drive innovation and scientific activity. I thank him very much for his good work there.

The last budget made sure that we had the investments and tools we needed to make sure that Canada can return as a scientific powerhouse. If we think about what makes an economy relatively more successful, there are two things in the history of developmental economics that really provide the kind of environment that allows us to compete relatively better than other nations.

The first is that we need to produce goods that other countries want. In the olden days that might have been fish, silver, or gold, but more and more today it is technology. That means we need to invest in science and education, and that is exactly what we are doing.

The second thing that we need to have a relatively more successful economy, to make sure that Canadians are better off and that our kids have better opportunities tomorrow than we have today, is a strong and empowered middle class. I think the member will agree that almost all the policies the government is pursuing are to ensure that we are strengthening that, so that every individual's children have more resources and more opportunities than their parents did before them.

• (1730)

Mr. Mel Arnold (North Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I refer to the comments made by the parliamentary secretary about the areas that are now protected. A major portion of those areas that have recently been claimed as MPAs were actually considered as protected under other protective measures. They were there for fisheries closures to protect specific habitat. They were not specifically set out, identified, and all of a sudden appeared on the map as something from the current government.

There were directives, protections that were put in place by the previous Conservative government as part of our targets that we set for the 2017 and 2020 targets of 10% and 20%. Those were Conservative targets.

How much of that seven point something percentage that the parliamentary secretary referred to was actually already under some form of protection?

Mr. Terry Beech: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite is correct in that the previous government was really good at setting targets. In fact it said that 10% should be protected by 2020, a commitment that our government is going to not only commit to but follow through on. Despite the target that the Conservatives set, in the first five years in which they pursued that target, they achieved protections of less than 1%.

The way that the minister and the government have pursued this, and we have been very open and transparent about it, was as part of the five-point plan that the minister put into place and talked about very early on in the mandate. We have followed that plan. We have consulted broadly. We have worked with industry. We have worked with stakeholders. We have worked with environmental groups. We have worked with indigenous peoples.

Due to all that good work, we are now having some success in actually meeting those targets.

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is truly a pleasure for me to rise and to consume about 30 minutes of this House's time on this issue.

I will couch my opening remarks by saying it was a privilege for me at one point in time in my life to earn a zoology degree in fisheries and aquatic sciences from the University of Alberta. I worked as a fisheries technician and on many fisheries experiments. I worked as a national park warden in Parks Canada enforcing the Fisheries Act, among other things, and of course as a conservation officer in the province of Alberta doing much the same, so I have a little working knowledge on this. I am proud to have folks like Dr. David Schindler as one of the professors I learned something from. If I told people when I was going to school, that would probably date both of us and I do not think that is a particularly constructive thing to do at this point in time.

Suffice it to say, I remained active. I was a fishing guide in the Northwest Territories while I was going to university. I spent a lot of time on Great Bear Lake, and of course on the north coast where the Coppermine River flows into the Arctic Ocean. I have maintained my love of the outdoors as an avid hunter and angler ever since. These kinds of issues are near and dear to my heart, especially when it comes to recreational fishing, or as it is more affectionately known, sport fishing.

These issues are very important. I will start by making some comparisons. When I was going to the University of Alberta years and years ago, there was a plan at that time by the World Wildlife Fund and the Canadian wilderness societies and so on that they wanted a 12, 75, 12 plan. They wanted to have 12% of all the land mass in Canada protected under the same kind of statutory protection a national park would have. That meant there would be no opportunities to do anything, no development and so on. There would be complete protection for that area. I do not want to call it conservation. I call it a preservation type of protection that they would have in these areas.

Government Orders

The other 75% of Canada would be considered areas that would be managed, like forest management areas. These would be areas where we would have human activity that would go on, but there would be zoning. Activities would be permitted, but they would be heavily regulated by the federal, provincial, or municipal government. Then about another 12% of our land mass at that particular point in time would be a complete disturbance areas. This would be areas for our cities, roads, major industrial developments, and so on.

I remember asking the question when I was in university if 12, 75, 12 was going to be enough. That adds up to 99, but members will get the point. As we have seen evolve through time, those numbers no longer hold true today with what certain groups are asking for. They are asking for more of that preservation land. They are asking for stricter regulations on the 75%. Of course, nobody wants to take responsibility for the 12% because that would mean we would have to tear down cities and do all those kinds of things in order to restore it back to its natural habitat, which is not a reasonable thing to ask people to do.

Who bears the burden then every time somebody asks for more protection? We have to take that protection out of that 12% or out of that 75% to add to the 12%. I am talking about the preserved areas. Who suffers the consequences of that? I am using this as an example on land to make my point later on about the protected areas and the marine areas. Who bears that price? It is everybody who lives in rural Canada. It is everybody who farms, everybody who relies on forestry, and everybody who is a fisherman, or a fisher person, or fisher peoplekind, depending on what the moniker of the day is.

The point is that everything we ask to happen in the natural environment generally happens outside the confines of city limits. This is not an aspersion on folks who live in cities, and I live in a city myself. However, having grown up on a farm, I understand every time somebody has to pay a price out in our so-called natural areas that price is borne by the people who live there or make their livings in these rural, remote, or non-city areas.

The same is going to actually hold true for those who earn a living in our marine areas. This would be our commercial fishermen. This would be anybody who does any tourism, anybody who does any type of business, and of course first nations people who earn a living off the coastal waters of our country. We have seen the absolute damage, the economic damage, that can be done to these communities when we do not get things right.

As we know, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans is tasked with maintaining fish stocks. We know in Atlantic Canada, going back to the early 1990s, some of the issues that happened there when we applied a purely political decision over good science and technical information. I am referring specifically to the collapse of the cod fishery.

• (1735)

I was a fairly young man at the time. I was studying in university in the late 1980s and early 1990s at about the same time that the cod fishery was closed. I believe it was in 1993 when it was closed. It was closed because it was mismanaged. At that time there were over one million seals in the Atlantic Ocean. Today we have six million or seven million seals there. It was a big problem. The fishermen had to

move to other resources, such as herring, lobsters, and other fisheries. They had to adapt to overcome the loss of the cod.

To this day we have had a moratorium. I want to talk about what it means. The moratorium on the cod fishery means that no one is allowed to do it, so the cod for all intents and purposes are preserved. The cod population stocks are under a preservation style of protection. Have the cod stocks actually come back? No, they have not. We have moved this from a managed fishery into a completely protected class and even that movement in and of itself has not had the desired effect or outcome that we wanted.

We have not stopped any of the other activity that happens off of the east coast. There are still ships coming in and out. I would argue we have lots of ships with foreign oil coming into the east coast. It would be nicer to have a pipeline going from Alberta to our friends in the east, but I digress. It is a much easier thing to manage than tankers full of oil coming in on the east coast. It would be interesting to see if we had a tanker ban on the east coast the same as we do on the west coast. It seems to be a bit of a double standard there, but I am getting off topic and I will come back to marine protected areas.

When we moved from a management mode of the cod stocks into a preservation mode, it did not solve the problem. I am not saying it was not the right decision, but it did not solve the problem because all of the other aspects of managing the cod fishery have now fallen by the wayside. The Department of Fisheries and Oceans, rather than restoring the cod stocks or managing the cod stocks, and I am not saying they are not doing some of that work, but now it is more interested in working the fisheries currently before it.

Now the Liberal government has proposed moving to a massive increase of the marine protected areas in our coastal waters. I was lucky to be a member of the fisheries committee in previous Parliaments because of my experience. As a matter of fact, people used to laugh when they found out a farm boy from central Alberta was a member of the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans for all those years, until they found out I actually knew a little about fisheries, other than how bad a fisherman I am.

Notwithstanding that, I learned a ton over the years and I was very honoured to go with the standing committee on a trip up north. We went to places like Prince Rupert, Inuvik, Tuktoyaktuk, and Paulatuk. We talked with the people who are going to be impacted by these marine protected areas there. The impacts and concerns are very real. People from local hunting and trapping associations up north came in droves to those meetings and made their voices heard. They are very concerned because they feel there has not been adequate consultation regarding some of the areas being proposed. There are very good questions about the risks of what is going to happen in the marine protected areas.

Government Orders

This is where we get to the conversation about what the international standard for a marine protected area is and how Canada is going to define a marine protected area. If we ask someone from the United Nations, that person would consider the marine protected area to be a no activity zone whatsoever. This is complete protection or what I referred to earlier as that preservation mentality. I am not saying it is right or wrong; I am just saying that is the mode most people would see when they hear about a marine protected area. They would see it as having the same protections that a national park would have.

Everyone knows that we cannot hunt in a national park. We cannot drill for anything in a national park. As a matter of fact, I have been an MP for 12 years and resort owners and so on in our national parks have not seen any changes over the last 12 years because it is so hard to get approval to get anything done in a national park. I am not saying it is right or wrong; it is just very difficult to do that because of the mandate Parks Canada has on its preservation, ecological integrity, and the other types of goals and ambitions that are laid out in the Canada National Parks Act.

Those same goals and ambitions are laid out in the legislative changes that are currently before the House with Bill C-55 and Bill C-68, which the government opposite just moved time allocation on, a bill that might be disastrous for the Alberta economy. It is just another straw on the camel's already broken back when it comes to the energy sector. However, I digress again and must return to Bill C-55.

• (1740)

With Bill C-55, the aboriginal groups, the Inuit, the people at the Prince Rupert Port Authority, the first nations groups, the Lax Kw'alaams and all the other groups we talked with out there are very concerned. PNCIMA was brought up. They are very concerned about the amount of foreign money that is coming in to influence policy decisions. The money coming in has been used by some aboriginal or indigenous groups out there to inadvertently stop what they thought was going to be an increase in the conversation. They realized they have sided with people who took money from a bunch of organizations that actually have a completely different mandate than what the first nations have. There is a court action happening right now where first nations groups in B.C. are raising funds to take the Government of Canada to court, citing all of the barriers it has put in place in the name of standing up for first nations, which will deprive them of economic opportunities going forward. This is something that is of very legitimate concern with Bill C-55 and the marine protected areas.

We have a tanker ban off the northern part of the west coast. Most people think that the entire west side of B.C. is coastal, but it is not. Just a little over a third of the west side of the province of British Columbia has access to the coast. The rest of it is in Alaska. We would have to go through Alaska in order to get some things done if we wanted to use the coastline in that case. We have a very small area to use along the British Columbia coast to begin with, and now a significant part of that coast is denied access, depending on what one is trying to ship or move.

I might be a bit cynical, but this is what the folks on the west coast and on the north coast who we met at committee are thinking. The

folks up north want to be able to continue to hunt whales. One of the marine protected areas that the government is considering putting in place is right in the mouth of the Mackenzie River and the delta where it comes in. That happens to be an area of shallow water where the belugas come in. It is a safe place for the Inuit hunters to go. They go there every year to hunt belugas. If it becomes a marine protected area to protect the belugas, which seems to be a noble cause, it would exempt the Inuit from harvesting in that area. They would have to try and find those belugas somewhere else in order to maintain their traditional hunt. That is a problem for the first nations people there.

Are we going to create marine protected areas in Canada that do not actually meet the international standard of what is expected of us with respect to marine protected areas, or are we going to have a made-in-Canada solution, forgo our international obligations and then do our best? I am not sure what the government's intentions are with respect to that. It would be great to see. However, we seem to have a lot more questions than we do answers, and the legislation is not particularly clear on some of these questions.

I will go back to the port in Prince Rupert. We met with the port authorities there. They are already very much concerned. Most people in Canada do not know that most of the container goods that we see going through the western part of Canada on their way east—and a ton of containers that come to the west coast come in through Prince Rupert, which has a great container ability—go by rail through Canada all the way down to Chicago. This is supplying goods from the Asia-Pacific marketplace into central North America as a distribution hub. It is an amazing facility. It is a very small community. It is a great provider of jobs. There are great economic opportunities there.

There was a proposal for an LNG terminal in Prince Rupert. We know what happened with the LNG proposal. That seems to have gone by the wayside. Given the fact that there will be a tanker ban, there is no way anybody would even consider moving forward with an LNG terminal in that area.

If I were the kind of person who wanted to be bitter and vindictive about making sure that the tanker ban held its way for all time, I would consider putting a marine protected area across the Dixon Entrance and across the Hecate Strait. This would pretty much mean that particular area, depending on the provisions that were put in place for the marine protected area, could shut down shipping altogether in those areas, or at least really restrict what one is able to do.

This again brings me back to my point. What is a marine protected area supposed to do? Is it supposed to protect the water? Is it supposed to protect the benthic area directly below the water column along the sea floor? These are all questions to which we do not have answers.

Government Orders

If we look at the sunlit zone, which is the area where the human eye can see sunlight at the top of a water column, there is not a whole lot of activity there. There are some fish species, some algae, and some plankton. However, all of the stuff is very much moving as currents move in and out. Does it make any sense to try and protect a wave while it is a-wave? It does not make any sense at all. These things are going to move around the ocean. Are we protecting that area? Some would say yes. Some would say no.

• (1745)

Are we protecting a rearing area for whales or other types of migratory species that use the water? Are they going to be birds, fish, aquatic mammals, or terrestrial animals, where a certain part of their life cycle relies on the marine environment? Are we adequately taking into consideration where those protections should be best placed?

Are we taking a look at the littoral zone, and are we going to protect it? Are we going to protect the benthic zone? Are we going to shut down commercial fishing, for example? Are we going to be shutting down dragging or trawling along the bottom of the sea for fish species? That is maybe a good thing, but maybe it is not. I happen to believe that, in certain cases, if it is done in the right place, protections on the bottom of the sea floor are great. They are great for the groundfish that live there, especially if it is an area rich in groundfish that usually stay in that area. An area of refugia actually creates species all around it.

I will go back to one of my jobs as a park warden, which was to patrol the north boundary of Jasper National Park on horseback. Why I ever gave that job up in the glorious Rocky Mountains riding horses, to this day I do not understand. However, my job was to protect the park boundary from poachers. Where did everyone go hunting for trophy rams or bighorn sheep? Well, they would go hunting where the rams were. The rams were in the national park, because they understood the refugia, and they would go back into the park any time they felt threatened. They knew where the boundary was. It was an interesting thing to watch. That area of refugia continued to populate the sheep populations as they migrated out, which is the same thing with other species.

This is not necessarily bad policy, but it is not an effective one-size-fits-all policy. It is going to work well for some species of groundfish, but it is not going to do anything for some species of fish that might migrate through or that do not use the area on a regular basis. We have to ask the question of whether the marine protected area is in the right spot.

I have a lot of questions about this proposed legislation and what the consequences of it might be. I have highlighted the fact that the cod fishery, taking the protectionist approach, has not exactly worked if we are not taking a serious look at management. When we put things into that category of preservation, it becomes very difficult to do any management, because we have to get double approvals for everything.

Imagine if Parks Canada said we need to shoot grizzly bears, wolves, and mountain lions in order to protect caribou. It is not unfathomable that this might be a desperation policy at some point down the road, as growth of the wolf, grizzly bear, and mountain lion populations continues to explode in the eastern slopes region of

Alberta. These animals are everywhere, so much so that, in some cases, we cannot find any ungulates anymore. Rather than stopping economic activity such as oil and gas exploration or forestry, we are going to shut those industries down and not do anything at all about predator control.

I do not see some of my colleagues from Atlantic Canada who were here earlier, but I know that a lot of them, even though they might not say it in front of a microphone, hear the same things that I hear. I have been there many times with fisheries, and they are asking for control of the seal population in order to allow the cod stocks to come back. However, imagine a situation where we create a marine protected area around some of the islands where grey seals or harbour seals rear their pups. It comes down to the point that someday somewhere, someone will say we have to have the courage to manage these populations and do what is right.

Imagine trying to manage predator control in a protected area where the needs of the wildlife are put before the needs of everybody else, a fishery, or whatever the case might be. I have news for members. It is romantic to think we have the ability to have these protected areas and that they can operate in isolation from the rest of the world, but that is not the case. The bill before us could seriously limit the ability of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans and other organizations to effectively manage wildlife populations and allow other economic activities to grow. Therefore, the bill should not be rushed through Parliament. It should be given every opportunity, which is why I move:

That the motion be amended by deleting all the words after the word "That" and substituting the following therefor:

"Bill C-55, An Act to amend the Oceans Act and the Canada Petroleum Resources Act, be not now read a third time but be referred back to the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans for the purpose of reconsidering all of the clauses.

• (1750)

The Deputy Speaker: I see the hon. government House leader rising on a point of order.

* * *

FIREARMS ACT

BILL C-71—NOTICE OF TIME ALLOCATION MOTION

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, an agreement could not be reached under the provisions of Standing Order 78(1) or 78(2) with respect to the second reading stage of Bill C-71, an act to amend certain acts and regulations in relation to firearms.

Under the provisions of Standing Order 78(3), I give notice that a minister of the crown will propose at the next sitting a motion to allot a specific number of days or hours for the consideration and disposal of proceedings at the said stage.

Government Orders

• (1755)

OCEANS ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-55, An Act to amend the Oceans Act and the Canada Petroleum Resources Act, be read the third time and passed, and of the amendment.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I can appreciate the background knowledge the member brings to the table when addressing the legislation before us. In listening to a number of his Conservative colleagues and to a certain degree him, I get the sense that they do not recognize the benefit to society with respect to how and why it is so important that we bring in legislation of this nature.

Does the member not believe that there is a strong role for the government to play in terms of protecting our coastlines or protecting endangered species? Obviously Canadians want to see that happen but Conservative members appear not to, or they do in a different bizarre way. I am interested in the member's personal opinion on this.

Mr. Blaine Calkins: Mr. Speaker, Canadians are rightly concerned about the pace at which the current government is ramming legislation through the House. This is about the fourth time allocation motion that we have heard today and now it is going to ram through the gun registry bill without even one hour of debate in the House. We have received notice of time allocation on that bill as well.

Notwithstanding that, the hon. member has been here for a while, longer than I would like I will admit, but he was here during the last Parliament and Parliaments before where we created marine protected areas in the Great Lakes and in other parts of the country, and we took a slow, methodical approach that resulted in buy-in from everyone.

The Liberal government is the most ideological government I have ever seen. We just need to read the articles that Chantal Hébert, a well-known Conservative, has written about the ideology of the government. The Liberals rammed through the tanker ban, and it is going to get sued on that by first nation groups on the west coast. If they ram this legislation through, they will get sued on it too.

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member brought up some issues around the concept of protecting no-take zones. These are called marine protected areas, so one would think they would be protected from something.

The member said maybe in some situations it might be worthwhile, for instance, to ban bottom trawling, one of the most destructive methods of harvesting animals from the ocean floor. Being in a marine protected area, should that not be the obvious first choice, and if we wanted exceptions, we would talk about them later? I am just wondering under what conditions would he think bottom trawling would be good in a marine protected area.

Mr. Blaine Calkins: Mr. Speaker, I talked about the fact that it is a good idea to protect some areas. I talked about the “12, 75, 12” plan. That was a policy that I lobbied for a long time ago. The

context of my speech was in making sure we get the right areas protected, that we have halibut spawning areas protected, certain species of groundfish. Most of these fisheries that are on the bottom are not generally migratory. I am speaking in generalizations right now. These are species that stick around in the same general protected areas. I do not have a problem at all with protecting some of those areas. I have great concerns with the pace that the current government is going about doing this, not taking in the scientific or technical aspects.

There are parts of our oceans that we have not even mapped yet, and we are creating marine protected areas without fully understanding if we are putting them in the right place. My fear, given the government's agenda to shut down the energy sector, is that the marine protected areas are going to be put in places to stop shipping lanes and prevent a future government from some day opening them up. I know this to be true, because in the legislation for the cancellation of any energy projects, the Liberals would compensate those interests based on the Canadian Petroleum Resources Act. If that is not an admission that they are going to shut down the energy sector, I do not know what is.

Mr. Martin Shields (Bow River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate my colleague's well-thought out comments, and his education background and practice.

On the environment committee, we heard from Inuit people from the north. I know the member has been to that area. Those witnesses said that what was being proposed to them was another form of colonization. They were opposed to this. They want to have the right to develop their own resources, both fishing and on the land. They are very opposed to this, and they believe this is another form of colonization. It is not reconciliation at all, but much worse. I wonder if you heard similar things being expressed in your trip to the north.

• (1800)

Mr. Blaine Calkins: I am not sure if he is referring to your trip to the north, Mr. Speaker, but if he is referring to my trip to the north, this is exactly what we heard. I was there with some of the colleagues from our side of the House on the fisheries committee, and we heard exactly those concerns. The people who live in the north, particularly in the Arctic and High Arctic, live right along the coast. They live along the coast for a very good reason, as that is where almost all of their food comes from. It is where all of their activity is, and where they get their provisions for the upcoming winter season. They need to have access to seals. They need to have access to the pack ice in the winter. They need to have access to beluga whales, and the char fisheries and salmon fisheries and so on that are up there.

While we were up there in Paulatuk, in Tuktoyaktuk, and in Inuvik, we talked to the hunting and trapping associations, to the chiefs and the elders, and to all the stakeholders who were there. Virtually all of them in each of those communities had a vested interest in being able to continue on with their traditional way of life. The previous New Democrat MP asked me a question on wanting to protect these areas 100%. I wish them luck if they are going to slap a marine protected area right in the middle of some place where the Inuit are harvesting their beluga whales as a matter of tradition, because that is a lawsuit waiting to happen.

Government Orders

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, New Democrats have concerns about this legislation, certainly around the failure to set minimum protection standards and targets for zoning for marine protected areas. We have concerns about oil and gas exploration being conducted in these marine protected areas. In fact, that is supported by the World Wildlife Federation of Canada, as follows:

The government is planning to create a marine protected area...around the Laurentian Channel, where North Atlantic right whales are known to frequent. But proposed regulations will still allow oil and gas drilling and seismic blasts in 80 per cent of the MPA. These activities threaten whales and other wildlife. An oil spill would be even more devastating.

Does the member agree with the Liberals that oil and gas exploration should be permissible in a marine protected area and that we should be gutting environmental regulations in favour of industrial development?

Mr. Blaine Calkins: Mr. Speaker, I do not see how a single New Democrat could stand up in this House and accuse the current government of putting forward legislative changes that are in any way, shape, or form benefiting the oil and gas sector. I have been here and watching this economic disaster in progress for the better part of the last two and a half years, and I simply do not know where the hon. member is sourcing his questions.

What I do know is that the price of gasoline in the Lower Mainland of British Columbia right now is about 30¢ to 40¢ a litre higher than it is everywhere else. It would be a shame to shut off that pipeline from Alberta and watch the price of gasoline go to \$2.50 a litre.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am listening to the discussion today, thinking there is a classic situation unfolding again. The NDP thinks the government is doing too much and the Conservatives think we are not doing enough.

I will go back to the discussion around the protection of the oceans. Would the hon. member agree that protecting the wildlife in the oceans will protect the upstream wildlife as well and that the entire ecosystem, where he used to fish in the Northwest Territories, will benefit from protecting the oceans that those rivers feed into?

Mr. Blaine Calkins: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the fact that my colleague has asked me a forthright question out of concern. I do not disagree with the premise of his question at all.

The issue I have is with the rapid pace that the legislation is going to be put in place and the massive amount of power the Governor in Council is going to have now to make the regulations. My NDP colleague who asked me a question earlier was right in the fact that the legislation does not clearly define some of the things it should be clearly define. I will give my NDP colleague that.

However, the problem we have is this. The rapid pace at which we are going ahead with the legislation, the agenda of having almost 10% of marine protected areas protected by 2020 without even having a basic understanding of the science we need to ensure we actually protect the right areas, is going to lead to political decisions and those political decisions will not be in the best interests of Canada. That is my concern.

•(1805)

Mr. Fin Donnelly (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to provide those who are watching, and members, with a number of points about what we do and do not support in the legislation. The bill would provide some new legal tools that would speed up the creation of marine protected areas, but it falls far short of Canada's international commitments to protect our marine biodiversity.

The bill fails to set minimum protection standards, and I will speak a little more about that, and targets for zoning for marine protected areas, which renders the designation inconsistent at best and meaningless at worst. It would give the minister far too much latitude to decide what activities would be permissible in an MPA. If oil and gas exploration can take place in an MPA, what is the point of the designation? Those are some of our concerns.

I want to talk about the NDP's proposed amendments at the Standing Committee for Fisheries and Oceans. We had five major themes. All were supported by witness testimony.

Our first theme was focused on establishing minimum protection standards. It makes sense that if we do not have a minimum basic standard with respect to protection, it gets very hard for either industry or for those concerned about protection, such as governments, nations, and first nations, to know exactly what is the definition criteria and how they meet a minimum basic level of protection. The government could focus a lot more on that.

The second theme was maintaining ecological integrity as the primary objective of an MPA, or marine protected area. That is critical and achieved through networks and other areas of protection, either federal designations, or at provincial or indigenous levels. All can play part in a constructive network of protection and protected areas. Maintaining that ecological integrity is critical for the whole concept behind an MPA.

The third theme was creating co-governance with indigenous peoples and establishing the authority of indigenous guardians. This is a critical element today of managing our resources, our oceans, our lands, and our watersheds. We just saw on the floor of the House of Commons an unprecedented ceremony recognizing those wrongs that were made prior to Confederation, but now being acknowledged by the government, and how our new relationship with first nations must be, which must include co-management. When we talk about marine protected areas, we must recognize a new way of managing and protecting our oceans.

The fourth theme was establishing no-take zones. This is a critical element to which the international community has drawn. I will speak more about that in a minute, about the importance of having some areas within the MPA. It does not have to be the entire area, but scientific evidence shows the more areas that are no-take or that have the highest level of protection flourish the best. There will be protection of sensitive ecosystems when no-take zones are established. Canada falls far behind when looking specifically at no-take zones.

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Finally, the fifth theme was to facilitate the implementation of a network of MPAs, not just specifically looking at the protected areas off and on land. We look at parks, but on the water we call them marine protected areas. Like on land, we need to provide connectivity. Establishing networks of MPAs is a critical element.

Other elements touched on similar themes. I will highlight the ones we heard at the standing committee. Ecological integrity, network ability of MPAs, and the recognition of indigenous rights were passed at the committee stage. Our proposed amendments were stronger, and it was regretful that they were defeated.

● (1810)

Many witnesses at committee supported the bill, but they also supported our proposed amendments. On November 23 of last year, Linda Nowlan, staff counsel at West Coast Environmental Law testified:

The law is currently very inconsistent. As you've heard and will probably continue to hear, people are astonished to learn that oil and gas exploration, undersea mining, and damaging fishing activities are all possible in the tiny fraction of the sea that we call marine protected areas. That's why an unprecedented 70,000 Canadians, members of the public, spoke out about one of the proposed new MPAs, Laurentian Channel, and said that we need to keep harmful activities out of these areas.

On November 21, Bill Wareham, the science projects manager of the David Suzuki Foundation, testified about the need to strengthen the bill with respect to indigenous protected areas. He said:

I think the other area of the act that needs strengthening is the area of indigenous protected areas. Many indigenous peoples have a longstanding interest in conserving resources and protecting areas of their traditional territory, and there's an opportunity to enable the government to accommodate indigenous protected areas, which are determined, managed, and governed by indigenous people. This amendment would not only facilitate additional conservation of natural resources, but would take Canada further down the path of reconciliation with indigenous communities.

On November 9, Susanna Fuller, senior marine conservation coordinator at the Ecology Action Centre, testified the following:

It makes no sense not to prohibit open net-pen aquaculture, for example, in a protected area that includes an important river for wild Atlantic salmon. It makes no sense to allow seismic testing and oil and gas drilling in areas that are important for marine mammals, or that are closed to bottom fishing to protect deep-sea coral and sponges. Essentially, our Oceans Act MPAs are lacking in some key ground rules that, perhaps, could not have been foreseen when it was drafted 20 years ago.

Third, the current lack of standards in this Oceans Act, and more broadly the lack of standards across all of the tools used to protect the marine environment—National Marine Conservation Areas, Fisheries Act closures—means that there is confusion at the ground level, which is not necessary. Canadians expect that in our terrestrial protected areas industrial activities will not be permitted. In the marine environment—and I think you've received our brief already that we put together with several other NGOs from across Canada—we're strongly advocating that activities like bottom trawling, oil and gas exploration and development, open net-pen aquaculture, and seabed mining should simply not happen in our marine protected areas. This does not preclude other low-impact human uses, like fishing with low-impact gear, ecotourism, and marine transportation.

The scientific evidence clearly demonstrates that bottom trawling has significant damaging impacts to sea floor ecosystems, and that no-take fishing areas are a key component of effective MPAs. Research shows that MPAs that permit varying levels of fishing and other activities are less effective at achieving biodiversity than fully protected areas.

International best practices suggest MPA core no-take zones should encompass 75% of a given MPA. Canada is nowhere close to reaching that high bar. Remember, this is the international community looking at examples in countries around the world that

say they have the most success when there is the establishment of large no-take zones within the MPAs. Again, it is a very small fraction of a country's economic zone in the ocean. We are talking about a small sliver of the ocean.

● (1815)

Right now, the minister has the discretion to determine what activities are allowed in an MPA and how restrictive each zone in an MPA can be. So far, Canada's fisheries minister has implemented a no-take zone in only five MPAs, and those areas are tiny when compared to the overall MPAs. Canada should follow international examples and make no-take zones the rule rather than the exception when it comes to MPAs.

We believe that reconciliation should be a part of all legislation. Additional designations are welcome tools, but it does not make sense to exclude explicit recognition of indigenous rights in the Oceans Act. Given the implications of MPAs for indigenous constitutional rights, it is irresponsible. The federal government's commitment to implementing the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and working in true nation-to-nation relationships with Canada's indigenous peoples, consistent with the Canadian Constitution, should be reflected in the Oceans Act.

Marine protected areas are an opportunity to forward the cause of reconciliation, but Bill C-55 fails to include specific provisions to accomplish this. There are already successful examples in Canada of co-management that the government could look to for inspiration. There is the co-management agreement between the Haida Nation on the west coast of Canada and the Government of Canada on the Gwaii Haanas National Park Reserve, or Parks Canada's co-operative management model in the Arctic. Those are a couple of examples. Best practices should be the rule and not the exception.

There has been some discussion about going too far or not far enough. Let us remember, if we go back to 1992, when the international community came together, that Canada signed on to a commitment to protect 5%, and then 10% of our oceans. That was over 25 years ago. Therefore, when I hear the Conservatives say that this is going too fast, or that we are protecting too much, we have to look at the context and talk about how we are doing. It is only just recently that we have managed to surpass 5% protection, and many of those MPAs do not enjoy strong protection of things like no-take zones.

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If we look from the perspective of where we are, many countries are much further ahead than Canada is. Given that they have done much more since 1992 to look at protection of their oceans, Canada has a long way to go. This is a move in the right direction. Consultation is critical. We need to get it right. I do not argue at all when it comes to taking the time to get it right, in terms of consulting, whether it is with territories, provinces, first nations, industry, or environmental organizations, those who are really concerned about our oceans and marine ecosystems, but at some point, we need to move forward with achieving the protection that is needed in order to provide a healthy, flourishing ocean.

The bottom line is that our oceans are in serious trouble. I remember reading a report back in 2012 from the United Nations top marine scientist, who pointed out that the major predators in our oceans are in steep decline. For instance, we are losing sharks at a phenomenal rate. Back then, I read that we are losing between 38 million and 70 million sharks a year.

● (1820)

The scientific knowledge has increased since 2012. Scientists are finding that up to 100 million sharks a year are being killed for their fins. Those predators play a key role in maintaining ecosystem balance. That is just one example of what is happening in our oceans.

When we look at marine ecosystem issues, we are swimming in oceans full of plastics. In some areas, it is microplastics. They are a huge problem. When we look at the issue of climate change, our oceans are changing rapidly. Ocean acidification is happening at an alarming rate.

These issues have to be dealt with. The world needs to come together. Canada needs to play its part. Protecting portions of the ocean in the exclusive economic zone is a way to do that. This is one tool in the toolbox. We need to do more. We need to move faster.

Again, I appreciate the comments about consultation, because it is critically important that all who have an interest in our oceans and ocean ecosystems are included in important decisions.

I hope the legislation moves forward. I hope the government listens to the amendments and the concerns. It hope it incorporates them to get this bill right, because that is what is needed. I hope that the Liberals listen to the NDP's thoughtful and optimistic comments about what we heard from many witnesses who testified, not just at the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans but in general in writing to me over the years.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government has been listening consistently on this issue, virtually since taking office, all the way up to committee stage. My understanding is that there were a number of amendments proposed, particularly from the leader of the Green Party, and incorporated into what we have here today.

I am wondering if my colleague could provide his thoughts on the four specific amendments brought in. Does he have anything to add specifically with respect to those amendments, recognizing that there is always room to grow in the future? This is not the last chapter of the book on such an important issue, because we have a very

aggressive, progressive Atlantic caucus, in particular, and in the coastal region of British Columbia, on this file. All MPs of all political stripes are concerned about our oceans.

Mr. Fin Donnelly: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate my hon. colleague's question about the amendments. I mentioned in my speech that unfortunately, the amendments we put forward were not accepted at the standing committee. They were defeated, and the government has not incorporated the five I talked about.

I talked about establishing minimum protection standards, maintaining ecological integrity, creating co-governance with indigenous people, establishing no-take zones, and facilitating the implementation of networks and MPAs. Those were areas of concern we put forward. We heard from witnesses who testified that these are important areas. Unfortunately, the government did not listen on those elements.

I appreciate my hon. colleague's comments that they will look at this going forward. I hope they do. I know that the minister has committed to looking at minimum protection standards by establishing an advisory body to get input. I appreciate that and think it is important. However, we need to have that in the legislation.

● (1825)

Mr. Mel Arnold (North Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Port Moody—Coquitlam for his comments and his background on the fisheries file. It is an honour to work with him on the fisheries committee.

I want to use my knowledge and background in conservation and the member for Red Deer—Lacombe's background in conservation in parks. One of the things we have seen from our work on the ground is that there is a difference between conservation and preservation. With conservation, one uses the resource responsibly but receives a benefit from that use so that one has something to put back into the resource afterward. In the case of preservation, as in some of these marine protected areas being proposed, the member for Port Moody—Coquitlam is proposing no-take zones. That means one has to provide something from nothing or else take something from somewhere else to support what one is doing. To me that sounds like the difference between conservatism and socialism.

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I would like the member to explain what he would be taking from to provide these fully no-take zones. Obviously, that cannot happen. How would it relate to the inability to do anything in overall predator or wildlife management within these no-take zones? We have seen the dangers of that. In Yellowstone National Park, the wolves and major predators were removed from that area but have since been re-established there. Without any controls, they are now wreaking havoc on the beef industry down there. How does the member propose that those types of issues would be dealt with in those no-take areas?

Mr. Fin Donnelly: Mr. Speaker, the member for North Okanagan—Shuswap raises an important point. First, I want to respond with respect to the context.

I hope I made it clear in my speech that we are talking about a small percentage of the ocean in our economic exclusive zone on all three coasts in our country. It is only a small sliver of the economic zone we are referring to when we look at marine protected areas, MPAs, within those areas. When we look at the exclusive zone, we are talking about only 5% to 10%. We are talking about a tiny percentage of the exclusive zone. When I mentioned no-take zones, I was talking about a percentage of the MPA itself, so it is an even smaller part. This is with the idea that MPAs should play a role in helping to protect marine biodiversity and in helping it flourish. Over the last quarter of a century, we have seen the opposite happen. That is why we need to protect our oceans, our oceans economy, and the communities that rely on them.

I know that the member is talking about wise use and stewardship. I appreciate those. I think they are important areas. Conservation is critical. Preservation is also critical. I used the example of sharks. We are at a point where we are beyond wise use and stewardship. It is critical that we continue to do that. However, we have to look at preservation, or we are going to lose these amazing animals we rely on not only for our community and for their cultural importance but for our economy.

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Port Moody—Coquitlam for his excellent speech, and especially for the history of this whole process. Here we are, 25 years after our commitments were made, and we have done essentially nothing to reach those commitments. We are at 5%. Australia and the United States are at over 30%. I wanted to give him a bit more time to talk about the importance of the no-take zones he mentioned briefly and how they encourage biodiversity and the growth of populations. We also have endangered species, such as the North Atlantic right whale, which is heading rapidly toward extinction off our east coast, yet we are doing nothing, really, to stop that tragic consequence.

• (1830)

Mr. Fin Donnelly: Mr. Speaker, I would like to acknowledge the hard work that my friend from South Okanagan—West Kootenay did before he even became a member of Parliament on, mostly, terrestrial biodiversity and his knowledge of biodiversity in general. I do appreciate his comments. He comes from an important and learned place when he talks about why it is important to have no-take zones within marine protected areas.

Traditional knowledge has shown that where there is human activity, where there is a lot of industrial human activity, it is very

detrimental to the ecosystem. There are impacts in areas where we have fished, in areas where we have introduced oil and gas. The importance of having no-take zones to allow the marine ecosystem, those mammals, those fish species, those shellfish, to flourish, come back, and thrive is critical.

I am glad that my colleague asked me about the history I mentioned. I brought that up in my speech because it is so important to provide context. I referenced the last 25 years, a quarter century, but if we look back over the last 200 years all the trends are not good in terms of some of the major impacts from industrial use and the way we conduct ourselves in the marine area.

We obviously have to do things differently if we want these magnificent animals to survive and thrive. If we want our coastal communities and their ocean economies to survive and thrive, we need to do things differently. We need to look at providing protections. We need to look at networks of MPAs in protected areas.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is with pleasure that I rise today to talk about the important piece of legislation we have before us. It is quite gratifying to see that it is at the third reading stage, making it one step closer to receiving royal assent.

I do not say that lightly. I believe there is a far greater expectation of Canadians, no matter where they live, whether it is along the coast or the in core of the prairie areas. Canadians do have a very caring attitude toward what is taking place in our oceans.

I have found first-hand over the last number of years that more and more constituents of mine are concerned about the environment and the types of things that are taking place on our planet. One of the reasons we had a commitment from the government during the last election to look at ways in which we can improve the marine protected areas was the level of interest, not to mention that it is the right thing to do.

I recall when we first saw the legislation being talked about, to a certain degree, which was back when we had the Harper government. I believe it was in the 2012 or 2013 budget where part of that large bill amended something like 70 pieces of legislation, and tucked away in there was the deletion of navigable waters and the impact of taking many streams outside of government protection in one form or another.

Ever since, I have seen that it has been more and more a political issue, where different members talk about the issue of water conservation and protection. I suspect members will find a keen sense of this from a number of members of Parliament. I look particularly to my Atlantic caucus colleagues who are very passionate about anything related to issues such as the fisheries and issues surrounding the environment and the coastal regions, which is not to take away from the individuals on the Pacific coast where there is a great deal of passion and a high sense of awareness in terms of what we need to do to protect our coastlines.

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Of course, we have to go all the way up north. Even in my home province, with the Churchill bay area, I can recall discussions with Speaker George Hickes, prior to becoming an MLA in the Manitoba legislature. He would often talk about the beluga whale stories and the manner in which he and the Inuit community would capture beluga whales. It was an interesting process to say the least, and how he incorporated that into his Speaker pin. Now, he is no longer the Speaker, but I think he left an impression on a number of MLAs, including me, of just how important it is that, when we talk about our oceans, we talk about the heritage, the opportunities, the jobs, the economy, and the environment. There is so much that needs to be taken into consideration when we deal with important legislation such as we have today.

I believe that the minister has done his work. There were extensive negotiations even before the legislation was brought in. I also listened to the second reading debate and saw the many stakeholders, individuals, and members who have an interest in the topic and who came forward and expressed their concerns. Ultimately in the standing committee, some amendments were brought forward to improve the legislation. That is what we have here today.

● (1835)

There is a sense of excitement with respect to the legislation passing. At the very core is the recognition of our coastal marine areas and the importance of having protected areas. This year alone we will achieve up to 5%, or maybe even a little higher, of our total coastal areas.

We have a very ambitious goal of 10% by the year 2020, virtually doubling during the next couple years, a very achievable goal, in good part because of the legislation. This legislation is a fulfillment of a commitment by the Prime Minister during the last election. A lot of the fine work was undertaken. Canadians participated through all sorts of means, sending a very strong message and helping to bring forward the legislation before us.

The legislation is very sensitive to our coastal regions, to the economic means and to the heritage of our coastal regions over the many years prior to Canada even becoming a great nation.

I highly recommend members across the way get behind the legislation. I appreciate many of the words of support coming from my New Democratic friends. They have raised consistently a number of areas of concern and potential amendments. I was not at the committee to hear the debate on those amendments. However, I know they were listened to as was the leader of the Green Party. They may not have gotten everything they wanted, but I would ask the opposition to look at the bigger picture as was presented by many individuals even prior to the legislation being brought forward. I was here during that debate on the navigable water amendments made in the budget motion. Many of the concerns that were expressed back then have been taken into consideration and incorporated in this legislation. That is a very strong positive.

On the other hand, at times it is hard to tell where the Conservative Party stands on issues of this nature. Over the years, the Conservatives have wanted to see less direct government involvement, which is surprising. I would think the Conservatives would listen more closely to the expectations of Canadians. If they

did that, they would be a whole lot more sympathetic and would support the legislation.

I will wait and see whether the Conservatives actually vote in favour of the legislation. However, based on what I have heard, I do not anticipate they will. The Conservative Party demonstrates time and again that it really does not understand the mood of Canadians or the types of things Canadians expect government to provide.

● (1840)

This is one of those things that I believe would receive wide support, in all regions of our country. We recognize that there are going to be some concerns. Some might raise the issue of the economic impact of having an area designated. There will be an impact, but the government has demonstrated clearly over the last two years that we understand the importance of working with others, consulting provinces or territories, indigenous people, opposition parties to a certain extent, but Canadians as a whole. By bringing in balanced legislation, we will allow for those areas that need to be protected to be protected faster, but also ensuring that we continue to grow our economy.

A good example of that is in regard to the pipeline issue. We have the Minister of Natural Resources who has demonstrated that we establish a process, put it in place, get behind it, and then move forward. We have seen a government that has been able to accomplish more in the last two and a half years on that file than the Conservatives did in over 10 years.

We have a track record that indicates, as a government, we understand the importance of the economic value of our coastal regions, but that we also have a moral responsibility and legal responsibility to ensure we are protecting our coastlines.

As I indicated, we are all connected to our oceans. I have been very clear on that. No matter where we live in Canada, all these bodies of water play a very important role in our culture, our economy, and are very essential to life on this planet.

The government is committed to increasing the proportion of Canada's marine and coastal areas that are protected. I made reference to five per cent this year, ultimately hitting 10% by 2020. When we say these percentages, it is worthy of noting how long Canada's coastal line is compared to any other country in the world. If we follow it from Vancouver Island going north and around the Arctic, and coming back down to New Brunswick and Nova Scotia and into the United States, it is a vast coastal line. Canada has a leadership responsibility that goes beyond our borders. We want to say to the rest of the world that we have targets, and they are reasonable targets. It will not be many years from now. We are virtually doubling them over the next couple of years. That sends a very strong message.

When we talk about our coasts and the importance of our oceans and ecosystem, it goes far beyond Canada, recognizing that Canada has played a very strong leadership role in the world on a wide variety of issues. This is yet another one, but one that is quite significant given the size of our coastal lines. Whether it is the right whale in the Atlantic, the beluga in Churchill, grey whales that go up the Atlantic, or whether it is salmon fishing, there are many issues surrounding our fisheries and protected species.

Government Orders

●(1845)

We heard a lot earlier about the plastics and microplastics. There are so many things that are taking place in our oceans, in our waterways, that we do have that responsibility to get that better understanding and to bring in legislation that will, in fact, make a difference.

This legislation will make a difference because it clarifies the responsibility, for example, of our Minister of Fisheries and Oceans to establish that national network of protected areas. It is something for which we have a minister who, in a very real way through the legislation, will ultimately, for the first time I believe, be in a great position to establish that national network. It also empowers the minister to designate marine protected areas by order and prohibits certain activities in those areas.

Again, depending on the activities, it could really have an impact in terms of what is underneath that water. We hear a lot about eco-tourism and the potential in tourism is absolutely phenomenal. We will continue to see, I believe, growth in that area. There is a big difference in providing, encouraging, and seeing that cultivated and developed, with all sorts of job opportunities that are there, versus things that might see the fore of some of our coastal lines being dragged or oil going in all areas of our coastal regions.

It is important that we recognize that there are many different types of activities, both today and going forward, that are taking place. Thus, it is important that we have a minister that has the authority to be able to prohibit certain activities in these protected areas. We look at it in the sense that, within five years of the day of which the order of a minister designating a marine protected area comes into force, the minister is to make recommendations to the Governor in Council to make regulations to replace that order or ultimately have to repeal it.

We are seeing an update in the strengthening of powers of enforcement officers. Far too often, we will see governments bring in legislation, and legislation is great. It helps set the framework, but at the end of the day, we need to look at ways in which we can invest in the resources to protect those resources. That means we need people on the ground. We need to have a better understanding of what is actually taking place. Without that, legislation will not do it alone.

I believe that we have seen the government as a whole invest in this. In particular, the Minister of Finance and the minister responsible for procurement are taking a look at how we can ensure that not only do we have legislation but we also have the resources necessary to be able to make a difference and to give additional strength in terms of powers to the minister to be able to ensure that it does in fact take place.

It does create some new offences, which is important to recognize, for a person or ship that engages in prohibited activities within a marine protected area designated by an order or that contravenes certain orders. One would expect that to take place, and in fact, that is what we are seeing.

I am going to go back to the idea of establishing a process. Establishing a process of designating a marine protected area today is lengthy. This legislation is going to cut back on that time. That is a good thing.

●(1850)

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my friend, the deputy House leader of the government, for doing such yeoman service for the government. He is always on his feet, on good days and bad days. Lately there have been a lot of bad days, but he is there. He is like the postman of Parliament, through rain, shine, scandal, or what have we.

However, I have to highlight the difference between that member now and when he was on this side of the chamber. He knows I have had some fun on this. We have seen many omnibus bills from the government. In opposition, he used to call those assaults on democracy. In opposition, when it came to time allocation motions and speeding up legislation for political means, he said, "never before have I ever experienced a government that is so persistent in using time allocation, a form of closure, using it as frequently as [it] does."

Well, as a private member, never before have I seen one member stand so many times in this House defending the government for using time allocation and doing all the things it promised never to do when it was in opposition.

We are debating amendments to the Oceans Act, and a number of other bills that the government is pushing forward and bringing to time allocation on debate. Would it not help this member's purposes for us to get back to a normal procedural pace here in the House? All they have to do is provide Mr. Jean to the public safety committee, and then we can get back to the functioning of Parliament. We can then get back to the type of Parliament that member used to dream about in opposition.

●(1855)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the kind words that the member opposite said about me, and I thank him for that. There are many, many more wonderful days on this side of the House to look forward to, and there have been some fantastic days in the past. Today the member wants this civil servant to be called before a committee, and maybe next week it will be a different civil servant because he or she might have said something else. I guess the sky is the limit on it. I must say that it has been an interesting process. Last week we had the member, who used to be the minister for veterans affairs, vote against the veterans benefits as we went line by line through all those votes.

Getting back to the legislation itself, I am sure my friend would agree that contrary to what the Conservatives might believe, Canadians want to see progressive legislation that is going to ensure we have a more protected marine coastal areas.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to emphasize a comment made earlier by the parliamentary secretary.

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Following the comments of our New Democratic colleague from British Columbia, he said that every piece of legislation could obviously be improved, that he was expecting to see some amendments from the NDP, and that he would look at ways in which we can work together to improve the bill. The Liberal members already voted against the NDP's amendments. They did not accept any of them.

Greater openness is really needed here. Given that the Liberals already voted against the amendments, they should not pretend to be open, saying that they are willing to improve the bill, and believe me, it definitely needs improvement.

The United States is already protecting 30.4% of its oceans. In Canada, we are protecting only 1.5% of our oceans. The goal was to achieve 5% last year and 10% by 2020. I would like to know how the Liberals plan to reach that target of 10% when the bill before us today does not adopt any minimum protection standards, and sets no action plan, no targets, and no percentage.

Not only do we have no idea where we are headed thanks to this hollow shell of a bill, but the absence of minimum protection standards means that, in these marine protected areas, people can engage in commercial fishing and oil and gas development.

How can the government call these protected areas when people can do anything they want in them?

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, my friend is being a little too hard on the New Democrats. We had the opportunity, while we were both in opposition, to talk about our oceans. Many ideas talked about are incorporated in the legislation. Some of those thoughts might have even trickled in from my New Democratic friend.

We have to recognize that when a piece of legislation goes to committee, just because someone moves an amendment does not necessarily mean it has to be accepted. I would encourage members to work with parliamentary secretaries, ministers, and other committee members, or whatever it might take. If they have an idea for a change in legislation, there are opportunities.

My friend will recognize that when we were both in opposition, and it was not that long ago, it was very frustrating, because under Stephen Harper, there were never amendments accepted. At least on this side, with this more open and transparent government, we are seeing more amendments being accepted, even from opposition members. We like good ideas.

● (1900)

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is always an education when the member is in the House. He was outlining the differences in Canada in terms of our oceans, where we have oceans across the west, the north, and the east. We are working with indigenous people now in a new relationship. The Prime Minister spoke in the House on February 14 about having a new, solid relationship with first nations and indigenous people in how we develop together, legislatively and through our land.

I am thinking of the role we can play in learning from indigenous people how they manage the oceans they live around and how that might become part of our discussion as we look at new oceans

protection legislation moving forward. Could the hon. member expand on how we can work on all oceans and work with all indigenous peoples in benefiting our country as well as their territories?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, when I look at the importance of the environment and our oceans, how can we move forward if we do not do what is responsible? The right thing to do is to work hand in hand with indigenous people. I, along with, I suspect, every member of the Liberal caucus, am so pleased with the general attitude the Prime Minister has when it comes to indigenous issues. It is one of building a new relationship, one of trust and honour, and wanting to move forward.

This is another area where we can learn a lot. That is one of the reasons I made reference to former speaker of the Manitoba legislature George Hickey. We can learn from the Inuit community and how they used to capture the beluga whale. There are quite the stories on how indigenous people have relied on our oceans and waterways for hundreds, going into thousands, of years. We can learn a lot from that. There is a great deal of value in learning from indigenous people. The more we can look to them to enable that leadership to come to the table, the better we will be as a society.

I want to emphasize, in regard to preservation, that today it is somewhere in the range of 5% to 6%. I believe it is getting closer to 6%. By 2020 we should be at 10%. Given Canada's coastal regions, that is an amazing statement for the world.

The Deputy Speaker: We are resuming debate, but before we get to that, I will let the hon. member for North Okanagan—Shuswap know that there are only about 10 minutes remaining in the time for Government Orders this afternoon. He will know he has a 20-minute slot coming up. He will, of course, have his remaining time when the House next gets back to debate on the question. I will interrupt him in the usual way before we go into the adjournment debate.

The hon. member for North Okanagan—Shuswap.

Mr. Mel Arnold (North Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this will be the second time that my speech is cut in half because of debate closure for the day and I have to continue the next day.

This will be my first debate without a prepared speech, so I will be taking a bit of time to pause to make sure my thoughts are coherent.

First, I want to talk about the timeline of what has taken place over the last year and a half on the study of marine protected areas and this legislation.

I looked at the mandate letter to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, and I saw a comment there about protecting Canada's coastlines. This was also a Liberal promise. The Liberals did not make any commitments. They only made promises, which they continue to break. There was a promise in that mandate letter to protect Canada's coastlines.

Government Orders

In December 2016, I put forward a motion in the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans that the committee undertake a study to look at the criteria and the process for establishing marine protected areas in Canada, to determine whether the process that had been taking place was an efficient and effective way of doing things. As members have mentioned, it sometimes took seven to 10 years for a marine protected area to be established.

The committee finally started that study in April 2017. We travelled north to Inuvik, Paulatuk, and Tuktoyaktuk, and talked to people there. They have established MPAs that were put forward by the communities. Those MPAs are supported by the communities, and they have been very effective. We also travelled to Prince Rupert.

In the fall of 2017, we travelled to eastern Canada, and what we saw there was a totally different story. Marine protected areas were being proposed or established by government without any consultation with the local fishermen or the local communities that depended on access to the resources in those areas. There is the odd one that was proposed by the community, and it is working, but we saw opposition to the way this was being put forward. There was no good consultation with the fishermen, who felt that their livelihood, their families, their boats, and their communities were being put at risk by the imposition of government over them. We have seen this process play out over and over, particularly with this government, with its “trust us; government knows best” attitude.

We are getting into a really scary situation. We see it with the values test in the Canada summer jobs program. We see it with Service Canada not being able to refer to individuals as Mr. or Mrs., Sir or Madam. These are values tests being imposed by a government that says Canadians should trust it because it knows best. Canadians are concerned with that. I am concerned with that. My constituents are concerned with that.

Conservatives truly care about the environment. My background is in conservation. That is how I arrived in the House of Commons.

My first interest in politics showed up in the 1990s, when a former Liberal government introduced a long gun registry. I owned one older deer hunting firearm. I went to the local fish and game club and asked what I would have to do to comply with a government that thought it knew best.

● (1905)

An older gentleman in the club said that I should become a member. Not being one to sit back and keep my mouth shut, within a few months someone said I should become a director. A couple of years later, people said that I should become vice-president. I worked my way through that organization, through the regional branch of the BC Wildlife Federation, and eventually became president of the BC Wildlife Federation for two years.

In that time, I found conservationists and Conservatives hand in hand. They were firearms owners, guys working with boots in the streams, doing wild game counts, actual work on the ground for fish, wildlife, and habitat. We did not dream about locking it up. We thought about using it so we were getting something from those resources to put back into them.

What the Liberals are proposing, without consultation, is identifying huge swaths of the ocean and locking them up, doing this only in consideration of one previous year of traditional use or existing use. In our travel to eastern Canada, we heard from fishermen who were now fishing halibut in an area where there had not been halibut in five to seven years. If an MPA had been established there as a no-take area to protect the halibut, people would not be allowed to fish.

The government is proposing to draw lines on a map to protect an area when everything is changing. Fish move, water currents change. The government would protect an area through a space on a map and a line on a map without taking the time that had been taken in previous governments and in previous roles. Sometimes it was seven to 10 years. That is not a very fast process, but when they were done, they were done well and they worked. That should not change. If it takes that long to do something right, then do it. A slap-happy, push it forward, bulldoze it through method is not the right way to do things.

I will get back to the committee and the study it undertook on marine protected areas. That study has now been pushed back and delayed. It may never see the light of day because of the time allocation. The Liberals have called time allocation on Bill C-55, to amend the Oceans Act, which deals with marine protected areas. They are calling time allocation on Bill C-68, to amend the Fisheries Act. Both of those acts will have to come before the committee. The committee has not been able to wrap up its study on marine protected areas, so the Liberals are bulldozing, steamrolling over a committee process that was put in place. Now is it going to be totally ignored by a government that simply tell us to trust it because it know best. The Liberals do not want to hear about the consultation. They do not want to hear the testimony that concerned fishers and communities have put forward. Why?

Are they pushing back because we have asked for half an hour with the public safety adviser? I propose that may be the case, but that should not be the way government operates. Governments should listen to the people. In this case, the Liberals are shutting us down. We are not going to be able to finish our study at committee and make the recommendations to the government. I imagine there would have been a long series of recommendations from that study. We have a number of members on that committee from Atlantic Canada. I do not think they liked what they were hearing about the proposed process either. The previous process may not have been perfect, but the proposed process really concerned them the most. They were going to be shut out. They were going to be disallowed from their current areas of access and from their current process.

● (1910)

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for North Okanagan—Shuswap will have 10 minutes remaining for his remarks and 10 minutes for questions and comments when the House next gets back to debate on the motion before the House.

*Adjournment Proceedings***ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS**

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

[*English*]

CANADA-INDIA RELATIONS

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it has been some time since I rose in adjournment proceedings in the House, but it is perhaps appropriate that I rise today for the late show dealing with Canada-India relations, because that really has seized this chamber for the last month following the Prime Minister's, one might now say, ill-fated tour to India, because the consequences have been deep for the Canada-India relationship. The consequences to the Prime Minister's and government's reputation have also been deeply scarred. Specifically, it is because of what we are now saying are the cover-up and conspiracy theories related to the Atwal India affair, and in the time I have, I will briefly remind Canadians what that is.

In a trip that was already being labelled as a "slow-moving train wreck" by the international press because of the Prime Minister's constant focus on photo ops where he wore attire that was more suitable to formal Indian weddings, he was being mocked for not taking seriously the trip and had a very light agenda on his trip. The trip went from bad to very bad when a former attempted assassin, someone who had been convicted of the attempted murder of an Indian politician on Canadian soil, showed up at high-profile events hosted by Canada's High Commissioner in India with the Prime Minister, featuring the Prime Minister's spouse and members of the cabinet. This person was in the event and that caused what I have said is the biggest diplomatic incident in generations, if not of all time.

Why do I say "all time"? It is because not only did the MP for Surrey Centre admit responsibility for inviting Jaspal Atwal to those events. He said that Mr. Atwal asked him, he sent the name into the Prime Minister's Office or the centre, and he was approved. However, on the trip, a story was written by CBC on February 22 entitled "Rogue Indian political elements may be trying to make Canada look weak on Sikh extremism". In that article, the reporter said, "A senior government official with knowledge of the prime minister's security protocols is suggesting rogue political elements in India may have orchestrated the embarrassing invitation of a would-be political assassin to a formal dinner with [the Prime Minister]." The story went on to say, "The official said questions should be asked of the Indian government about how Jaspal Atwal...suddenly surfaced during [the] visit".

This story was written by the CBC after that reporter and several other members of the press gallery following the trip were given a briefing. That senior official, revealed in the story later on, we knew was Daniel Jean, the national security adviser. When that official is saying "questions should be asked" to journalists, it is clear that an official of the Canadian government was put out a day or two after damaging world headlines to do damage control on the Prime Minister's trip. The Prime Minister, the Minister of Public Safety, and others have stood in the House and repeated this conspiracy theory.

We have one member of Parliament of the Liberal government acknowledging that they did the invitation to Mr. Atwal, yet the Prime Minister and the public safety minister suggested that it was a rogue Indian conspiracy theory. Today, the Prime Minister suggests that the opposition cannot be given the same briefing as journalists, because that would be classified.

Therefore, with such accusations levelled by the Canadian government through the Prime Minister at the Indian government, what measures are being taken to repair this profound damage with our friends in India?

● (1915)

Mr. Jonathan Wilkinson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I know that the Conservatives are going to try to keep milking this one mistaken invitation for all it's worth, but this is getting to the level of being completely ridiculous.

I will tell the hon. member what he has been told now many times. The invitation should never have been issued. The member for Surrey Centre has acknowledged that he passed along a couple of dozen names and that the name of Mr. Atwal should not have been included. The member has taken responsibility for this mistake. When the government became aware of the invitation, it was rescinded.

Any attempt to use this situation to try, for partisan purposes, to impugn the reputation of a distinguished, non-partisan national security official who has served this country with honour for decades is very unfortunate.

[*Translation*]

If there were any lingering doubts as to whether the Conservatives are actually interested in examining the facts, they have surely been dispelled by now.

[*English*]

The Leader of the Opposition has been offered a classified briefing from our non-partisan professional public service and he has not accepted it. While the Conservatives remain more interested in political gamesmanship, I will remind them of what was actually accomplished during the Prime Minister's trip to India.

[*Translation*]

During the trip, the Prime Minister was delighted to announce an investment of over \$1 billion shared between Canadian and Indian businesses. These investments will help create nearly 6,000 well-paying jobs for middle-class Canadians.

● (1920)

[*English*]

The two prime ministers announced plans to finalize an arrangement this year to facilitate the export of Canadian pulses to India. This is a critical announcement for Canadian farmers, and it is why the chair of Pulse Canada's board of directors said, "It is clear to me that we can count on the Prime Minister to be in our corner."

Adjournment Proceedings

NATIONAL DEFENCE

The trip resulted in significant announcements related to clean energy and environmental protection, combatting gender-based violence and empowering women and girls, working together to combat terrorism and radicalization, and enhancing people-to-people ties between our two countries.

[*Translation*]

Canada and India have a long-standing bilateral relationship based on a mutual commitment to democracy, a shared tradition of pluralism, and strong interpersonal connections.

[*English*]

The Prime Minister, along with six ministers and 14 members of Parliament, visited India to deepen those ties and make progress on important issues in the interest of all Canadians, and all the Conservatives can focus on is one invitation that was issued in error and was immediately rescinded.

If the Leader of the Opposition believes he needs more information on the subject, he should accept the briefing he has been offered.

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Mr. Speaker, the parliamentary secretary recited the greatest hits of the lines we have been hearing from the government in the last few weeks, but he highlighted the conundrum they are in. The hon. member said it is all about one mistaken invitation. He seems to believe the one version of events, that the member for Surrey Centre is responsible for the entire affair, that Jaspal Atwal asked him if he could attend and the Liberal MP invited him, and that is why he showed up.

If that seems to be what the member believes, why then the briefing on February 22 from the national security adviser where he said, and I will repeat from the news story the CBC wrote:

The official said questions should be asked of the Indian government about how Jaspal Atwal...suddenly surfaced...

Why is the Prime Minister's Office putting out a counter-narrative to the simple invitation that the member seems to believe? The Prime Minister still clings to this, and said that we cannot hear about it because it is classified.

What does that member believe? Does he believe his own talking points or would he like to get to the truth and hear from Mr. Jean himself?

Mr. Jonathan Wilkinson: Mr. Speaker, the opposition members say they want the facts about this matter, but now their leader has been offered a full briefing, and he is not taking it. I think that makes their motivation pretty darn clear.

The invitation to Mr. Atwal was issued in error. The invitation was rescinded as soon as the mistake was discovered. However, the Conservatives see a partisan political opportunity here, so they have spent the last few weeks trying to sully the reputation of a distinguished, non-partisan, career civil servant. They engaged in a 24-hour stunt of a voting marathon during which they voted against things like funding for the RCMP and funding for border security, and refused a briefing on the very subject they claim to want to know more about.

Their leader should accept the offer.

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise on a question that I asked on November 20, 2017 regarding another pay cut to the members of our Armed Forces, which is being forced upon them by the Liberal government. The Prime Minister is prepared to take care of his billionaire friends, vacation on their islands, go on junkets in India, cut the benefits and tax credits available to people suffering from diabetes. He has already cut the danger pay for our troops who were serving in Operation Impact and fighting ISIS. With the Minister of National Defence and the Prime Minister, we do not see a government that has shown any appreciation or respect for the brave men and women who serve us in the Canadian Armed Forces. The question I raised on November 20 is why they would cut the special allowances that are paid to members of the Canadian Armed Forces.

A lot of members of the Canadian Armed Forces take many years to hone their skills. They become special operations forces soldiers. They move up from infantry to CSOR, the Canadian Special Operations Regiment. They sometimes become a commando in JTF2, or maybe they specialize and become a technician in search and rescue. I can tell members that the SAR tech guys who are stationed in Winnipeg at 435 Squadron are some of the best in the world.

In the line of duty, whether they are fighter pilots, submariners, SAR techs, or members of CSOR or JTF2, they have honed these skills and put a lot of effort into it, often taking cuts in their rank to become members of elite squadrons. When they are members of these elite units, they often get injured, both physically and invisibly. What the government is now doing is that if they cannot be repaired, cannot recover from the injury they sustained in the workplace, in their service to this country, they could lose their special allowance.

We are not talking nickels and dimes, but rather up to \$22,000 a year. A lot of military families bank on their loved ones becoming a part of these elite crews within the Canadian Armed Forces, and that they will enjoy the extra pay that comes with that service. Therefore, when a callous government, with a heartless policy, steps forward to say that if they cannot service within six months of that injury they will lose that benefit, that is a huge pay cut. I see the member for Durham nodding, who has served in the Canadian Armed Forces and understands this all too well. If one wants these members to step forward with their operational stress injuries like PTSD, then government should treat them better. However, they are being thrown to the curb by the Liberals because they cannot get well enough fast enough.

Adjournment Proceedings

In the United Kingdom, Australia, and the United States, they allow members up to a year to recover rather than throwing them out of the unit and cutting their pay. They know how much money they have invested in people like fighter pilots, commanders, special operations forces soldiers, submariners, and the SAR techs. They know what they have invested in these individuals, and getting them healthy is more important than cutting their pay. However, with respect to the Liberals, balancing the books—although I do not know if they ever balance their books—stealing from Paul to pay Peter, or stealing from our troops to pay the Prime Minister's buddies, if we want to use that analogy, is more important to them than standing and supporting our troops.

● (1925)

[Translation]

Mr. Jean Rioux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for raising the issue of military pay and benefits during the adjournment debate, because this gives me an opportunity to set the record straight.

I want to make it very clear that there have been no cuts to our military personnel's pay or benefits. The member opposite is referring to changes made to the administration of monthly allowances. These allowances are paid to men and women in the Canadian Armed Forces who are exposed to dangers and harsh conditions that other members usually do not experience. They apply to unique specialized roles played by members participating in special operations, paratroopers, rescue specialists, and those on land or sea duty for extended periods.

These allowances, which our soldiers receive on top of their pay, are incentives intended to keep them motivated. Last summer, most of these allowances were increased by 5.1%. In addition to this increase, the policy was revised to ensure that those who are no longer on such duty due to injury or illness stop receiving the allowance. The changes were made as a result of an in-depth audit of allowances that was conducted to resolve ambiguities, complaints, and other concerns.

We realize that this change may have an impact on some members of our military. This is why they will have a six-month grace period to transition to the normal pay rate. We are not making any budget cuts. This is a matter of fairness for those who are regularly exposed to more risks and dangers as a result of the unique, specialized aspects of their jobs.

Our priority is to help those who are ill or injured recover. This is why we committed to offering them the best care and support there is, through our new defence policy entitled, "Strong, Secure, Engaged". I must point out that this policy makes our men and women in uniform a priority, but the Conservatives voted against funding this policy last week.

Our government is investing \$198 million, through our defence policy, to implement the total health and wellness strategy. This strategy will also offer an expanded range of health and wellness services and programs. We will also add at least 200 new health care personnel. We are firmly committed to improving the care and treatments offered to members of our military who experience health issues during their careers.

To help our ill or injured members recover, our government is actively working to create a new transition group. This new group will provide flexible support adapted to members who are recovering from illness or injury, as well as to those who are permanently leaving the forces.

We are also committed to showing more flexibility in meeting the needs of our members, so that those who want to serve their country can continue to do so, regardless of their illness, since our military personnel is our most precious resource.

● (1930)

[English]

Mr. James Bezan: Mr. Speaker, first of all, Canadians should never believe the Liberals. When they say it was an administrative decision, I can say that it took the Minister of National Defence and the President of the Treasury Board to sign off on the policy to take away the special allowances from the brave men and women who serve in the Canadian Armed Forces who are ill and injured.

We can never believe the Liberals when they say that they care, when they are stigmatizing those who are dealing with mental illness. They are making sure that if they try to come forward with mental health issues, they will have the added stress of having their pay cut, with the removal their special allowances.

On this side of the House, we will always stand in support of the brave men and women who serve us in uniform. The Liberals, on the other hand, are using them as pawns in the politics they are playing right now in trying to get a seat on the UN Security Council. They have no problem and no conscience when it comes to cutting the pay of the brave men and women who serve in the Canadian Armed Forces.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean Rioux: Mr. Speaker, with respect to the adjournment debate on the pay and benefits of our military members, I would like to reiterate that our government is not making any cuts to the pay and benefits of our military personnel. Last summer, we announced that pay and monthly allowances would increase significantly. We know that our men and women in uniform and their families make tremendous sacrifices for our country.

In return, our government's budgets provide for appropriate compensation for members of the Canadian Armed Forces and make their well-being a priority, as set out in our defence policy, "Strong, Secure, Engaged".

The question is why did the Conservatives decide to vote against the well-being of our troops last Thursday. The truth is that this is an issue of fairness and that we need to focus on what is important.

That is why our government is also working to help our ill and injured soldiers recover.

*Adjournment Proceedings**[English]*

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the chance to rise tonight at adjournment proceedings to revisit a question I asked on November 20, 2017. It was related to an event that has since passed, which was the Emmanuel Macron climate leaders summit that was held in Paris.

However, let me move on to the point I want to raise tonight, which relates to the Prime Minister's answer to me, which was entirely favourable. What he said was, "I know that by working together, we will achieve our international commitments as laid out in the Paris agreement." What I want to revisit this evening with the House is what we are to understand our international commitments to be, as laid out in the Paris Agreement.

What I find in the day-to-day press and conversations in this place is a conflating of the current target for carbon reductions that the Government of Canada is using as our current goal, as though it were absolutely consistent with the Paris Agreement. Now, of course the current target to which the new Liberal government, which is not that new but the Liberal government since 2015, has ascribed to is the target of 30% below 2005 levels by 2030. The government knows well that target predates the Paris Agreement being negotiated, because it was negotiated in December 2015 and this is the Government of Canada's target from May 2015. It was tabled by former Conservative environment minister Leona Aglukkaq.

At the time, it was decried as one of the weakest targets in the industrialized world. In fact, our current Minister of Environment and Climate Change described it at one point as being the floor, and that we would certainly do better than that. It was less than 12 months later that the floor became the ceiling, and this is now our target.

However, to understand why it really matters to pay attention to the Paris Agreement, we have to look at where Canada did show leadership, and that was in advancing our target for all countries globally. We must ensure that our reductions of greenhouse gases are sufficiently aggressive to hold global average temperature to no more than 1.5 degrees Celsius, and certainly below two degrees. In looking at why 1.5 degrees matters, it matters critically and urgently, and I say this in no way as an exaggeration or hyperbole. It matters for the survival of human civilization.

It may even matter for the survival of the species that we achieve an equilibrium of carbon dioxide and greenhouse gases in the atmosphere such that we can adapt to those changes in climate change that we can no longer avoid. It is a question of odds. The odds matter. We are now almost in a game of Russian roulette. If we lose 1.5 degrees as our goal, if it goes to two, or worse to three or four, we are increasing the odds with every increase in global warming of catastrophic events such as, for instance, losing the western Antarctic ice sheet.

Because it sits on land instead of the melting ice in our Arctic, which does not affect sea level rise, if we lose the western Antarctic ice sheet, that has an impact of an eight-metre sea level rise in Canada. That is information from the University of Toronto's study called the GRACE project under Professor Dick Peltier. That is a

huge impact. We have to do everything in our power to hold our temperature to no more than 1.5 degrees Celsius. Worse risks are if we lose all the permafrost in our Arctic, if it all melts, that releases four times more greenhouse gases than everything since before the industrial revolution. That could effect human extinction.

I ask to hon. government to please consider what our Paris target is, and how we are going to meet it.

● (1935)

Mr. Jonathan Wilkinson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member alluded to, the initial question actually related to the One World summit, but the question is a little different, and I am happy to address the question the member has posed.

This government was elected on a platform that included a significant commitment to addressing the issue of climate change. Many who ran for the Liberal Party, as ran for other parties, certainly the Green Party, did so in large measure because they were committed to addressing the issue of climate change. I for one ran in large measure because of a commitment about addressing climate change.

Once elected, the government played a constructive role in the context of the development of the Paris Agreement. The hon. member was in Paris with the Minister of Environment and Climate Change for those conversations. Subsequent to that, we worked with the provinces and territories in the federal architecture that is Canada to come up with a plan that would allow us to have visibility about how we actually address this matter and meet the targets to which we had committed under the Paris Agreement.

As the hon. member mentioned, the target that was established had been established under the previous government, but the previous government had established a target with absolutely no plan in place to actually meet that target. As the hon. member knows very well, many of the changes that are required for us to make substantive progress toward achieving emission reductions require major changes in the way we conduct industrial practice, whether that is phasing out of coal, changing the nature of the transportation system to move toward more electric vehicles or other kinds of alternative vehicles, or bringing in new building codes that over time will affect the energy efficiency of not just new buildings but retrofits of existing buildings. Those are all things that take time to thoughtfully develop and then they take time to thoughtfully implement. The government was in a position where it had 12 years to actually work through and implement a process that would allow us to have visibility on meeting our target.

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This government is very much committed to addressing climate change. We are committed to achieving the targets we established under Paris. To the extent we are making progress in that direction, we are open, as the minister has said on many occasions, to ratcheting up our level of commitment over time. However, let us be clear. In Canada, governments have histories of establishing targets with absolutely no plan and no actions to meet them. This government has taken the exact opposite perspective, which is to say we need a target, but we actually need a plan. We need to show Canadians that this is something we actually can do, and that we work step-wise to show progress on this critical issue. As the hon. member has talked about, it is something that is not only in the interest of Canadians but is in the interest of all citizens of our planet.

● (1940)

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, the critical question here is time. We heard the parliamentary secretary say the government may ratchet up our commitment over time. We are running out of time. That is our most precious and vanishing commodity.

I have watched the debates on climate in our country over decades, and procrastination has been the order of the day. However, it is not correct to say there was never a plan. The government of the Right Hon. Paul Martin had a plan that would have taken us very close to Kyoto. It was brought forward in 2005, and was replete with measures that the current government could implement. There were things like eco-energy retrofit for housing, and programs to encourage the purchase of low-emission vehicles, either electric or hybrid. We are not seeing the government even dust off the 2005 budget of a previous Liberal government that was very close to reaching Kyoto targets, had the Conservatives not been elected and cancelled all those plans.

My point is, it is 2018. I still see no plan. I do not see a carbon budget, and I do not see the kind of action that is required.

Mr. Jonathan Wilkinson: Mr. Speaker, with all due respect to my hon. colleague, I clearly have a different perspective on that.

If one reads the pan-Canadian framework, there are measures relating to the transition toward energy efficiency in vehicles, but also a longer-term transition toward lower emission or zero emission vehicles. There are provisions relating to new building codes for new buildings, and also retrofit building codes, to ensure we actually are reducing GHG emission levels that come from buildings. There are provisions relating to the accelerated phase-out of coal. There are provisions relating to the development of a low-carbon fuel standard, which will lower the emissions intensity of the fuels we are actually using.

There is an enormous number of measures that will help us in a step-wise way to get to our targets. There is clear visibility outlined in the pan-Canadian framework as to how we will do that. Implementation of a climate plan has never been done in the history of Canada, and we will do it.

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 7:43 p.m.)

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