HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

House of Commons Debates

VOLUME 148 • NUMBER 061 • 1st SESSION • 42nd PARLIAMENT

OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Monday, May 30, 2016

Speaker: The Honourable Geoff Regan

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, May 30, 2016

The House met at 11 a.m.

Prayer

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

● (1105)

[*English*]

NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR SAFE DISPOSAL OF LAMPS CONTAINING MERCURY ACT

Mr. Darren Fisher (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.) moved that Bill C-238, An Act respecting the development of a national strategy for the safe disposal of lamps containing mercury, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am proud and delighted to rise today to speak to Bill C-238, a national strategy for the safe disposal of lamps containing mercury act.

First I would like to thank my constituents of Dartmouth—Cole Harbour for having faith in me to effect real change and to make their voices heard in Ottawa. It is an honour to come here and work hard on their behalf to create a better environment for Canadians.

My private member's bill calls upon our Minister of Environment and Climate Change to open a dialogue and work with our provinces and territories to develop a robust national strategy ensuring that lamps containing mercury are safely disposed of.

[*Translation*]

We know that mercury is toxic.

[*English*]

However, Canadians are dumping toxic mercury into landfills daily.

I am thankful to the members who have seconded my bill, and I am truly honoured by the kind words I have received from members across the country. I am also encouraged by their feedback and their eagerness to protect Canada's environment.

I am touched that the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands approached me early on to jointly second the bill. I commend her environmental leadership and passion to work across party lines for the greater good. This is not about individuals; it is about protecting Canada as a whole. Canadians expect us to work together and find solutions together.

Private members' bills are often deeply personal. In 2012, I represented the Burnside Industrial Park in Dartmouth. Burnside is home to hundreds of innovative businesses and manufacturers, and it is the largest industrial park in eastern Canada. We have world leaders in solar technology. We have businesses contributing to shipbuilding. We even have research happening daily on the development of a Tesla battery.

It was during this period that I toured Dan-x Recycling. Dan-x is located in my riding of Dartmouth—Cole Harbour and is committed to ensuring that all mercury-bearing light bulbs are diverted from landfills and properly recycled. During my tour, I asked the normal questions that one would ask. I asked what the regulations are for end-of-life mercury light bulbs. I was shocked to hear that there were none. In light of the fact that there were no regulations, I began working within our municipality to, at the very least, divert the bulbs used in city-owned buildings. We had no enforcement measures to ensure that folks properly disposed of or recycled CFL bulbs. I was told that it had always been expected that with the introduction of CFL bulbs and the continued widespread commercial use of fluorescent bulbs that regulations would soon follow. This is the inspiration for Bill C-238.

The issue of keeping mercury out of our waterways and off our land matters to me as a parent. Like many folks, I want to leave this world a better place for our children and for future generations. That is why I immediately joined the municipal environment committee when I became a councillor for the Halifax Regional Municipality. It is why I am thrilled to now sit on the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development with our federal government.

It was Benjamin Franklin who said that “an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure”. It was true back then, and it is as true now. Remediation of land and water is costly, and when preventative measures can be taken, it makes the most sense.

I would like to thank our previous federal government and my colleagues from across the floor for taking measures to reduce the use of inefficient incandescent bulbs and helping Canadians embrace energy-efficient, compact fluorescent light bulbs and other lamp technology.

As with an ecosystem, even one small positive change often acts as a catalyst, setting off a chain reaction. For commercial purposes, fluorescent lamps have been popular for some time. However, CFL bulbs, as I mentioned, have gained in popularity since legislative changes to bulb efficiency standards were announced.

In 2014, a Statistics Canada report showed that three-quarters of total households reported using compact fluorescent lights. With so many Canadians using efficient compact fluorescent bulbs, we must ensure their safe disposal.

We warn consumers to step out of the room if a mercury bearing bulb breaks, but we do very little when Canadians dump these bulbs into our landfills every day.

[*Translation*]

Mercury is dangerous and toxic.

[*English*]

We are talking about an element that causes severe health problems, birth defects, and even death.

Commercial fluorescent bulbs alone contain 22 milligrams of mercury. Sources state that it takes only 0.5 milligrams of mercury to pollute 180 tonnes of water. One small CFL light bulb contains between 0.17 milligrams and 3.6 milligrams of mercury. It might not sound like a lot, but with more than three-quarters of Canadians using these bulbs, it really adds up.

The Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment reported that waste lamps, whether broken or intact, contribute about 1,150 kilograms of mercury to landfills in Canada each year. That is 1,150 kilograms of mercury with the potential to poison our water and lands.

Mercury has the ability to undergo long range transport. That means that mercury deposited into a Halifax landfill could theoretically redeposit somewhere in northern Canada.

It is our responsibility to show real environmental leadership and protect Canadians whenever we can. We must take responsibility and protect future generations from this needless pollution. We can no longer pass the buck. We must work together and act now.

● (1110)

[*Translation*]

Solutions to this problem already exist.

[*English*]

As I mentioned, my private member's bill was inspired by an amazing and innovative facility in my riding of Dartmouth—Cole Harbour. It recycles every bit of a fluorescent lamp. These bulbs are made of glass, mercury, lead oxide, and phosphorous powder. This facility separates and reuses the glass in the production of new bulbs. The metal is melted down and reused by metal recycling facilities. It even processes and recycles the phosphorus powder that contains the toxic mercury.

Facilities like this exist across Canada. The member for Edmonton Strathcona has a facility in her riding that recycles these toxic mercury-bearing bulbs, as do the ridings of Brantford—Brant, Cambridge, Dorval—Lachine—LaSalle, and Delta. These companies are focusing on a green economy, on clean technology. It is what we as a government have been talking about for the past six months. Investing in clean tech makes sense. Just look at these entrepreneurial ventures that have the ability to take this issue and turn it into something positive. We must encourage those with environmental and entrepreneurial spirit, like those who have established the facilities I have mentioned. My bill complements investment into the green economy. Bill C-238 has the potential to help grow this industry. We all know that when industry grows, so does the number of jobs.

Canadians are investing millions of dollars in the municipal landfills across the country. Whenever possible, we must divert recyclables from landfills. It makes dollars and it makes sense. These particular recyclables may be dangerous, but they are valuable when correct measures are taken. Light bulb recycling facilities, like the one in my riding of Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, employ Canadians while providing a valuable environmental service. That is what we mean by a “clean economy”.

As I mentioned, solutions to this problem exist. Many provinces may lack CFL end-of-life strategies, but others are showing true environmental leadership. The Province of British Columbia is a fine example of leading the way and showing that successful models do exist. Notably, British Columbia's LightRecycle outreach program has diverted over 12.5 million lighting products from B.C. landfills since 2010. Its statistics are outstanding and extremely encouraging. This model gives us a hint of what we can achieve across the country. With a national strategy, we are merely currently scratching the surface. In 2010, only around 10% of British Columbia's mercury lighting was safely disposed of through this program. However, in 2013, that number skyrocketed to 74%.

I am not here to tell the provinces and territories what to do and how to do it. Although this particular program and model is encouraging, it is important to note that Bill C-238 does not put demands on the provincial and territorial governments. Bill C-238 is the first step in ensuring that mercury-bearing light bulbs are diverted from our landfills.

Bill C-238 calls for a conversation. It is about creating a dialogue and encouraging our provincial and territorial governments to collaborate from coast to coast to coast.

Canada is transitioning towards a green economy, and I believe Bill C-238 complements our government's firm belief that a clean environment and a strong economy go hand in hand.

A problem like mercury in landfills from consumer waste takes real environmental leadership to solve. I believe a robust national strategy, with positive collaboration between our federal government and our provinces and territories, can ensure the safe disposal of mercury-bearing lamps. It is time to expect our provinces, municipalities, cities, and towns to make bold moves in the right direction.

● (1115)

[*Translation*]

We need to work together.

[*English*]

We need to work together with consistency across our country to protect Canadians from mercury.

I strongly believe that a national strategy for the safe disposal of mercury-bearing lamps is a bright idea and provides strong environmental leadership to protect our waterways and our land. This is a government that cares about the environment, but, more so, Canada is a country that deeply cares about the world we leave for future generations.

Together we can encourage our federal government to create an open dialogue with our provinces and territories to develop a strong national strategy for the safe disposal of mercury-bearing lamps. This is about fostering a discussion. As such, I look forward to continued feedback from members of the House.

I encourage all of my colleagues in this House to support Bill C-238. Why? Because we are all in this together. Every single one of our ridings across Canada is affected by this problem. With Bill C-238's federal environmental leadership, we can work together to leave this world a better place for future generations.

Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the invitation to engage in the discussion and debate on this. Like most bills that come before this House, one would expect that there would be comprehensive consultations with our provincial and municipal partners. We would also expect that a costing would take place to determine the costs of a new initiative to the taxpayers of this country.

I would ask my friend, who is a member of the environmental committee, of which I am also a part, and who does good work there, whether he has already conducted consultations with the provinces and territories to determine how far they are implicated in this and whether they support the bill. Second, has he done a costing of what this measure would entail in terms of costs to the Canadian taxpayer?

Mr. Darren Fisher: Mr. Speaker, as my friend said, we are on the environment committee together.

There have been no discussions at this point. This is the beginning of the process. This is where we would start the consultation when and if we get the bill passed.

I want to point out that the idea of moving forward on this is more of an opportunity than a cost. We would be potentially hiring Canadians to work. I do not want to presuppose an outcome of what this would look like, but if we did go that route, we would be hiring Canadians across the country to work in these facilities.

We have already embraced recycling depots across the country as a way to handle our natural resources and our resources. This is something I would see as a potentially large job creator across our country. In fact, it would benefit the economy. As to potential costs, there are no costs in a discussion. There is no cost in a consultation. This would be something that would facilitate an increase in jobs across the country when we do come forward with a national strategy.

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend from Dartmouth—Cole Harbour for his piece of legislation.

To reply somewhat to my friend from the Conservatives, I think there is always a cost to action. There is also a cost to inaction. The cost of inaction on dealing with dangerous pollutants is severe and can be quite life threatening, and certainly costs our health care system a lot of money if people are exposed to these chemicals.

We have consulted in B.C. about this issue, and certainly in my riding. One of the gaps, which is significant, for his initiative to become successful is around education. A lot of Canadian consumers often do not know and appreciate what is in their consumer products. We find that some of the federal regulations around what goes into our products are somewhat weak. I have not yet read it in the hon. member's bill, but I am wondering if there are any education components to it. Simply implementing the requirements for recycling initiatives are good on their own, but without consumers actually bringing the product to the right place at the right time, all is for naught.

The hon. member has contemplated calling for a kind of national strategy. However, has he also called for some sort of national education process so that consumers and Canadians can be better informed, not only about the products they choose, but what to do with them once they are done with them?

● (1120)

Mr. Darren Fisher: Mr. Speaker, I cannot imagine a national strategy not having an educational component. However, this bill does not speak to what the national strategy would look like. It does not offer suggestions. It is a start of a conversation and the beginning of dialogue.

However, I will say that I have talked to hundreds of people across the country about this, and almost to a person, nobody knew that there were recycling facilities for mercury-bearing light bulbs across this country; nobody had contemplated that. It did not seem like a big deal to throw it in the garbage can.

Therefore, there is already a move afoot. There is already a conversation being had around the country right now because of the instigation of this bill and the potential for this national strategy.

Again, I would comment on the incredible work being done in British Columbia on recycling light bulbs. They are truly leading in the nation.

Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am grateful to my colleague on the environment committee for bringing forward this initiative. I think he would admit that this legislation builds on our previous Conservative government's actions to control mercury within our environment in Canada.

A lot of Canadians do not realize that Canada does not mine mercury. Canada is arguably the richest country in the world when it comes to natural resources, but mining mercury is not one of those activities. Ninety-five per cent of all the mercury deposited in Canada comes from foreign sources, which is why our former Conservative government was active in negotiating the Minamata Convention on Mercury, an international convention that essentially calls for tough measures to reduce mercury emissions. That was in 2013.

In November 2014, we followed that up with the products containing mercury regulations, which essentially prohibit the broad import and manufacture of products containing mercury, with limited exemptions. These regulations are expected to reduce by somewhere in the order of 21 tonnes the mercury that will be emitted into our environment between 2015 and 2032.

I appreciate the member's effort to build upon our previous government's work. This is important. The work we do at committee is not only about the environment but about sustainability, the long-term balancing of the environment with our economic objectives. We want to make sure that, as the Liberal government has said so often and as we used to say, the environment and the economy have to go hand in hand.

Some of the measures we are undertaking at the environment committee include a study, which we have now completed, on the Federal Sustainable Development Act. We are undertaking right now a study on conservation, which includes parkland and marine conservation areas. We are also undertaking a review of the Canadian Environmental Protection Act. All of these serve Canada's interests to make sure that, as we move forward, we continue to make our environment safer, cleaner, and healthier for Canadians to live in.

Bill C-238, a national strategy for the safe disposal of lamps containing mercury, contains three elements. The first would establish national standards for the safe disposal of mercury-containing lamps. The second would establish guidelines regarding facilities for safe disposal of these lamps. The third would create a plan to promote public awareness of the importance of safe disposal of these kinds of lamps. Right now these lamps end up in our landfills, and the mercury leaches into our soil and our water sources. Virtually all Canadians would agree that is something we do not want to see happen.

This bill attempts to establish a strategy. I would ask the member why we need a national strategy. As our former Conservative government moved forward to address the presence of mercury within our environment, we acted. We did not simply establish strategies and talk shops where we prolonged any action on these measures, but we acted. We signed the Minamata Convention. We moved forward with regulations on mercury and mercury emissions. We do not need a formal strategy to get this done. The Liberal government has within its full power the ability to move forward with its own legislation and to move forward with its own regulations and policies that would build upon the work that our former Conservative government did in this area.

Some national strategies that have been presented are worthwhile, especially the ones addressing many of the health challenges still present in Canada. However a strategy is simply a call to develop a plan, whereas moving forward with action goes to the very substance of what we hope to achieve.

● (1125)

The bill would also require this strategy to be tabled in the House within two years and then reviewed every five years to make sure it is in keeping with new strategies for the disposal of mercury-containing lamps.

By the way, I am going to support this bill going to committee, because I want to continue to build on the work that the previous Conservative government achieved, to make sure we continue to clean up our environment of mercury contamination. However, the challenge is to make sure any initiative or strategy is cost efficient and does not impose additional undue tax burden on Canadian taxpayers or red tape that ties up businesses, provinces, and municipalities.

The member actually admitted in his opening comments that the provinces and municipalities are implicated in this strategy. Much of the work and cost in implementing this strategy would actually be done at the provincial and municipal levels, which is where these recycling and disposal facilities would be located. Conservatives, of course, are always concerned with what kinds of additional costs will be imposed on Canadians.

As a Conservative government, we were very proud of a record of having reduced Canada's tax burden to the lowest level in over 50 years, and Canadians welcomed that. They do not want to pay more taxes, but they understand that we want to keep our environment clean.

I looked at a few pieces of legislation similar to this one that have already been presented in the House and to which I had a chance to speak. Motion No. 45 required that all infrastructure projects at the municipal level that are over $500 million in value would have to go through a full climate change impact analysis to determine what the upstream and downstream greenhouse gas emission implications would be for those projects.

The member who brought this private member's bill forward suggested that projects at the municipal level, chosen to meet the needs of municipalities and provinces, would actually be seen through a lens of climate change rather than for the purposes for which those projects were being built and planned. This would impose huge additional costs on our local governments, additional red tape, and delays, and it would discourage the municipalities from moving forward with critical infrastructure in their communities.

The same thing was true for Bill C-227, a private member's bill, which would place a requirement on contractors for projects within the federal realm. In other words, if a building contractor wanted to bid on a federal building project, the contractor would have to go through a community benefit analysis. On top of all the other red tape government has already imposed on those wishing to do business with government, it now wants an additional community benefit analysis, which again would add additional costs, more red tape, and increased costs of projects, because that would have to be built into the bid price.

On top of that, it would complicate the federal bidding process, by adding more and more red tape to the process, when in fact these projects should be bid based on best value for the taxpayers' dollar, or in other words, the best value for the best price. Therefore, Conservatives have a right to be skeptical about the bill before us. Is it going to be another example of Liberals' overreaching, adding additional cost to taxpayers?

In both of these cases, of course, as much as the motives behind these initiatives are laudable, the motion and this bill would actually pose additional regulatory burdens on Canadians, and that is my fear with this strategy. Quite frankly, the member could have moved forward with simply asking the government to move forward with regulations in consultation with the provinces and municipalities to provide the appropriate recycling and disposal policies across the country. For whatever reason, the member did not do that.

Hopefully, this matter will be fully discussed at committee. I will certainly be asking the member questions about costs, regulatory burdens, and exactly what this would mean for Canadian taxpayers. I look forward to the discussion, and I know the member and I are going to work very closely to make sure this is done in a way that is respectful of taxpayers and also addresses the very real concerns of mercury within our environment.

● (1130)

Mr. Sven Spengemann: Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate my friend and colleague from Dartmouth—Cole Harbour for his excellent presentation and his private member's bill, and also for having secured the support of the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands and the express support from the last speaker to bring the bill to committee. That really—

Mr. Garnett Genuis: I have a point of order, Mr. Speaker. There are no questions asked during private member's business outside of the mover.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): I will consult with the table and get back to the members shortly.

My apologies to all, there was an error here and I seem to have made it. We will resume debate.

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I was worried for a moment. I am sure it was a good question, too. We will have to find a way to get it on the record. Perhaps our friend can offer a speech on the bill.

New Democrats will be supporting Bill C-238. We think it would go some measure toward doing some important things for our environment, which Canadians are rightly concerned with. It is a deeply held belief and value by Canadians that as we go about our daily lives, feed our kids, light our homes, and go to work, we do not want to be doing harm.

At the heart of the legislation is a notion around a principle that is often not applied when we pass legislation and laws in this place. It is a notion, which has been long-standing, called the precautionary principle. It suggests that before we go out and bring a new product or chemical into the world, we should look at all the best available evidence to understand if there are any impacts or exposure to the environment that would bring risk to the environment or the health of Canadians.

Clearly around issues of mercury or any of the highly classified toxins, as we innovate and try to get that green economy, products that use less energy, that are less wasteful in a whole bunch of different ways, it is important to take the full life-cycle costs and the full understanding of what it is that we are buying, producing in our factories, and bringing in from overseas.

The bill would move us in that direction. However, there is a couple of concerns that we have but they are concerns that can be addressed as the bill moves through. One is around the element of education. We know that changing the way we recycle and use products is important, but a key element in that is that consumers have full knowledge and full participation in whatever program we are trying to initiate.

The bill is interesting in that the federal government does not really have jurisdiction to direct provinces, territories, and municipalities to do one thing or another with their waste streams. We can offer some guidance. We can have some encouragement. We can bring in laws that restrict the use of certain products.

However, in terms of recycling, in terms of the reusing of certain products, what the bill seeks to do is three things. One of them is set up a national strategy. We know, and we have been told, that Environment Canada is engaged in producing such a strategy. This would be encouragement for the department to get on with it.

It is not news that mercury and other toxins are highly lethal, not just to humans but to a lot of things that humans care about, like the planet, fish, birds, and all the rest of that. It is curious that we have gone so long, and there have been some delays by previous governments in introducing legislation. My understanding is that as we have been exporting a lot of this harmful material south of the border into their recycling facilities, there is not a lot of enthusiasm to continue to have that stream going to the United States and other countries. It is a good principle that Canada takes care of its own garbage and pollution. This seems like a basic understanding and value that we would all share.

I suppose, as my friend from Dartmouth—Cole Harbour has said, this is the beginning of a conversation with provinces and territories. In my experience, they sometimes like to have that conversation in advance of legislation being brought forward, but it is a big task for a single member of Parliament to take on, to try to engage with all the provinces and territories. However, that is going to be vital. Oftentimes if our partners at the provincial and territorial level feel like an initiative is also their idea, they are much more enthusiastic about participating and going through the process. If they feel like it is Ottawa imposing an idea, that can have the opposite reaction.

It is curious, simply because when we have dealt with other issues from the government, it has had very long and strenuous consultation processes, sometimes to the point of frustration. John Manley used to talk about constipation through consultation. There can be a tendency within governments that when it is not sure how to proceed, it continues to consult and consult and never really does anything. Ottawa loves to study things.

I am encouraged that there is an initiative in here that says we should go forward and do something. There is maybe going to have to be some extra energy put toward the consultation side, particularly at the municipal level. For those of us in the House who have engaged in municipal government, they have very few resources, and by that I mean money, to deal with a lot of issues. Their budgets are often strained. They cannot, as the federal government does and the previous one did, run massive deficits. It is just not available to municipal governments.

● (1135)

One of the first questions I am going to get from councillors, town councillors, and mayors is, "How do we pay for this?" If this is going to end up on their bottom line, they want to be able to participate and do it right, but they also want to ensure they do not bear all the costs. That is a completely fair understanding of the situation.

We also see in the bill that there would be a report-back mechanism, and I believe it would be in two years. There would be an ability for us to have a sense of where the strategy is going and whether it is working. One of the things that I would encourage is that we would have some clear metrics designed, if they are not already in place in the legislation, so that reporting back is not anecdotal or subjective but is quite objective and fact-based. What is the level of mercury hitting the landfills right now? What is the expectation of the legislation in terms of reducing that pollution? Are we able to achieve those targets, and if we are off, why are we off? That accountability is important to Canadians because they have too often heard large ambitions from governments that are left relatively vague. When it comes time to see whether the thing worked, there is no way to actually hold government to account because the measures were never put in place.

My friend from Dartmouth—Cole Harbour talked about the need for environmental leadership, and we agree that for far too long, on the broader issue of the environment, the federal government has been absent or heavy on the rhetoric but very light on the action. Probably no issue underlines that fact more than the issue of climate change, where we have seen, in fact, a lot of leadership from the municipal, provincial, and territorial levels but an absence of that here in Parliament where it has been a frustrating 30-year process of trying to deal with the issue of climate change and carbon pollution into our atmosphere.

As my friend from the Liberal side noted earlier, some will come to this debate and say that it is only costs. This is a cost to consumers. It is going to be a cost to the economy. It is going to hurt the creation of jobs and only cost consumers and taxpayers. I would argue that this is an example where, if we look at the full cost of what is happening, there is a cost already being borne on municipalities and provinces, in trying to deal with these toxins, like mercury. There is a cost to consumers and Canadians directly through their health care.

I was just with a friend this past weekend, when I was back home in Smithers, who is dealing with mercury contamination issues, yet his exposure to them was never through his work. The doctors have looked back and realized that it was from playing with old discarded light bulbs, as many of us did as kids playing *Star Wars* and busting them up with no knowledge that we were being exposed to something like mercury, which can bioaccumulate. That means it can continue to stay in our systems decades after exposure. My friend is facing serious health consequences now. It may be through diet, which is also a concern, but it was actually just through exposure as a young person.

All this is to say that when addressing any issue and looking at any product, any chemical, any toxin, we look at the full life-cycle of the product from cradle to grave. We look at how we are taking care and being responsible consumers, and how it is when the government puts forward legislation it is seen through a lens that is clearly understood by Canadians and is accountable to Canadians.

This is not what this bill is, but I would greatly encourage the current government to apply the same principles it has in the legislation to things like climate change and reviewing industrial projects, such as mines and pipelines, so that we have a clear accounting for what that precautionary principle is and we have a clear accounting of what the true costs are of any government decision. It would not be some vague subjective notion but something that people could hold the government to account on.

If they are going to approve an oil pipeline like Kinder Morgan to Vancouver, what are the Liberals actually taking into account? This would not be some sort of subjective "we looked at climate change", but what the actual contribution upstream and downstream is, and what the full life-cycle cost of any decision that we make is. Canadians make these decisions all the time. If they put funds into their kids' education program, they try to understand what the full costs and benefits are. As a government, we should run ourselves as a household, and as many families do, understand what the full cost of any activity or inactivity might be.

I thank my friend from Nova Scotia for his bill.

● (1140)

Mr. Jonathan Wilkinson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak today to the bill introduced by the member for Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, which proposes the development of a national strategy for the safe disposal of lamps that contain mercury. I certainly commend him for his efforts in this regard. The lamps referred to in the bill are light bulbs such as florescent tubes or compact florescent light bulbs, which are known commercially as lamps.

Mercury, as many of us know, is a potent neurotoxin that can cause damage to the brain, central nervous system, kidneys, and lungs, and is particularly damaging to the development of the human fetus, infants, and young children. It is a chemical of global concern due to its high toxicity and its ability to travel long distances in the atmosphere. It has impacts on human health and the environment in places far from its source of release, such as Canada's Arctic. There, mercury levels in wildlife have been increasing over the past 30 years.

While the effects of mercury are most significant in Canada's Arctic and pose a particular risk to populations who rely heavily on the consumption of predatory fish and traditional food, the impacts are evident in all regions of Canada. The bill could make an important contribution to reducing releases of mercury and can build on other actions Canada has taken domestically and internationally.

Domestically, the federal government has undertaken several targeted policy and program initiatives to reduce emissions and releases. Under the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999, the government is taking action to address the health and environmental risks of mercury, including mercury from lamps.

For example, the products containing mercury regulations prohibit the manufacture and import of products containing mercury, with some exemptions for essential products that have no technically or economically viable alternatives, for example, certain medical and research applications, and dental amalgam. In the case of lamps, the regulations limit the amount of mercury the lamps can contain and require labelling to inform consumers of the presence of mercury, safe handling procedures, and options for end-of-life management and recycling.

In addition, in April of this year, the government published a proposed code of practice for the environmentally sound management of end-of-life lamps containing mercury. The code of practice provides guidance on environmental best practices for managing these lamps at their end of life. It also includes information on diversion and end-of-life management options for areas where access to recycling and disposal facilities is limited, such as northern and remote communities.

The proposed code of practice is open for comment until June 6, 2016, and the government plans to publish the final code of practice by the end of 2016.

In addition to federal measures to address mercury in lamps, there are federal regulations aimed at other activities, which also reduce mercury emissions and releases. For example, federal regulations limiting carbon dioxide emissions from the coal-fired electricity sector have an added benefit of reducing the mercury released into the atmosphere. Regulations on effluent from metal mines include limits on the release of mercury to water.

In March of this year, the government also published the first national evaluation of mercury in the Canadian environment, called the Canadian Mercury Science Assessment. During the period covered by the assessment, which was 1990 to 2010, Canadian emissions of mercury to the air decreased by 85%. Despite the decreases in Canadian emissions, however, ambient levels of mercury in the air in Canada have only decreased by 18% on average from 1995 to 2010. This is because over 95% of the mercury that results from human activity and gets deposited in Canada comes from foreign sources: approximately 40% from East Asia, 17% from the United States, 8% from Europe, and 6% from South Asia.

These foreign sources of mercury include emissions to air from industrial sources in other countries. They also include the use of mercury in small-scale gold mining, and in various products and processes, as well as from the disposal of wastes containing mercury and the re-emission of mercury from contaminated sites. While Canadian mercury emissions are expected to continue to decrease due to our ongoing efforts, global emissions are predicted to increase, in part due to the growth of coal-fired power plants in China and India.

In light of the impact of global activities, Canada continues to be a strong proponent of international action on mercury and the government is working toward ratifying the Minamata Convention on Mercury, a global treaty to protect human health and the environment from human-generated emissions and releases of mercury and mercury compounds.

Returning now to the bill being debated, this important initiative would also result in less mercury getting into the environment and will benefit the health of Canadians and the environment.

Bill C-238 deals with one source of mercury emissions, lamps. The bill would put an obligation on the Minister of Environment and Climate Change to develop and implement a national strategy for the safe disposal of lamps containing mercury. The bill would also require the minister to work in co-operation with partners and stakeholders in order to table a national strategy within two years of the act receiving royal assent by Parliament, or December 31, 2018, whichever is later. Every five years after the national strategy is initially tabled, the minister would report on the effectiveness of the national strategy.

● (1145)

This private member's bill complements the government's current actions on mercury. The national strategy that would be developed as a result of the bill would facilitate a harmonized approach, focusing on existing gaps to achieve environmental and sound management at end-of-life lamps containing mercury.

The bill envisages that the minister will seek the support of other governments across the country to develop and implement a national strategy. Responsibility for managing waste is shared among federal, provincial, territorial, and municipal governments.

The Government of Canada currently regulates international and interprovincial movements of hazardous waste, manages waste on federal lands, and has extensive authorities to regulate toxic substances and products that contain them. Provincial and territorial jurisdictions regulate waste management operations and facilities, and the end-of-life management of products. Municipal governments collect and manage waste for recycling and disposal.

The development and implementation of the national strategy will also require support and input from industry, environmental groups, municipalities and Indigenous groups. We will need to hear from these stakeholders about what should be included in the national strategy to help advance this important issue.

We look forward to hearing from all our partners and stakeholders as to what is needed to develop an effective national strategy. It should build on successful programs, such as the work done through the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment, and should address the gaps that exist. We already know what some of those gaps might be, such as a lack of public awareness on the importance of recycling these lamps as well diversion programs for northern and remote communities.

I am pleased to say that the government is supportive of this bill. We will encourage the committee to do a careful reading of its provisions to ensure that the national strategy does not duplicate efforts already under way and can focus on the gaps that may exist across the country.

Once again, I would like to thank the member for Dartmouth—Cole Harbour for bringing the bill before the House. It will help to focus national attention on the issue. I am confident that when we all work together, we can make a significant difference in addressing the safe disposal of lamps containing mercury.

Mr. Larry Maguire (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak in favour of Bill C-238, an act respecting the national strategy for safe disposal of lamps containing mercury, put forward by the member for Dartmouth—Cole Harbour. I would also like to congratulate the member on putting forth his first private member's bill in the House.

Bill C-238 would provide for the House to work in a bipartisan manner to not only pass the legislation, but begin the process of raising awareness and educating Canadians on the safe disposal of light bulbs containing mercury.

Mercury has the ability to be spread between water, air, and soil, which can significantly and negatively impact human and environmental health. It is well known that mercury is toxic and can cause health problems, including birth defects, rashes, and death. When low quantities are accumulated, they create a risk to mothers and their babies.

Mercury poisoning can also cause neurological damage, including slurred speech, memory loss, and tremors. The Mad Hatter in *Alice in Wonderland* did not get eccentric and zany from the exotic tea he was drinking; it was the mercury that led him down the rabbit hole of insanity.

Bill C-238 prescribes three important elements that need to be considered and supported. Precisely, it would establish national standards for the safe disposal of mercury-containing lamps; guidelines regarding facilities for safe disposal; and would create a plan to promote public awareness of the importance of those lamps being disposed of safely.

Previously, in 2010, our Conservative government released a risk management strategy for mercury, which proposed to reduce releases of mercury through the products containing certain toxic substances regulations. Supporting the bill is in line with the previous Conservative government's approach to controlling toxic substances that pose a risk to human health. For example, the previous government passed the Canada Consumer Product Safety Act, Bill C-36, in 2010 and banned the use of bisphenol A in baby bottles.

As the environment is a shared jurisdiction with the provinces and territories, we also must be mindful to not overstep our boundaries as a federal government. I believe, however, the legislation would strike not only the right balance but could lead to a productive partnership on this file.

I appreciate that the legislation is focused and has a clear purpose as the thrust of the bill is to instruct the environment minister to develop and implement a national strategy for the safe disposal of lamps containing mercury. As it stands, many provinces and municipalities have different approaches to this issue. I believe that best practices can be shared, and when different levels of government work together, we will be able to educate consumers on how to safely dispose of these light bulbs without a considerable cost to the taxpayers.

In Brandon, Manitoba, the city has taken the approach of allowing our collection point for hazardous goods to be open six days a week, as an example. Furthermore, it has partnerships with hardware stores across the city at which people can drop off hazardous goods. The city communicates on a regular basis with its residents on which goods should not be tossed into the regular garbage pickup to ensure they do not end up in the landfill.

There are many other examples of municipalities having programs that accept household products that contain mercury. Some have implemented collection programs specifically for fluorescent bulbs, while others collect them as part of their household hazardous waste programs.

The reason the legislation is timely is many Canadians have fluorescent bulbs in their homes, their businesses, or farm operations. The reason we still use fluorescent bulbs is that they are more energy efficient than incandescent lights. The use of fluorescent lamps in place of incandescent bulbs can reduce energy consumption and in turn keep our electricity bill down. Nonetheless, we must not forget about their negative effect on the environment and on health.

The knowledge curve on properly educating consumers on how to safely dispose of them needs to be enhanced, and this legislation is a good starting point for that to occur. In fact, I hope the legislation will spur hardware stores, department stores, and just about anyone who sells florescent bulbs to take it upon themselves to share with their customers how to safely dispose of the bulbs and how to take the appropriate measures when a bulb is accidentally broken.

● (1150)

Moreover, the legislation can provide an opportunity for light bulb manufacturers to review how they package and ship their products to further enhance the safe transport of their products.

As with all programs and activities in the federal government, it is important to measure the effectiveness of specific initiatives. Far too often governments have good intentions, however, do not have systems in place to see if goals are being met. That is why it is necessary to emphasize that under the bill the Minister of Environment and Climate Change would have to report to Parliament. In particular, under clause 3, the Minister of Environment and Climate Change would be responsible for preparing a report setting out a national strategy and implementing it. Moreover, clause 4 describes the review of the report where within five years of the tabling of the report and every five years after that the minister of environment would set out his or her conclusions and recommendations regarding the national strategy.

It is imperative that all levels of government work together to keep toxic substances out of Canadian landfills and waterways. I am pleased to highlight that in the member's riding of Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, a company called DAN-X recycles mercury-bearing light bulbs, which is reducing the environmental risk to its landfills. Many members might be interested to know that recyclers can recover the mercury for reuse.

I am pleased that we have such effective facilities in our country. We need to encourage their growth and success in order to keep our lands and waterways clear of hazardous materials. It is important that all members of the House support the legislation as the associated risks from mercury to our health and the environment are too high.

I know all Canadians care about our environment, which is why it is so important to involve the provinces, territories, municipalities, and private industries in developing and implementing this national strategy. Working together and supporting each other is the only effective way to make positive changes in our communities, and in Canada as a whole. Together, we can provide strong environmental leadership and can protect our lands and waterways. After all, this is what Canadians expect from us. The time to fulfill this obligation in a tangible way is right now.

● (1155)

[*Translation*]

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House today to discuss Bill C-238, an act respecting the development of a national strategy for the safe disposal of lamps containing mercury. I support this important bill at second reading because it is a good initiative and a step in the right direction.

The NDP supports all initiatives relating to the sustainable development of our communities. We want to minimize the presence of toxic substances that can threaten the balance and viability of our ecosystems.

Our record proves that the NDP has always been a leader in environmental protection. We must figure out solutions to the unsafe disposal of the mercury component of bulbs.

There are three main points in this bill. First, the Minister of Environment and Climate Change must develop and implement a national strategy for the safe disposal of lamps containing mercury. I congratulate my colleague on proposing such a strategy. This should have been done a long time ago, but unfortunately, the Conservative government was not particularly concerned about the environment. This is a step in the right direction.

Second, the bill calls on the Minister of Environment and Climate Change to work with representatives from the various levels of government, industry, and environmental groups to implement a national strategy for the safe disposal of lamps containing mercury. That is extremely important.

Later, I will explain why we need to work with the provincial, territorial, and municipal governments, as well as the private companies that make these products. I will explain why we need to address the root of the problem, the creation of this waste.

Third, the bill calls on the Minister of Environment and Climate Change to monitor and properly assess the effectiveness of the strategy. That is common sense. The NDP has always called for a ban on incandescent light bulbs. We want the government to implement a plan that will make it mandatory to recycle compact fluorescent bulbs. What is more, we want the companies that sell these light bulbs to be subject to a code of practice that is not just voluntary.

A voluntary code of practice does not ensure the implementation of a robust process. The process cannot be monitored or assessed and so no progress is made. A voluntary code of practice is no longer good enough. We need a code of practice that makes it mandatory for the industry to safely dispose of lamps containing mercury.

I worked in the environmental field for a number of years, and I think that extended producer responsibility is one of the most important things. Producers cannot just put a product on the market and then wash their hands of it. They need to be responsible for that product from cradle to cradle, from its creation to its recovery or reclamation. That is what is meant by extended producer responsibility.

It is important to reduce the quantity of waste materials sent for disposal by making companies responsible for the recovery and reclamation of the products that they put on the market and promoting more environmentally friendly products.

At the manufacturing stage, companies need to think about what will happen to a product at the end of its useful life. They need to think about how its components can be repurposed and how to dispose of it safely. This is known as extended producer responsibility.

It is important to implement a strategy for the safe disposal of lamps containing mercury, but we need to go even further and implement a national strategy on extended producer responsibility, in order to come up with ways to dispose of all products manufactured in or imported into Canada in a manner that is safe for the environment and for Canadians' health.

● (1200)

In that respect, I have worked very hard to find ways to improve the overall performance of products before their life cycle ends, specifically in order to minimize waste at the source.

In fact, the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment has been advocating for standards to reduce the amount of mercury in lamps sold in Canada since 2001. Of course, it is now 2016.

I congratulate my colleague on his contribution towards creating this national strategy, and I want to assure him of my full support. I will help and encourage him in his efforts. Unfortunately, the Conservatives did nothing on this file for far too long, for nearly a decade in fact, which is really disappointing.

Many businesses and organizations in Drummond are doing their part, and I would like to highlight one in particular: Ressourcerie Transition.

On April 22, Earth Day, I visited a number of organizations and industries that work on environmental protection, as well as some organic farms in my riding. One of the organizations I visited was Ressourcerie Transition, which works on the reuse, recovery, and repurposing of products. This is very important.

There has to be a shift from producing disposable products that end up in our landfills and create major problems in our communities, to coming up with a way to have products that meet conditions for the 4Rs: reduce, reuse, recycle, and reclaim.

I want to congratulate Ressourcerie Transition on reusing and reclaiming objects and then reselling them to the public.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): 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.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

PUBLIC SERVICE LABOUR RELATIONS ACT

Hon. Patty Hajdu (for the President of the Treasury Board) moved that Bill C-7, An Act to amend the Public Service Labour Relations Act, the Public Service Labour Relations and Employment Board Act and other Acts and to provide for certain other measures, be read the third time and passed.

● (1205)

Ms. Joyce Murray (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I stand today to offer my support for Bill C-7, a bill that respects the rights of the dedicated women and men serving in the RCMP by providing a new labour relations framework for RCMP members and reservists.

The bill is a significant step forward in the history of the RCMP and its labour rights. It would enable RCMP members and reservists to engage in meaningful collective bargaining. I am proud of this initiative that is so in the public interest and serves the rights and well-being of these dedicated women and men.

Our national mounted police force has not only a storied past but now a stronger future. Since its beginning in 1873 when Prime Minister John A. Macdonald introduced in the House the act establishing the Northwest mounted police, the RCMP has been an integral part of Canada's development. From the 1874 march west from Fort Dufferin, Manitoba to policing the Klondike gold rush, to the *St. Roch* passage through the Northwest Passage, to the last spike of the Canadian Pacific railway in Craigellachie, British Columbia, to the vital roles in World Wars I and II, the RCMP has played an instrumental role throughout our country's history.

Despite its long, storied contribution to Canada, its members did not have the full freedom of association with respect to collective bargaining. That would now change. The Supreme Court of Canada has removed the barriers RCMP members faced in exercising this right, a right guaranteed to all Canadians by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

[*Translation*]

The bill provides the appropriate framework for the labour legislation that will govern the RCMP. It gives RCMP members and reservists the same access to a collective bargaining process that other police forces in Canada have.

To do that, the bill amends the Public Service Labour Relations Act and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Act to create a new labour relations regime for RCMP members and reservists.

More specifically, it will give RCMP members and reservists the right to choose whether they wish to be represented by an employee organization during collective agreement negotiations with the Treasury Board of Canada.

As I said, before the Supreme Court decision, RCMP members could not organize or participate in collective bargaining.

[*English*]

Indeed, they have been excluded from the labour relations regime governing even the federal public service since the introduction of collective bargaining for this sector. Instead, members of the RCMP had access to a non-unionized labour relations program. This program had initially been imposed by section 96 of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police regulations in 1988. It was then repealed and replaced by substantially similar section 56 of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police regulations in 2014.

Its core component was the staff relations representative program, or SRRP, the primary mechanism through which RCMP members could raise labour relations issues. It was also the only forum of employee representation recognized by management, and it was governed by a national executive committee.

The program was staffed by member representatives from various RCMP divisions and regions elected for a three-year term by both regular and civilian members of the RCMP. Two of its representatives acted as the formal point of contact with the national management of the RCMP.

The aim of the SRRP was that at each level of hierarchy, members' representatives and management consulted on human resources initiatives and policies. However, the final word always rested with management.

[*Translation*]

Many changes were subsequently made to this labour relations regime, which increased the independence of the staff relations representative program.

However, none of these changes had much of an impact on its objective, place or function within the traditional RCMP chain of command.

In May 2006, two private groups of RCMP members filed a constitutional challenge on behalf of RCMP members in Ontario and British Columbia regarding labour issues.

These two groups were never recognized for the purposes of collective bargaining or consultation on labour issues by RCMP management or the federal government.

● (1210)

[*English*]

They saw the declaration that the combined effect of the exclusion of RCMP members from the application of the Public Service Labour Relations Act and the imposition of the SRRP as a labour relations regime unjustifiably infringed members' freedom of association.

The Supreme Court ruled that key parts of the RCMP labour relations regime were unconstitutional. It struck down the exclusion of RCMP members from the definition of employee in the Public Service Relations Act as unconstitutional, and it held that a section of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police regulations infringed on the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. In fact, the court affirmed that section 2(d) of the charter "protects a meaningful process of collective bargaining that provides employees with a degree of choice and independence sufficient to enable them to determine and pursue their collective interests".

In the case of the RCMP, the court determined that the existing labour relations regime, built around the staff relations representative program, denied RCMP members that choice, and imposed a program that did not permit RCMP members to identify and advance their workplace concerns free from management's influence. It found that the staff relations representative program did not meet the criterial necessary for meaningful collective bargaining. Under this program, RCMP members were represented by organizations they did not choose, and they worked within a structure that lacked independence from government. The court held that this violated their charter right to freedom of association.

I am proud that our new government's bill, Bill C-7, addresses just that. It brings labour rights governing this group of federal employees into line with the federal public sector labour relations regime, which has been in place for over 40 years. It provides RCMP members and reservists with a sufficient degree of choice and independence from management while recognizing their unique operational reality.

The RCMP is a nationwide federal public sector police organization, and thus its labour regime should be aligned and consistent with the fundamental framework for labour relations and collective bargaining for the federal public service.

Bill C-7 includes several general exclusions that mirror exclusions already in place for the rest of the public service. For example, staffing, pensions, organization of work, and assignments of duties are excluded from collective bargaining. Each of these issues is instead dealt with under other legislation, for example, the Public Service Employment Act for staffing, the Public Service Superannuation Act for pensions, and the Financial Administration Act for the organization of work and the assignment of duties. This system has been in place for years, and it works.

Having recently taken the GBA+ training module that government provides, which is gender-based analysis, I was impressed to see how the RCMP has been implementing gender-based analysis, the lens that ensures that both women and men are properly served in policy decisions taken by management. I want to congratulate the RCMP for being a leader in the implementation of this very important program.

[*Translation*]

There are other ways in which RCMP members can express their concerns about labour issues. If a uniformed member has a concern about the safety of the uniform, he or she can speak to the workplace health and safety committee. Together with the union representatives, the committee can study the issue and identify the best possible solution based on the evidence.

Moreover, workplace health and safety issues can be included in the collective agreement through bargaining. If members have concerns about employment conduct, they can share them with the union representative on the labour-management committee.

In other words, there are other ways for RCMP members and the union to raise concerns outside of the collective bargaining process. The members and the union can work with management to improve the workplace.

● (1215)

[*English*]

I would also like to point out that some have criticized the bill and said that only pay and benefits can be collectively bargained. This is simply not the case. There is a whole host of other issues that can be collectively bargained. Conditions of work, such as hours of work, scheduling, call back, and reporting conditions, can be collectively bargained. Leave provisions, such as designated paid holidays, vacation leave, sick leave, and parental leave, can be collectively bargained. Labour relations matters, such as terms and conditions for grievance procedures and procedures for classification and workforce adjustment, can be collectively bargained. For example, the decision to lay off an employee is a staffing matter, which is not subject to negotiation. However, measures such as compensation or the manner in which layoffs are conducted may be negotiated.

As I said, the Supreme Court invalidated the existing labour relations framework for the RCMP because it violated the charter right to freedom of association. The court suspended its judgment for one year to give government time to consider its options. The government sought an extension and was given an additional four months to provide a new labour relations framework for RCMP members and reservists. Unfortunately, the suspension of the Supreme Court of Canada's decision has now expired. Therefore, it is important that the government move quickly to put in place a new labour relations framework to minimize disruption for RCMP members, reservists, and management.

Indeed, delaying the passage of this legislation is problematic for a number of reasons. There currently is an overlap between the RCMP Act and the Public Service Labour Relations Act, which could result in confusion and conflicting interpretations. In addition, members could be represented by multiple bargaining agents, making it difficult for the RCMP to maintain a cohesive national approach to labour relations. That is especially worrisome given the nature and function of our national police force, in which members are posted to positions anywhere across the country in a variety of functions and activities. The potential to be represented by a number of various bargaining units could be very confusing.

Should this not pass quickly, there is also the concern of uncertainty among RCMP members about their collective bargaining rights and the measures they can take should they need access to representation.

Let me add two further arguments for the swift passage of this legislation. The government took steps, including consultations with RCMP members in the summer of 2015 to bring this new framework into compliance with the Supreme Court's ruling. Last summer, regular members of the RCMP were consulted through an online survey and town hall meetings to seek their views on potential elements of a labour relations framework.

At the same time, Public Safety Canada consulted with the provinces, territories, and municipalities that are served by the RCMP through police service agreements. Public Safety Canada will continue the dialogue with contracting parties as the new regime is implemented. The findings from these consultations were very helpful and instructive in developing the elements of Bill C-7.

Finally, let me add that this bill is also consistent with our government's efforts to restore fair and balanced labour laws in this country. We believe in collective bargaining. That is why, for example, we introduced Bill C-5, which would repeal division 20 of Bill C-59, the 2015 budget implementation act, which was tabled last April by the previous government. Division 20 would have provided the government with the authority to unilaterally override the collective bargaining process and impose a new sick leave system on the public service. By repealing those provisions in Bill C-59, we are also demonstrating our respect for the collective bargaining process.

● (1220)

[*Translation*]

We believe in fair and balanced labour relations, and we recognize the important role that unions play in Canada.

[*English*]

That is why we have also introduced measures to repeal Bill C-377 and Bill C-525, which were also passed without the usual consultation process for labour relations law reform by the previous government. Bill C-377 placed new financial reporting requirements on unions, and Bill C-525 changed how unions could be certified and decertified.

Bill C-7 restores the power of the federal Public Sector Labour Relations Board to select the certification or decertification method appropriate to each particular situation, and I would say fair method to both the representing and the represented parties, rather than being limited to the mandatory vote method, which can skew a decision against the union in certain circumstances.

The previous government had research and a report that concluded that very situation.

[*Translation*]

Recently, on May 25, the government announced its intention to repeal portions of the Economic Action Plan 2013 Act, No. 2, division 17. The portions in question have to do with changes made to essential services, collective bargaining and processes for grievances, and dispute resolution without any consultations with public sector partners. We took these important measures to ensure that workers are free to organize and that unions and employers can bargain collectively in good faith.

[*English*]

Bill C-7 honours this right, a right that has long been exercised by all other police officers in Canada. It is the right to good faith collective bargaining. This bill would institute this right in law. It would lay out the rules that govern labour relations for RCMP members and reservists, and enshrine the principles and values of our society as reflected in the charter and as required by the Supreme Court of Canada. It would recognize the particular circumstances of our unique national police force, the RCMP.

I would ask my colleagues to do the right thing and support the passage of this bill, so that it becomes law without further delay.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member talked about how legislation apparently aligns the process with other parts of the public sector.

The member will know, I think, that every other time there has been certification within the public sector, there has been a secret ballot process. There are allegations that there could be intimidation if there is a secret ballot. I do not understand how that could even work. Even so, is that not particularly unlikely in the public sector?

Would the member not agree that in order to be consistent with certification processes in other parts of the public sector, there should be assurances in this legislation that there is a secret ballot for the RCMP?

Ms. Joyce Murray: Mr. Speaker, I would like to make sure the member understands that under this bill there may be a secret ballot for the RCMP, but it would be for the board to determine whether that is the appropriate certification or decertification method given the circumstances.

I would also like to remind the member that the previous government's own analysis, the study it had commissioned on the impacts of secret ballots, concluded that using a secret ballot has led to a significant decline in unionization. In other words, it made it more difficult for members of the public service to be represented by a bargaining agent.

We are looking for a fair approach that could select a secret ballot, but also the card check, depending on the circumstances of which would be the most fair.

● (1225)

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, one of the things I have noticed in my 12 years in the House of Commons is that everything is an emergency now. We have to get these bills through immediately or we are failing in our duty. The role of Parliament has become increasingly, as the present leader of the Conservative opposition says, an audience or a rubber stamp of bobble heads.

We are here to do due diligence. Therefore, when I hear the hon. member talk about responding to the court ruling on the rights of RCMP officers and yet I look at the bill and see what is taken out of the collective bargaining rights, I think there are serious concerns that have to be addressed here. The inability to bring forward issues of harassment allegations and the inability to talk about issues of staffing, whether or not a police officer has proper backup, are things that belong within the collective bargaining process. The hon. member tells us not to worry, that there are other manners within the civil service that work well. Well, no they do not work well.

The problems we have seen with the RCMP, such as fundamental harassment and backup, are issues that have not been dealt with. This is where the collective bargaining process is supposed to be in place. It seems to me that the government is stripping out all those rights in providing a Potemkin process for the RCMP to go through, while not giving it the tools it needs to be in conformity with the courts.

Why this rush to push this through, when we need to scrutinize the lack of credibility of key parts of the legislation?

Ms. Joyce Murray: Mr. Speaker, the member raised two key issues. One was the short time, and the other was what he called stripping out rights. I will respond to the second one first. This would not strip out rights. This would provide rights. It would provide the right to be represented. It would provide the right to collective bargaining, and it would not be just pay and benefits. There are a whole host of issues that can be bargained collectively, such as hours of work, scheduling, call-back and reporting conditions, leave provisions, designated paid holidays, vacation leave, sick leave, parental leave, and I could go on.

However, I also want to address the first part of the member's question, which is about how quickly we are aiming to have the bill completed, and that is because there was a Supreme Court decision on this. The extension has expired, and now we are in a period where the lack of representation is not allowed, so this is a period of confusion. We need to make sure it is absolutely as short as possible, on behalf of the RCMP members themselves.

There are opportunities for several unions to move in and make an attempt to represent RCMP members. That would not be in the interests of having a unified national police force that can be managed nor for the members themselves having constant and consistent conditions in their collective agreement. It is not in their interests to delay this, and it has been thoroughly discussed and studied. I encourage the member to support this on behalf of the RCMP members in his constituency.

Mr. David de Burgh Graham (Laurentides—Labelle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am wondering if my colleague the parliamentary secretary could talk more about the real world impact, now that the Supreme Court deadline has in fact passed.

Ms. Joyce Murray: Mr. Speaker, here is one very important aspect. The legislation before us, Bill C-7, requires that a collective bargaining employee representation organization not also be substantially representing other public servants, so that it is a dedicated collective bargaining organization. That is very important because of the nature of the RCMP's work.

Think of a time when the RCMP might be called in to address a situation of disorder that has to do with a strike and collective bargaining. How would its members respond if it were members of their same union in a different category who were on strike, a different type of employee in one large umbrella union? That would be extremely problematic and conflicting for RCMP members, but that is exactly the situation that could arise, should the RCMP be organized by a union that has some other components to its responsibilities.

It would not be in the public interest, and it would certainly not be in the RCMP's interests to be put in that situation where it may need to take action against its own union and fellow union members. That is why having a union dedicated to the RCMP is so important. For that, we need Bill C-7 to be passed as soon as possible.

● (1230)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I agree with my friend from Timmins—James Bay that, under the Supreme Court B.C. hospitals case and the more recent case specifically with respect to the RCMP, its members have the right to bargain collectively with or without this legislation. The hon. parliamentary secretary makes a good point. However, I am sure that would be avoided if we did not have Bill C-7 in place.

As the member will know, my biggest concern with Bill C-7, which I find baffling, is that the decision was taken to remove the issue of harassment from the ambit of a possible collective bargaining agreement. We are not requiring that it consider harassment, but why has the government decided that members of the RCMP, employers and employees, should not be able to agree to include harassment in negotiating the collective agreement? I have heard from the hon. Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness that the harassment issue is high on his agenda and that something else will be done. However, just today, Karen Katz, a 27-year veteran of the RCMP, who has been on sick leave with PTSD since 2009, was fired by the RCMP. That does not give me confidence that the institution is taking harassment seriously.

Ms. Joyce Murray: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands for raising this important point. As a Liberal member in opposition in previous years, not only have I participated in meetings with members of the RCMP who have suffered harassment and not received proper support and response, but I have hosted such meetings in my constituency of Vancouver Quadra. Therefore, I am in complete agreement that there is a problem within the organization, that there has been a problem historically, and that there remains a problem. I want to assure the member that the minister is seized of this issue and is working on it.

I would ask how collective bargaining would address that. That would suggest that in other organizations that have the right to have representation and collective bargaining there is no such harassment happening. However, that is not the case, not in some of our municipal first responder forces nor with national first responders. Therefore, I would say that collective bargaining cannot necessarily address the aspects of an organization's culture and human behaviour that leads to this completely unacceptable activity and that we must take serious measures to prevent—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Order, please. Resuming debate, the hon. member for Durham.

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise for the third time in debate in this House of Commons on Bill C-7.

[*Translation*]

I would like to start by sincerely thanking all members of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. The men and women of our RCMP are essential to our public safety and security.

[*English*]

I and many members, in our speeches to Bill C-7, have tried to thank the men and women who wear the uniform for Canada and provide peace and security across our country. As I have said in previous speeches, in many provinces and territories in our vast country, particularly in rural communities of the country, the RCMP members are the only member or front-line element of public safety and security and, in many cases, the only visible extension of the federal Government of Canada. It is appropriate that all members have thanked the RCMP for their tremendous work.

While Ontario is not a contract jurisdiction for the RCMP, because of our Ontario Provincial Police force, I am also very fortunate to have an RCMP detachment in Bowmanville in my riding, as part of the O Division detachment group. Not only are the men and women of this detachment critical to some of the federal investigations and public safety work done in Ontario by the RCMP, but as I have constantly said, they are also the backbone of our community. These men and women act as coaches of soccer and baseball teams, and they are active in charitable organizations in our community. That is appreciated, and I know members of the RCMP take great pride in not just serving in communities across the country on their postings but in becoming part of those communities. I want to start with a great thanks to them.

As I have said in previous speeches to Bill C-7, it has been a bit of a journey for this Parliament in response to a Supreme Court decision. In fairness, the government has listened to some of the opposition concerns we have raised, and our public safety committee did some important work on this bill. However, there remain concerns with Bill C-7 among parliamentarians and, most importantly, front-line members of the RCMP. The concerns are particularly with the rushed nature and the lack of consultation with the front-line members of the force. That is why we are here in debate and why the Conservative Party, which has tried to work with the government throughout this process, remains as frustrated as some of the members across the country.

To remind this House, we are here as a result of the Supreme Court of Canada decision in the Mounted Police Association of Ontario court case that went from lower courts all the way to the Supreme Court and, in fairness, was a decision first considered by the previous Conservative government. That is when the former government provided an outreach program within the RCMP, including a questionnaire to elicit feedback from the front-line members of the RCMP with respect to the unionization of their force. Sadly, that has really been the only substantive consultation done with the men and women on the front line of the force, and that is what brings me here today to continue to have concerns about Bill C-7.

However, that court case was clear. The Supreme Court of Canada said that the charter right of members under section 2(d) to collective association was violated for men and women of the RCMP by their exclusion from the Public Service Labour Relations Act. The court then gave Parliament a year to come up with a regime for the association or collective bargaining rights of RCMP members.

That is important because the court gave a year. In fairness to the new government, one of the first acts of the new minister was to ask for a slight extension. However, sadly, that extension of time did not lead to substantive consultation with men and women of the RCMP. That is a bit of a miss. We have had some good debate and, in fairness, the minister, the parliamentary secretary, and the President of the Treasury Board as well have appeared at committee and been part of the debate, and that is appreciated. However, there has not been much direct consultation with the front line, despite that extension of time, and that concerns me.

● (1235)

It concerns a lot of our members, who have been hearing from men and women across the country with concerns about Bill C-7, particularly in provisions related to sections 40 and 42, which I applaud the government for agreeing to amend, but also with respect to the exclusions from collective bargaining. I will touch on that briefly in my remarks.

However, it is important, in this final time that I get to speak, to remind the House what the Supreme Court of Canada said. It did not say that the RCMP should just join Unifor, the United Steelworkers, or a large existing labour organization. In fact, the Supreme Court gave direction on two key areas. It said that the right of collective association under section 2(d) of the charter was violated for RCMP members. The two elements the court viewed as being required were employee choice and sufficient independence from management. Those are the two critical parts of that judgment.

Members will see why these elements led the government to a pragmatic approach, but, really, the lack of consultation has hurt it with the employees themselves who have to make the choice of bargaining agent.

It is important to note that the Supreme Court of Canada says clearly that section 2(d) of the charter does not protect all elements of association and collective bargaining. In fact, labour models in recent years, going way back to the Wagner model of collective bargaining, and the construct that led to that, and the Rand formula, have been evolving as the tribunals over time were really the guardians of labour law.

In the advent of the charter, charter protections, particularly around collective bargaining rights, have really usurped the old work done by tribunals. The Supreme Court has said that the RCMP is a very unique quasi-military organization with a chain of command, operational discipline, order constructs, the ability for postings, and the unlimited liability faced by members. It is not a regular job when we allow men and women in uniform in Canada to impinge on the rights of others, and also bear the risk themselves of potential injury or death. This is a very unique role. It is why we acknowledge and appreciate the special work done by the RCMP across this country. However, the Supreme Court of Canada recognized clearly that the unique nature of the RCMP leads to unique needs with respect to a collective organization and unionization. Therefore, the two key elements we have to consider from this decision are employee choice and sufficient independence from management.

The staff relations program had been in effect since the 1970s, since the RCMP was excluded from the Public Service Labour Relations Act. The program had been the internal human resources function, serving as the conduit between management and the front line.

Ironically, most of the RCMP members and most of the members of these associations who have been fighting for unionization are RCMP members who have been part of the staff relations program. They saw merit in that. They saw how it functioned well in some manners. However, the Supreme Court determined, and most of the witnesses we heard from determined that there was not sufficient independence from management to safeguard the charter rights of our members. This is why we are here today. It is not like the RCMP had nothing, they had the staff relations program, but the Supreme Court said that the staff relations program was not sufficiently independent from management, which is critical to remember.

I will predict to the House, and I know the parliamentary secretary probably agrees with me, that many of those staff relations personnel will likely form the leadership of whatever union we eventually see.

● (1240)

The good thing is, they will take with them that collective knowledge and memory of what has happened before and then they will have more ability to be independent from management as they collectively bargain, particularly related to remuneration. We have heard consistently that compared to the big 15 police forces our men and women of the RCMP need a top-up. That will be a critical part of those negotiations.

Independence from management is critical, but the first element of what the RCMP feels is critical in the unionization of the RCMP, as a result of this court case, is employee choice. For Conservatives, we have viewed that choice as giving every single member, from Windsor, to Winnipeg, to Whitehorse their right to decide who will be their collective bargaining agent, or indeed if there is a collective bargaining agent at all. How is employee choice best demonstrated? That should be conducted by secret ballot, as it has been historically for all public sector unions, because most have been unionized for several decades.

I am not sure why the government has been so reluctant to acknowledge that. Canadians sent members of the government caucus here by secret ballot. They obviously think it is sufficient to get them to this place, but they do not want to give employee choice through a secret ballot to our men and women in uniform.

Some members of the RCMP have said to me that I am getting hung up on a little detail. This is not a little detail. This is fundamental to true employee choice, absent of influences from the workplace, from Parliament, and from management, that Canadians have enjoyed since 1874. It is a fundamental tenet of our democracy. Conservatives have raised this since my first speech in this place on Bill C-7. We are very disappointed the government has not responded to that, given the men and women we charge with securing the rights and safety of Canadians with that same basic democratic right when it comes to choosing their collective bargaining agent.

I will spend a moment on exclusions. I have been very open with supporting the government, or trying to support it, with respect to exclusions. I know many of the RCMP members watch my speeches on Bill C-7. The Supreme Court clearly says that not all elements of the collective bargaining arrangement are bargainable.

Why are there some exclusions? It goes back to the paramilitary structure and the unique organization of the RCMP. The very fact there are postings, discipline, operational grading, consistency of operations, safety of conduct, all of these things are unique to the RCMP. If we had every posting bargainable or grieved, there would be no operational structure to the force. By extension, we cannot ignore the fact that on the horizon is the military. Therefore, do we really think these operational forces, like the RCMP or the military, could have every decision, operationally or discipline-wise, grieved? I do not think that is reasonable. As someone who has served 12 years in uniform, that is not reasonable. In fact, a very unique chain of command structure of the RCMP, or by extension the military, demands some degree of autonomy from the traditional labour dynamic. I acknowledge that. Some of the strident members of the mounted police associations have disagreed with me on that, but most of them do not disagree with the fact the RCMP is a paramilitary organization with a very unique culture and needs.

The issue of harassment often comes up, and everyone tries to say it needs to be bargainable. The interesting thing is that then every issue would be deemed as harassment. We need to root out harassment and have a zero tolerance for it. I have heard the minister's comments. I know he keeps it as a priority, as the previous minister did.

● (1245)

Bill C-42 in the previous Parliament, the Enhancing Royal Canadian Mounted Police Accountability Act, tackled this specifically and provided safeguards and a process to ensure that the RCMP had a zero tolerance environment. All members of Parliament agree on that point. There is no tolerance for harassment in the workplace, especially because of the chain of command setting where a superior officer, man or woman, is in a position of a power differential. Those can be difficult and challenging areas when there is harassment. If somebody is using that power differential to harass, that is an absence of leadership on his or her part.

We can make sure that harassment is addressed, that a zero tolerance environment is promoted, without carving off certain elements so that everything related to operations, discipline, postings, and so on would be aggrieved as harassment. These things can be advanced.

I would remind members of the RCMP and those who will continue to listen to my speeches on Bill C-7 that they are still dealing with the old way of thinking. Once there is an independent union, for lack of a better term, one of these mounted police associations nationally will have a significant voice in the public discourse as well, not just at the bargaining table for collective bargaining. Much like the MPAO took its court case and made public statements, once the RCMP has a single unified bargaining agent, the men and women of that organization will have a prominent role in the discourse around policing, public policy issues, public safety and security issues, and harassment. I tell members of the force not to think about the future based on the past and the staff relations program, which clearly was not independent enough for management, but to think of this new union being independent from management.

Let us not kid ourselves and suggest that we can treat the RCMP with its chain of command, with its need for operational ability and discipline and postings, just like any other department of the federal government. It is not. We ask a lot of the men and women who wear the uniform for Canada and in return there is a unique set of employee and employer relationships. The Supreme Court not only acknowledged that but it gave us the road map to say that is possible and in conformance with the charter.

I would also say for the exclusions that there is also the Financial Administration Act, there is a complaints process through the civilian route, and there are Treasury Board guidelines on a range of workplace issues. The collective bargaining table is not the only area where the health, wellness, and occupational elements of the workplace for RCMP members are considered. We need to remember that.

I would like to offer brief praise to the government on its willingness to remove Sections 40 and 42 from Bill C-7. The Conservative caucus, and the NDP caucus joined with us, pushed to have these sections removed. It was not core to the Supreme Court of Canada decision and the need for a collective bargaining agent. In many ways it concerned the men and women of the RCMP that the government was trying to outsource health and occupational wellness to workers' compensation bodies. The point I have always made, particularly when it comes to operational stress injuries that we have seen rise, is that we do not need an uneven playing field across the country on how our men and women seek treatment and compensation with respect to injuries. There needs to be one consistent high standard for our one top level police force. I applaud the government for listening and for removing those provisions from Bill C-7.

Our public safety committee has simultaneous to Bill C-7 also been hearing from uniformed service personnel from across the country on the issue of operational stress injuries. It is heartening to see all sides working on this. This is an area where we need to take the learnings from the Canadian Armed Forces and Veterans Affairs Canada and the RCMP and share them with other municipal police forces, firefighters, paramedics, and prison guards.

● (1250)

The Conservatives appreciate the government's movement on some fronts with regard to Bill C-7. However, without the secret ballot and without the real consultations to ensure the men and women on the front lines of the RCMP understand the exclusions, on which I have tried to work with the government, we cannot support the bill as it currently stands. I would ask the government to give more time so the men and women of the RCMP have confidence in the union that will be created.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Michel Picard (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank and congratulate my colleague from Durham for his inspiring speech. I would like to think that the common ground he spoke about will eventually convince members on his side of the House to support the bill.

We hear my colleague's demands quite clearly. However, with respect to the secret ballot, does he not think that the two specific elements in the court's decision are choice and independence?

Since the court set only two criteria, would it not be feasible, and even preferable, to allow RCMP members, as professionals, to make their choice and then determine how to choose their union? This vote, regardless of format, happens at the second stage. By responding to the court's ruling, we can finally give them the choice they need.

● (1255)

[*English*]

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the parliamentary secretary for his work on the bill, and his compliments on my remarks. I appreciate that. I know he was listening intently, as he did two previous times, so I am sure he heard certain elements of my speeches before.

Unfortunately, I would have to give my friend a 50% grade on Bill C-7. Two elements were elucidated upon by the Supreme Court, and the Liberals fail on one and pass on the other. What we see in Bill C-7 is sufficiently independent from management. It is taking the shortcomings of the staff relations program and fixing it.

Where the Liberals fail is on employee choice, for two reasons, and it gives me no great pleasure to give them this grade. The first is that they cannot make a decision unless they are informed on the full extent of the elements of Bill C-7, including the exclusions. We are all hearing from men and women of the RCMP that they do not understand why certain elements of the collective bargaining context are excluded so they cannot make an informed decision on their bargaining agent.

The second element of why they fail—the employee choice element of the Supreme Court decision—is the secret ballot vote. Our previous government did an outreach exercise in the form of a questionnaire to members. However, to really find out what members think, the members have to understand what is before them, and it is clear not enough of them do, and they have to weigh the decision and vote, free from pressure from management and free from their partners in some cases. The way we do that in a democracy is with a secret ballot. I am not sure why this modest proposal is being ignored by the government.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it has been a pleasure to work with the hon. member as Bill C-7 works its way through Parliament, even though we do not always agree.

I would like to pick up on a theme that was in his speech and also in the remarks of the parliamentary secretary earlier. Collective bargaining is not the only place that workplace safety and health issues get meted out. As the parliamentary secretary noted earlier, there are places with collective bargaining where workplace issues still arise. I want to address that, because it is a bit of a sleight of hand. While it is a fair point, it does not really get at the essence of what we need to be discussing when it comes to Bill C-7.

Of course workplace issues still arise in workplaces governed by collective agreements. The point of the agreement is to have a framework to decide how to deal with those issues when they come up. It is wrong to say that because there are still workplace issues at places with collective agreements that workplaces do not need collective agreements, which is really the pared down version of the argument we heard from the parliamentary secretary. A version of that we heard in the member's remarks.

Could the member speak to the fact that collective agreements are a tool and an important way to address workplace safety and health issues and that as Bill C-7 exists, if we take away the exclusions, there are still a lot of very reasonable layers of protection for management? Issues go to binding arbitration, the arbitrator is required to consider the unique role of the RCMP as a national police force, as well as the stated budgetary policies of the government.

My point is that there is a lot of protection for management in Bill C-7 without the exclusions, so why would we, as a Parliament, want to prejudge the reasonableness of the proposals and the commitment of RCMP members and their bargaining agent to the institution and not allow them to even bring those forward?

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the work of the member for Elmwood—Transcona on Bill C-7. He joined our committee for a time, and was a welcome addition. I disagree with him, and this puts me in the odd spot that I am helping the government indirectly, but there has not been a sleight of hand here.

On the elements of the exclusion, some things can be dealt with elsewhere. I have talked about Bill C-42 and the issues and the structure around the Financial Administration Act, Treasury Board guidelines. Therefore, there is another framework of federal regulation surrounding the workplace that also applies to the RCMP.

However, what is critical, and I said this at committee and know the hon. member was listening, is that the chain of command nature of the RCMP and the ability for training, service standards, discipline and that sort of thing is from the chain of command structure. While I agree there is some trust issues with managements, and there has been historically for the last couple of decades, at the end of the day, senior leaders in the RCMP started in the same place a brand new recruit did, in depot. The operational requirements, standards and indeed discipline and conduct are elements of that training and that uniform. Operational command and the ability to post, the ability to assess performance is of paramilitary nature and is not a regular workplace environment.

What I say to some members, and we had them at committee, is that the RCMP members go through depot and some of their classmates, men or women, will become senior management, ultimately maybe commissioner one day. That trust and that shared training and adherence to the institution is part of the workplace. The Supreme Court recognizes that. It did not say, as a result of the Supreme Court decision, that this workplace would be treated like a manufacturing plant or even another element of government.

It is important for the government to try to get the balance right. As I said, it has that in terms of independence from management. We feel the front line is not sufficiently confident in what it sees in Bill C-7. Without a secret ballot vote, we cannot really know whether our men and women of the RCMP support this union structure.

● (1300)

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member mentioned at the beginning of his remarks that this was the third time he spoke. I have been in the House every time he has spoken, and he has done so with passion, conviction, and a forthright nature.

I want to ask the hon. member again about the secret ballot. In a question from the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, the hon. member for Vancouver Quadra referenced that the secret ballot had seen a decline in unionization, and studies had shown that. If we use that logic, that is the only reason why the union movement has declined, I would suggest it would more so be the will of the members, which can be even greater under a secret ballot system. As the hon. member for Durham has said, a secret ballot is the tenet of democracy.

Could the hon. member expand on that, particularly the decline of union movement and the fact that union members are free to express their voices?

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Mr. Speaker, the member for Barrie—Innisfil has worn a uniform. His advocacy for the RCMP for our men and women in uniform and uniform service across the country is appreciated.

He highlighted where the government was failing. The employee choice element of the Supreme Court decision has not been met. He expressed it probably perfectly. He described it as "the will of the members". There is a great book on Churchill and parliamentary democracy called *Will of the People*. The will of the people to send all of us to this place is expressed by secret ballot so there is no interference with the desire for that vote. Why not extend that same basic right to the men and women of the RCMP?

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to start my remarks today by thanking all the men and women in the RCMP who serve our country. It has been a real honour to have had an opportunity, through working on Bill C-7, to hear from them and get a sense of the needs and challenges of the RCMP today.

As a new member of Parliament, this has been an opportunity for me to learn a lot about a very important institution in Canada and to hear directly from those who serve us so well.

It is an attempt by the NDP to try to manifest that thanks in arguments and in a position on Bill C-7 that will bring about the best outcome for members of the RCMP and that will give them a greater say in the future of the institution they serve, and through that institution the country.

It is my hope that our arguments and actions in this debate have been worthy of their service. In that spirit, I would like to make some remarks about the bill at third reading.

Bill C-7 was one of the first bills the government brought to the House of Commons. At that time, there was a collegial spirit, and a lot of talk about the importance of the committee process and how empowered committees would be in order to make meaningful changes to legislation. At that time, there was far less evidence that this may not come to pass than there is now.

The NDP was happy to support the bill at second reading, to send it to committee to deal with what we thought were some important concerns. Some of those concerns were addressed, and we were happy to work with other parties in order to get rid of clauses 40 and 42 in the bill, which really had little to do with the Supreme Court decision and were kind of tacking on a decision about the benefits of members without consulting them. Frankly, this was just before, or on the cusp, of them potentially having a bargaining unit that could do that credibly on their behalf.

That did not make sense. We were very glad to work with the other parties on committee to jettison that part of the bill, and leave it for later when RCMP members could be represented in that discussion and help come to a conclusion about the state of their benefits, rather than having the decision made for them.

The next important area of concern from our point of view are the exclusions. That is also the point of view of nearly every RCMP member who has contacted me as the responsible critic in the NDP.

Today we heard hon. members talk about the two important elements of the Supreme Court decision, the explicit ones. Those are independence of the bargaining unit from management and choice, that members be able to choose a bargaining unit.

What gets lost, even though those are the two items explicitly mentioned by the Supreme Court, is that there needs to be an independent bargaining unit freely chosen by the membership in order to bargain with the employer about the things that matter in the workplace.

Even if the bill meets those two aspects of independence and choice, if it leaves nothing to bargain, because that has all been excluded under the legislation, or if it does not leave most things to bargain, then I do not think it is in keeping with the spirit of the Supreme Court decision. I have said before in the House that the bill as it stands is certainly open to challenge.

It is not just open to challenge because it is a bill, a piece of law. Any bill at any time is open to any challenge. It is open to challenge, and is likely to be challenged, because it does not satisfy the people who went to court and fought for years in order to get some meaningful say over the future of their workplace.

It is not because by getting collective bargaining rights all of a sudden employees or the president of the union or just anyone who happens to work for the RCMP can walk into the commissioner's office and say "This is the way it will go from now on". It is because it would at least give them the opportunity to be involved and consulted in a way that they never have been before.

● (1305)

That is why so many RCMP members were so excited and joyful when the Supreme Court ruled that it was not right and that it was a violation of their charter rights that they be denied the right to bargain collectively in their workplace. The way that the Supreme Court made sense of that was that people need the freedom to meaningfully advocate for their concerns within their workplaces.

It has been our position all along that these exclusions do not do that. It seems to be that some members are of the view that somehow if we take away the exclusions, suddenly a clerk in the RCMP would be dictating to the commissioner what the rules of the workplace are. Of course to anyone who has any real understanding of collective bargaining, that is ridiculous. I do not see why we would not want to empower members to bring forward proposals about the way things ought to operate in the RCMP. We all know and have discussed many times already, not just in this Parliament but in all of the previous Parliaments, that there are problems within the RCMP.

Traditionally, the way to deal with those problems has been that the commissioner and the government, in some way, shape, or form, get together and say that there is zero tolerance for the kinds of problems that exist, or affirm their support for the force and say that they want to work together to ensure that the RCMP members have everything they need. However, we know that has not always worked. I do not see how that could possibly be controversial to say.

Collective bargaining, which the court has said RCMP members have a charter right to, would not be the only tool. I do not think anyone is maintaining that once collective bargaining comes to the RCMP there will be no further problems or incidents in the workplace. What we are saying is that by introducing meaningful collective bargaining, and by that I mean bargaining without the list of exclusions currently in Bill C-7, we would be introducing a genuinely new tool into the workplace, not just for workers but also for management and the government to deal with some of those issues, and to deal with them closer to where they are happening, so that they do not have to come to Parliament to be dealt with, mostly by people who do not have experience or background in the RCMP. They could be dealt with in the workplace instead.

If it turns out that some of those proposals are completely unreasonable, then they would go to binding arbitration. That arbitrator is required by this very law to take into account the unique role of the RCMP as a national police force and the stated budgetary policies of the government. Therefore, allowing RCMP members to come forward with proposals is not any kind of real threat to the operational structure of the RCMP. Any of those proposals would first be reviewed by management at the bargaining table. If they are really unreasonable they would not be agreed to. Beyond that, they would be assessed by an independent third party that has to take into account all of those very factors, which members have so well articulated, that make the RCMP different.

Certainly, if we talk to RCMP members themselves, those who are advocating for a more open model of collective bargaining without the exclusions, they will tell us that they do not want the RCMP to be treated just like any other federal department. However, if we take the exclusions out, the RCMP is still not treated just as any other federal department.

Therefore, it is our submission that Bill C-7 satisfies the legitimate concerns made in those arguments and that those arguments are mistakenly applied in favour of having an itemized list of exclusions, when those concerns are already answered by the many other elements of protection either for management or due to the unique nature of the RCMP. Sometimes those are harder to tell apart than others, but we are satisfied that those protections exist and that unreasonable proposals that do not adequately care for the spirit of the RCMP and its unique operational nature will be dispensed with through binding arbitration and those interpretive constraints.

What the exclusions really amount to is just prejudging the reasonableness of the proposals employees may bring, and saying to them in advance, "Whatever it is you want to bring here you can't, and we don't want to hear it." That is the tone that is set.

● (1310)

There may be other avenues that they can bring those proposals through. There have been other avenues over the last four or five decades and more. However, the point is that those other avenues have not been satisfactory. That is why so many members of the RCMP took the RCMP to court to say they wanted collective bargaining because their legitimate desires and goals within the workplace, even though it would be nice if they were, were not being heard adequately through those other avenues.

They want another avenue called collective bargaining, not because it is a panacea, not because they are going to get everything they want but because they clearly need another tool in the tool box. They need another way of working on these issues in their workplace in order to have success at resolving long-standing issues within their institution that have eluded them through all those other avenues. It is their way of asking the government not to create more avenues that formally are the same as the avenues before, but to do something genuinely new and let them in on the ground level to propose and be part of solutions in their workplace to deal with as much as they can as close to the work as they can. Those other issues that cannot be resolved can then bubble up and can be dealt with along with those other avenues.

I just do not see why that does not sound like a good idea to the government, and why the government insists on maintaining these exclusions. I just do not see the same threat to the institution.

Looking at the bill and considering the history of the RCMP and listening to what RCMP members would have to say is something that unfortunately more Canadians are not in a position to be able to do directly. Part of the honour and privilege of being the critic for the bill for the NDP is that I have had the opportunity to do that. When we lay those things beside each other, it is hard not to feel that this list of exclusions really is just ridiculous. It either comes from a desire to satisfy RCMP management as opposed to the front-line workers in a way that I do not think makes sense or is appropriate for government, or it comes just from a basic failure to understand collective bargaining. That is not where I started out in terms of my thinking on this, but I just do not see how they can engender this kind of resistance to these exclusions, given everything else that is within the bill, the binding arbitration system and the interpretive constraints put on the arbitrator, and think that somehow the RCMP is going to fall apart if members put their issues on the table.

Those members care deeply about the institution, and that is something that has been very clear to me in the correspondence that I have received from them. Let them bring the proposals, let them work with management, and let them have their agreements and disagreements. For what does not get solved there, we can look at those other avenues. No one is saying those other avenues need to be closed. It is just to say that there is an opportunity here to do it differently and to do it better, and that we can do that while respecting the unique nature and therefore unique needs of the RCMP. In fact, a lot of that is already in the bill.

Just to address some of the other arguments that have been made, we have heard that it is a different kind of organization because the members start out as cadets and anyone who ultimately ends up wearing the commissioner's uniform wore the other uniforms on the way up, so there is a level of trust with the senior leadership of the RCMP. That is a nice picture, and I am sure that it is true in many cases. However, it is clearly not enough, just in the way that collective bargaining on its own is not enough. Just because they have a collective agreement, it does not mean that they will never again have a workplace incident. However, they set up rules in order to be able to deal with an incident when it happens.

The trust and camaraderie within the RCMP is a good thing and I am sure that in certain cases that has meant a great deal to those members and has helped resolve situations, but it clearly has not resolved them all. It verges on being naive to expect that simply because people were together in their initial training, somehow 20 years later there are never going to be problems between management and workers. Sometimes despite its best intentions, management is going to be on the wrong side of that argument. What is important then when that trust breaks down, as it has demonstrably within the RCMP at times, is that there is a good process in place. That is the idea behind a collective agreement.

● (1315)

There can be workplace processes in place without a collective agreement. Many workplaces have them, but the idea is to give RCMP members a say in what those procedures will be. It is not to say they would get a veto on every workplace procedure. It still has to be negotiated and go to binding arbitration. Fundamentally I do not agree with the idea that somehow there is something that will fall apart if members are allowed to bring those proposals.

When one hears from as many members as I have, they are distressed and upset at the fact that those proposals will not be able to go forward. They were also not consulted in any serious or meaningful way prior to this. There was a survey that the Conservatives ran last summer. I have heard from certain members that they did not really know what they were being consulted on or understood what their answers would ultimately mean. Therefore, there has not been great consultation and I have been hearing that members do not agree with the exclusions.

I do not see why the government is willing to dissatisfy so many RCMP members, many of whom were part of the suit in court, who felt that they were gaining not a panacea but an important tool in the workplace that was not there before, a workplace where some things were not going right. In my view, there is not much at stake with removing these exclusions.

That is something I have been wrestling with. I wrestled with it at committee and again at report stage where there was an amendment about the exclusions. It was not as comprehensive as the NDP amendment at committee, but it at least dealt with one of those exclusions. We heard the same arguments and we are hearing those same arguments again today at third reading. It has been a bit of a disappointment in terms of process, because other than the RCMP commissioner himself and some top brass and other members of this chamber on the government side and in the Conservative Party, I have not heard anyone say that they agree with the exclusions or that they do not think some of those exclusions should be lifted.

It is rare to get a unanimous conclusion and I have heard from some who think some exclusions are warranted and maybe others are not, but the resounding cry I have heard from those who would be affected by the legislation is that they would like to have a significant number of exclusions removed, and in most cases all of them, so that they can bring proposals forward. I have yet to hear a compelling argument, when I look at the whole bill and the other aspects of the bill, that says we should not be doing this.

Saying RCMP members all went to their first training together so we should just trust them to do a good job is not sufficient. I do not think it is enough to say that they are getting independence and choice of the bargaining unit, when there is not left much to bargain. That is a really important thrust of the Supreme Court decision. That is clear and that is the subject of the decision. One might forgive the court for not feeling it had to be on the list of things the legislation had to satisfy. How do members select a bargaining unit if the legislation that grants the right and the process to collective bargaining takes away everything that can be bargained at the same time, leaving only pay and benefits? It is clear that the spirit of the decision is not being respected and we can expect to see it challenged again by the very same people who fought it for a very long time.

We started out by supporting this to send it to committee in part because we wanted to see those exclusions dealt with, but that simply never happened. In all of that I never heard a really compelling argument for why they would not be removed. It is unfortunate, but it is not something that we can support at third reading at the end of this process.

● (1320)

Ms. Joyce Murray (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for his work on Bill C-7. However, he asked a question about exclusions, and I will answer that before asking him another question.

Bill C-7 would align the RCMP labour relations and collective bargaining with the rest of the public service. It has exclusions that apply to other public servants. What works well is that there are other avenues established in statutes where employees can pursue their interests and objectives in collective bargaining. It is far more than just pay and benefits that is included, as there is a whole host of other issues.

I would like to hear the member's thoughts on the issue that was raised by the member for Durham. He supported everything about Bill C-7 until the last few minutes of his speech. He then pulled his support, walking away from the constitutional rights to appropriate collective bargaining and turning his back on RCMP members, on the issue of card check versus secret ballot.

The member is very aware that the board has the right to apply the secret ballot. Should it think there is uncertainty in any way as to what the card-check method produced in terms of the intentions of the members, it can and will have a secret ballot.

Could the member explain his position around the certification and decertification to help me understand why the Conservatives would walk away from the entire bill on that issue?

● (1325)

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Mr. Speaker, the parliamentary secretary gave a two-part question, so I will give a two-part answer.

We have heard from RCMP members, and a number of members in this place, that it would not make sense to treat the RCMP as any other branch of the federal public service. The appropriate analogy is on the other police organizations in Canada. At committee, we received a document that showed there are a number of police organizations across Canada that enjoy the right to collective bargaining. They have a bargaining unit that has negotiated some clauses, small or large, within their collective agreements that cover the areas of exemption.

I would agree with RCMP members and arguments made in this chamber that there is a unique nature to the RCMP, which certainly sets it apart from other federal departments. It has to do more with policing, and that is why it makes sense to align the act more with the status quo of other police forces in Canada and not with other federal departments.

We have heard the arguments against the card check, but I do not believe it is undemocratic. It has never been implemented without an option to call for a secret ballot vote. Therefore, to say that this right would be taken away is just not true on the facts.

If one does not make one's assessment in a vacuum, there is a lot of evidence that shows that when it comes to secret ballot votes, it is not simply that members do not get to express their true opinion if it is not for unionization, but that there are intense intimidation campaigns leading up to secret ballot votes that cause employees to change their minds. That is why the card check system was brought about. Nothing on the facts about this has changed, despite protestations from certain Conservative members of the House.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, one of the things that concerns me about the bill is that the government is purporting to respond to the court ruling about the rights of RCMP officers who have been denied the ability to undertake collective bargaining. However, we have a bill that sets out to allow collective bargaining, but then strips away key provisions that should be in place in normal collective bargaining.

For example, there is the issue of being able to talk about staffing in terms of whether or not a police officer has backup. These are fundamental health and safety issues that would normally be under collective bargaining. There is also the issue of harassment. We have seen so many cases of officers subjected to harassment who did not have a proper dispute mechanism. The Liberals are telling us there are many other existing processes that they could take their harassment claims to, but they have failed.

Today, on a day when an RCMP officer with 27 years of duty has been terminated, who is suffering PTSD from what she referred to as systemic harassment on the force, would it not be wise to allow collective bargaining? Would it not be wise for that to be one of the places where RCMP members could put these issues on the table to start finding solutions, so that we do not end up with RCMP officers, who may be suffering in unhealthy work environments, before the courts?

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Mr. Speaker, if we look at the flashpoint incidents, or the cases that RCMP members and the MPPAC, and those who have advocated for collective bargaining for the RCMP for a long time and who took the government to court to secure those rights, they are not talking about 5% over four years or little adjustments to the health plan or pension. They are talking about the kinds of incidents that we have heard about in the media. They have to do with harassment. They have to do with officers answering calls alone in remote and northern communities and ending up hurt or dead. They are talking about the equipment that in some cases they do not have in order to respond effectively, and which has ended up in the injury or death of members.

These are the things that animated and motivated a court battle over many years in an effort to win those rights. I have a lot of sympathy for members who are feeling angry and frustrated that the bill that is supposed to bring a collective bargaining regime into existence for them, at the same time takes away their ability to raise the very issues that animated and maintained and motivated that court battle over so many years.

My short answer to the member's question is yes. It is not right that the RCMP is not able to bring proposals to the table. No one is saying collective bargaining fixes everything, but the court has said that Canadians have a right to it and that it is another way to address problems. It is fair to say that the RCMP is in need of a new way because it has tried things under the old model many times before. I am glad to see that we are going to try again. I hope it is successful. We could increase the odds of success by putting more tools in the toolbox. That is what meaningful collective bargaining would do, but that is unfortunately not in Bill C-7.

● (1330)

Mr. Anthony Housefather (Mount Royal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am a former mayor and have negotiated with police forces on collective agreements. In addition to what my colleague from Vancouver stated in recognizing that other groups within the public sector also have these exclusions, to me it is particularly important when it comes to police and paramilitary organizations that these exclusions exist. When they are included in collective bargaining, they tend to be areas where people cannot agree and concessions have to be made in other areas, such as salary, for example, in order to satisfy demands that may be unreasonable in relation to termination or harassment policy.

Based on the hon. member's review of other police organizations in the country, are these not typical exclusions in most police collective agreements?

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Mr. Speaker, when we had a spreadsheet submitted to us at committee on the last day, one from MPPAC and one from the RCMP itself, we found that in virtually every category of exclusion, at least one and often more police forces across Canada do have clauses that fall within the area of that exclusion.

These exclusions are not normal for police forces across Canada, which is part of what we are saying. If police forces across the country have negotiated clauses that fall under the purview of these exclusions and the sky did not fall, then why would we think that the sky would fall if RCMP members are allowed to just bring it to the table for starters? They may negotiate something that falls within the purview of one of those exemptions, but that would not be the end of the world.

To speak to some of my colleague's concerns about cost and other things, it is important to know that the proposed framework set up in Bill C-7 is that those things go to binding arbitration. The arbitrator, because of what is in Bill C-7, is required to take into consideration in his or her deliberations the unique nature of the RCMP as a national police force and the stated budgetary policies of the government. That is not a very forgiving arbitration regime from the point of view of RCMP members. What we are saying is that the government should at least allow them to bring proposals to the table and maybe—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Resuming debate. The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness.

Mr. Michel Picard (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak to the important bill now before us at third reading.

As members are aware, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled in January of last year that a number of key provisions of the labour relations framework for the Royal Canadian Mounted Police violated the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Indeed, the court outlined that interfering with the right of RCMP members to the collective bargaining aspect of the labour relations regime in place at the time was an infringement of RCMP members' charter guarantee of the right to freedom of association.

In accordance with the Supreme Court's timeline, that labour relations regime was dissolved on May 17. Right now, RCMP members are being provided with workplace support through the members' workplace services program on an interim basis. However, as I will discuss shortly, the House must move quickly to implement a new legislative framework governing labour relations in our national police force. As such, I invite all members to join us in support of Bill C-7, an act to amend the Public Service Labour Relations Act, the Public Service Labour Relations and Employment Board Act and other acts and to provide for certain other measures.

That this legislation was brought before the House so quickly is a mark of our government's determination to respect not only the ruling of the court, but also, in a timely manner, to respect the constitutional right of the thousands of men and women who serve Canadians from coast to coast to coast. This government takes the protection and security of Canadians very seriously. Since the RCMP plays an integral role in achieving this objective, it makes sense that we should make every effort to protect the rights of those who protect us.

Let me now turn to how Bill C-7 would achieve these essential goals. In the first instance, as the court made clear in its decision, in order to comply with the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, a labour relations regime must be based on two fundamental principles: one, it must provide for independence, in the sense that an employee organization must be independent of management; and, two, to comply with the charter, a labour relations regime must provide choice, in the sense that employees have the opportunity to choose for themselves the organization they wish to represent their interests to their employer.

● (1335)

[*Translation*]

By contrast, to quote the decision of the court, the labour relations framework known as the staff relations representative program was:

> … not an association in any meaningful sense, nor a form of exercise of the right to freedom of association. It is simply an internal human relations scheme imposed on RCMP members by management.

Bill C-7 would enable the very opposite. It speaks to that which is the essence of bargaining as a collective: an independent organization, not beholden to management, freely chosen by the people whose interests it was created to represent and uphold.

RCMP members and reservists, for the first time, would enjoy the same labour relations rights that other employees in the federal workplace have enjoyed for more than four decades: independence and their choice of representation.

Before I get into the details of the bill, I think it worthwhile to remind the House how the bill came to look the way it does. The Government of Canada could not simply impose these changes on RCMP members. It was important that the government hear and take into account the views of RCMP regular members.

RCMP members were consulted through a variety of channels, from an online survey to town hall sessions in more than a dozen communities across the country. More than 9,000 regular members completed the survey, and over 650 people participated in the town hall sessions.

At the same time, recognizing that the RCMP, through police service agreements, provides police services in many jurisdictions across Canada, and that a change in labour relations may have implications for those agreements, Public Safety Canada engaged in discussions with the provinces and territories that are served by the RCMP.

[*English*]

The bill before us today is in keeping with the decision of the Supreme Court and also with the results of consultations with RCMP regular members and reservists and contracting jurisdictions.

The views and preferences expressed during those consultations with RCMP members and reservists were clear. A large majority stated that they wanted: first, the option for a unionized RCMP; second, independence from RCMP management; third, representation in a single national bargaining unit of RCMP members and reservists by a bargaining agent whose principle mandate is the representation of RCMP members; and fourth, binding arbitration with no right to strike.

Bill C-7 addresses each of these four key points, which come from RCMP regular members and reservists themselves. RCMP members and reservists told us they wanted the option to unionize. This bill would provide them with the option to choose whether they wish to be represented by a bargaining agent, in a sense, a union. They told us they wanted independence from RCMP management, and this bill would enable a bargaining agent that is independent from the influence of RCMP management.

A majority said they wanted representation in a single national bargaining unit of RCMP members and reservists by a bargaining agent whose principal mandate is the representation of RCMP members. This is a point worthy of further explanation.

The government agrees that should RCMP members choose to be represented by a union, that bargaining agent must have the representation of police forces as its only responsibility. To do otherwise opens the possibility of a potential conflict in loyalties. It would be unfair and unwise to put RCMP members in the position of having to police members of another bargaining unit with which the members were affiliated.

The government also agrees that the bargaining agent should be a single national body rather than having the national character of the RCMP altered by the formation of regional unions.

We are confident that Canadians will see these provisions as appropriate. Again, most RCMP members themselves believe this to be the best course. Indeed, one of the reasons it is important for us to adopt this legislation quickly is that since the previous labour relations regime was dissolved on May 17, the RCMP finds itself in an interim period. The sooner Bill C-7 is in place, the sooner we can ensure that regional bargaining agents or bargaining agents that are not exclusively focused on policing do not begin to establish themselves within our national police force.

● (1340)

[*Translation*]

The bill would also achieve the independence and choice demanded by the court decision by bringing RCMP members and reservists under the governance of the Public Service Labour Relations Act, thus aligning RCMP labour relations with that of the rest of the federal public service. This means RCMP regular members and reservists would have the right to negotiate a collective agreement, as bargaining agents have been negotiating on behalf of other federal employees for decades, and as is the case for every other police service in Canada.

Existing provisions of the Public Service Labour Relations Act that exclude employees in managerial and confidential positions would apply to the RCMP. As well, when the act is applied to the RCMP, officers holding the rank of inspector and above would be excluded from representation.

This bill would enable the negotiation of collective agreements that would cover things one would expect to find in such agreements, from rates of pay and pay increments to hours of work and work scheduling. RCMP regular members and reservists would be able to negotiate, among other things, overtime and extra duty pay; shift and weekend premiums; designated paid holidays, vacation and sick leave; parental and maternity leave; career development; and education. In other words they could negotiate provisions we have become accustomed to seeing for many, many years in the collective agreements that have been negotiated in the federal public service and in public and private sector organizations across Canada.

Further, the Public Service Labour Relations and Employment Board would be charged with administering the process for RCMP members, just as it does for all other employees of the Treasury Board of Canada.

As one would expect, Bill C-7 takes into account the particular circumstances of the RCMP and the important role of the RCMP as Canada's national police force in ensuring the safety and security of Canadians.

Accordingly, it restricts certain matters from negotiation or inclusion in any arbitral awards that impact the RCMP's ability to operate in an effective and accountable manner.

Things such as law enforcement techniques, including methods of interrogation, crime analysis, witness protection, DNA collection, search and seizure techniques, and so on, would be non-negotiable.

● (1345)

[*English*]

Other exclusions from collective bargaining or arbitration would include, for example, the uniform, order of dress and equipment of the RCMP; deployment; and conduct and discipline, including inappropriate behaviour, commonly recognized as harassment, and enforcement techniques. These kinds of exceptions are by no means unusual, but as I know, the issue of conduct, including harassment, has been the subject of much discussion in the House and in committee, allow me to reiterate that it is a priority for our government to ensure that all RCMP members and employees feel safe and respected at work.

The Minister of Public Safety has made clear directly to the RCMP commissioner that in dealing with harassment we expect comprehensive, transparent investigations; serious disciplinary measures; support for victims; and concrete action to end toxic workplace behaviour.

As the House has been informed, the minister has asked the Civilian Review and Complaints Commission for the RCMP to undertake a comprehensive review of the RCMP's policies and procedures on workplace harassment and to evaluate the implementation of the recommendation it made in 2013. Going forward, the minister will continue to be active on this important part of his mandate from the Prime Minister to ensure that the RCMP and all other parts of the public safety portfolio are free from harassment and sexual violence.

I will close by returning to the four key elements RCMP members told us they wanted to see in a new labour relations framework. They want the option for a unionized RCMP; independence from RCMP management; representation in a single, national, bargaining unit of RCMP members and reservists by a bargaining agent whose principal mandate is the representation of RCMP members; and binding arbitration with no right to strike.

It is fitting to end my remarks today on the last element. I believe it speaks to the commitment and dedication of the members of our national police service that members themselves have told us they should not be allowed to withdraw their service.

[*Translation*]

Clearly, RCMP members understand their responsibility, and this government understands its responsibility, which is to respect the decision of the Supreme Court of Canada and bring forward a bill that assures RCMP regular members and reservists of their charter right to freedom of association. That is the bill we have before us now, and I urge all members of this House to join the government in supporting its expeditious passage.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier, we have not yet heard any real arguments to justify the exclusions that are in Bill C-7.

Considering all the other protections for management that are included in Bill C-7, why does the government feel that these exclusions are necessary, and why not allow RCMP members to weigh in with their opinion?

This question should be pretty easy to answer, given that the government supports these protections.

Mr. Michel Picard: Mr. Speaker, I will respond not only in my capacity as parliamentary secretary, but also as a former civilian member of the RCMP.

When I was a member of the RCMP I witnessed some difficult incidents and saw for myself its unique role. One cannot always compare the RCMP and other police forces.

The RCMP has a unique role because of the levels of service it provides. The exclusions are not what make the RCMP unique. It is because of this existing unique and special role that these exclusions are required, and that can be seen in the field.

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask my colleague a question about the exclusions.

We heard the member for Elmwood—Transcona say that some of the exclusions were made for provincial police and therefore should be included in this bill. However, we know that the RCMP is unique and different from provincial police forces. That is exactly why the opposition members argued against workers' compensation at the provincial level.

Could the member explain why the exclusions are still the best solution for this unique national organization?

● (1350)

Mr. Michel Picard: Mr. Speaker, as a result of the RCMP's unique nature, there are police forces at every level: municipal, provincial, and federal. Whether we are talking about contract policing or federal policing with federal laws, the RCMP is a unique entity given its overall national environment, the way it is organized, and the nature of its work.

It is true that the RCMP is seen as a quasi-military organization. There are many reasons we can list as to why the RCMP is a unique entity. However, these men and women put their lives at risk every day to protect the lives of others and, for that reason alone, they deserve exemptions that prevent problems on the ground and keep them safe.

[*English*]

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I wish to follow up on something that I was discussing with the Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board earlier, which is the reason why it is so important to have harassment as an item subject to collective agreements in Bill C-7. I am very disappointed it is not there. The reason it should be there is that in a collective agreement there is the possibility and an ability to have it put into a framework. Right now if members of the RCMP complain of harassment they have no access to legal counsel, no support, and no peer support and can be subject to further harassment while awaiting a decision. We really should have a measure in this bill that gives the men and women of the RCMP the ability to set up a free, open collective bargaining framework that protects them if they are being harassed.

Mr. Michel Picard: Mr. Speaker, I invite the hon. colleague to maintain this question at heart, because we do share the same preoccupation when it comes to harassment.

In terms of this specific issue, we understand that it is part of the exclusion because it is clear in the mandate letter that was addressed to the Minister of Public Safety that we have to address this specific issue. There are solutions to erase this issue, which appears to be imperfect at the moment. However, it is a tough issue and we believe that, with the engagement we have through the Minister of Public Safety, we will address and correct the situation properly without jeopardizing any negotiations with respect to the exclusion aspect.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for the speech he gave today.

According to the comments made by some of the people who are involved in this matter, it would seem that the bill does not quite meet the criteria set out by the court in its ruling on this issue. This will be the second bill introduced in the last short while that does not meet the court's requirements.

Could my colleague at least address the court's ruling? Does he think that the bill before us today meets the criteria established? Some people think that this bill does not fully meet those criteria, as one might have expected.

● (1355)

Mr. Michel Picard: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his question.

I would like to remind the House of something that was said by the party opposite and that we completely agree with. The court was very clear on two things: the RCMP must be given the choice as to whether to become unionized and the union must be independent from RCMP management. Those are two criteria that are set out in the court's decision. There are two others, but those are the first two criteria that the bill presents to Parliament.

Mr. Anthony Housefather (Mount Royal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to commend my colleague on his excellent bill and his excellent speech.

Earlier, I asked the hon. member for Elmwood—Transcona a question about collective agreements for police officers. I do not agree that the majority of police officers in Canada have bargaining rights on issues that we have excluded from this bill.

Can the hon. parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness tell us whether these exclusions are different from those that apply to the majority of police officers in Canada?

Mr. Michel Picard: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question.

Earlier I alluded to my past experiences as a former civilian member of the RCMP. I had the misfortune of monitoring the events at Dawson College over the internal radio, and I completely understand the importance of having a chain of command, which entails many of the things that we find in the exclusions. It is important for the exclusions to be maintained. It is hard to compare the RCMP with other police forces because the RCMP is just different.

Other police forces do not provide all the same services as the RCMP. When we see men and women putting their lives at risk on the ground, the chain of command is so important that it is essential to maintain a certain number of things within management. The work on the ground is what makes the RCMP so unique.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, just in relation to the timing of the bill itself, we all recognize the important work that RCMP members do in all regions of our country, and their ability to organize is long overdue. This would not be the first time we had a police organization in Canada being organized to form a labour negotiating board.

I wonder if the member would provide some comment on the fact that this is long overdue and we have nothing to fear because it has already been happening in many different forces in Canada.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Michel Picard: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

Indeed, this is not the first time that a police force has unionized. The problem we have is that, considering the unique role of the RCMP, it is crucial that the organization that represents it specialize exclusively in the kind of work that characterizes the RCMP.

If the current vacuum goes on for too long, there is a risk that the agencies that come forward to represent RCMP members could create conflicts of interest if, by chance, a conflict arises whereby two sections of the same agency are in conflict because of any RCMP activity with or in a group that is also unionized with the same agency. In order to avoid that, it is absolutely crucial that they unionize with a specialized group, and the time has come to do so.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*Translation*]

SENIORS

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois does not give up when it comes to fighting for social justice issues, especially when it involves the most vulnerable among us.

In committee 15 years ago, we highlighted the need to automatically register seniors who are eligible for the guaranteed income supplement through the simple tax return. Departmental officials at the time admitted that they had been aware of the deficiencies since 1993.

Former Bloc critics Marcel Gagnon, Raymond Gravel, and Christiane Gagnon toured all over Quebec looking for people who have been shortchanged. We have been fighting for their cause in the House for years now.

Today I am proud to say that the federal government has finally heard us, after 25 years of inaction, eight governments, three bills in the House, and two unanimous motions in the National Assembly. We will continue monitoring this very closely until the first payment is made.

This is why Quebeckers win when they elect Bloc Québécois members who work on their behalf.

* * *

● (1400)

[*English*]

MEMBERS–PAGES SOCCER MATCH

Mr. Matt DeCourcey (Fredericton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this year the House of Commons kept former parliamentarian Peter Stoffer's tradition alive, and on May 18 the annual MP-page friendly soccer match took place. A grizzled band of misfit members from both sides of this House faced off against a spry, young, and upstart team of pages in a hard-fought battle.

Commoners FC started off strong and led most of the game. However, with depth on the pages' side, we were outnumbered, at times out-hustled, and certainly out-cheered. Our early offence was not quite enough, and at the final whistle the score stood at a four-to-four draw. It was fitting to see both sides share in the glory that evening, as we are all winners in this House with the tremendous contribution of the pages.

I thank these young leaders who work tirelessly each and every day to ensure that our work here runs effectively. To the pages I say that their personal contributions are a valuable resource to this chamber and a lasting testament to Canada's rich democracy.

* * *

[*Translation*]

BEAUPORT-LIMOILOU FISHING FESTIVAL

Mr. Alupa Clarke (Beauport—Limoilou, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in Quebec, the arrival of summer is synonymous with a brand-new season of outdoor activities in the vast green spaces of my riding, Beauport—Limoilou.

One of the most popular of these activities is the Festival de la pêche at the Rivière Beauport linear park, the 23rd edition of which will be held this Saturday, June 4. This is a major event, free for the whole family, that exposes the young and the curious to the joys of fishing right in the heart of Beauport—Limoilou.

The Education and Water Monitoring Action Group will stock the river with nearly 4,500 trout for the festival. This event is part of the provincial fishing festival, so people do not need a licence to come fish.

I invite everyone in Beauport—Limoilou to tie some flies, take some pictures, and eat some hot dogs with their neighbours starting at eight o'clock on Saturday morning at the Rivière Beauport.

I know I will be there.

OTTAWA CHAMPIONS

Mr. Greg Fergus (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to rise today to acknowledge the Ottawa Champions Baseball Club in its second season.

[*English*]

The Ottawa Champions play in the Can-Am League, which has teams in Quebec City; Sussex County, New Jersey; Rockland, New York; and Trois-Rivières. Last year they sold just more than 115,000 tickets and welcomed more than 150,000 fans to the ballpark for their inaugural season that saw them compete for the playoff spot right up until the last games of the season.

The local star is Sebastien Boucher who is from Gatineau, Quebec. The team manager is Hal Lanier, who played for the San Francisco Giants and the New York Yankees.

The Ottawa Champions will play 54 home games this summer. In mid-June, they will welcome the Cuban national team and in late June a sister-league team, the Shikoku Island League all-stars from Japan. They will play in Ottawa against the Champions.

Next year, as part of the Canadian 2017 celebrations, the Ottawa Champions will hold a Can-Am all-star game.

[*Translation*]

I encourage every baseball fan in Ottawa—Vanier to come out and watch the Ottawa Champions knock it out of the park.

* * *

CANADIAN HERITAGE

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to talk about the importance of seeing our young people express themselves by grabbing a pen, a microphone, or a camera to tell their stories, and to tell our stories.

This past Thursday, I attended the short film festival for youth at Le Trait d'Union community centre in Longueuil. This was just a few streets away from the Gentilly elementary school, which a young man named Xavier Dolan attended in the 1990s.

I am extremely proud to speak on behalf of everyone in Longueuil and Saint-Hubert, and everyone here in the House, I am sure, to acknowledge this great Quebec director and his triumph at the Cannes Film Festival for his latest film, *It's Only the End of the World*, which won the Grand Prix. This recognition reminds us how important our cultural industries are, since they nurture and develop our talents and protect our distinct identity.

I ask all sector stakeholders and the Minister of Canadian Heritage to rise to the collective challenge and commit to protecting our space in the global mosaic and allow future Xavier Dolans to proudly represent us in 20 years.

[*English*]

DISABILITY AWARENESS WEEK

Mr. T.J. Harvey (Tobique—Mactaquac, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am excited about a new program that is having a positive impact on youth with a mobility disability in my riding and throughout New Brunswick. The Transition NB program, created by Ability New Brunswick, is helping youth with a mobility disability access training, post-secondary education, and employment.

New Brunswick has the second-highest rate of disability in Canada at 16.4% of the population. Persons with a disability in Canada have much lower education and labour market participation rates than the general population.

Students with a disability are more likely to leave high school without a diploma compared to students without a disability, and only 13.2% of persons with a disability have a university degree.

Ability New Brunswick is finding creative solutions to barriers like housing, transportation, and accessibility and helping youth throughout New Brunswick reach their full abilities and potential.

● (1405)

[*Translation*]

As today marks the start of Disability Awareness Week in New Brunswick, I want to take this opportunity to thank disability organizations, their staff and volunteers for all they do—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola.

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[*English*]

WEST KELOWNA WARRIORS

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, everyone loves the underdog, and in my riding that underdog was the West Kelowna Warriors. People said they would never make it past the Penticton Vees. They did.

Then, naysayers said they could not win the B.C. junior hockey league championships. They did again. Few picked them to win the Western Canada Cup. They not only won that, but they found a way to win the national junior championship RBC Cup.

This achievement is about much more than winning hockey games. It is an example of what can happen when a group of young leaders believe in themselves and each other and never give up.

Let us celebrate the success of the West Kelowna Warriors who not only had an amazing season but showed us all that, when we believe, we can achieve.

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[*Translation*]

KINOVA

Ms. Linda Lapointe (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am rising in the House today to congratulate an innovative company in Boisbriand, in my riding of Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, on its success.

On May 19, His Excellency David Johnston presented the Governor General's Innovation Award to Kinova, a company founded by its CEO, Charles Deguire.

Kinova received this prestigious award to recognize the success of the JACO robotic arm, which offers Canadians with upper-body mobility restrictions more autonomy, control, and range of motion, as well as improved mental well-being.

I invite the House to reiterate its confidence in Canadians' innovation and congratulate Charles Deguire and his team at Kinova for helping people with reduced mobility become more autonomous.

Congratulations to the entire Kinova team.

* * *

[*English*]

CONGRESS OF BLACK WOMEN OF CANADA

Mr. Sven Spengemann (Mississauga—Lakeshore, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to rise today to recognize the Congress of Black Women of Canada first founded in 1973 by Kay Livingstone. In 1985, my local Mississauga and area chapter was formed, and I am proud to say that more than 30 years later, two of the chapter's original founders, Faye Schepmyer and Madeline Edwards, are still very active today. They are champions of education. They offer annual scholarships, EQAO tutoring, and a summer and March break camp.

These two exceptional Canadian women and their organization are also champions of social housing. This year marks the 20th anniversary of the opening of Camille's Place, an 82-unit apartment complex that the Mississauga chapter actively manages in order to address the social and economic needs of women of the region of Peel.

I invite all members to pay tribute to the Congress of Black Women of Canada's Mississauga and area chapter for its incredible work and dedication to our community.

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450 TACTICAL HELICOPTER SQUADRON

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it was a historic moment recently for the flight crew of the 450 Tactical Helicopter Squadron operating one of Canada's new CH-147F Chinook helicopters, in responding to the wildfires in Fort McMurray, Alberta.

The 450 Tactical Helicopter Squadron's home base is Garrison Petawawa, in the heart of the beautiful upper Ottawa valley.

May 6 marked the first time a CH-147F Chinook helicopter has been deployed in a Canadian domestic humanitarian operation, flying in 8,200 pounds of food, water, and other goods to the Fort McKay First Nation.

Chinook helicopters provided much-needed strategic lift during the conflict in Afghanistan, off the bomb-laden roads. Helicopters save lives.

On behalf of the flight crews of the 450 Tactical Helicopter Squadron, 4th Canadian Division Support Base Petawawa, I thank Canada for providing the necessary equipment to do the job, for either here at home to aid with emergency relief, or overseas, whatever the task may be.

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● (1410)

STEVEN MACKINNON

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I pay tribute to Steven MacKinnon, a pioneer of ecological farming in P.E.I., who died suddenly at his home in New Argyle at the untimely age of 53.

Steven was a seventh generation farmer, farming the land settled by the MacKinnon family in 1808. He was passionate about issues affecting the family farm and was unafraid to stand up for what he felt was right. Yet he respected the views of others and enjoyed energetic debates.

Steven was a visionary, being one of the first farmers to farm in an ecological manner as a way to promote environmental stewardship. Active in the National Farmers Union since his teenage days, he served in many roles and at the time of his passing was district director in Prince Edward Island.

He will be missed by many in the agriculture sector, environmental organizations, community groups, and, of course, his family. He leaves behind his greatest love, his daughter Janell, and other family members. Our condolences.

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BROOKLIN SPRING FAIR

Mrs. Celina Caesar-Chavannes (Whitby, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this weekend is the 105th Brooklin Spring Fair in my riding of Whitby. What started as a small agricultural community gathering now welcomes more than 30,000 visitors each year.

The fair has stayed true to its agricultural roots and fills an important role in the community in connecting Whitby's youth to the region's farm-focused past and educating them about the vital role farms and farmers in the community. In recent years, it has further expanded to focus on the importance of conservation and environmental stewardship.

None of this would be possible without the hard work and dedication of the board of directors and volunteers who work hard year-round to make the fair a success. Their commitment to civic engagement is an example to us all and I thank them for all they do in the community. Whether at the parade, the dunk tank, or the pie-eating contest, I am sure I will see them at the fair.

SCLERODERMA AWARENESS MONTH

Mr. David Sweet (Flamborough—Glanbrook, CPC): Mr. Speaker, June begins this week and so does Scleroderma Awareness Month.

What is scleroderma? It is a progressive and chronic connective tissue disorder that can attack internal organs, literally shutting them down one at a time. Other symptoms include weeping ulcers and serious skin deterioration.

As many members of the House know, as I have spoken about it before, I watched my mother suffer from scleroderma, and it was heartbreaking. Unfortunately, she is not the only strong woman to be afflicted with scleroderma because the disease overwhelmingly targets women. In fact, almost 80% of sufferers are women.

What is alarming is that incidence of scleroderma is on the rise. However, the good news is that new research on therapeutic measures is making a tangible difference and we are hopeful of a cure on the horizon.

I would like to recognize Maureen Sauve, who has been a relentless, passionate, and selfless champion and leader at the national and provincial levels with the Scleroderma Society. What we need now is more government involvement and funding to help bring home a cure, stem the tide of increase, and assure the women and men suffering that the Government of Canada stands with them, this month and every month.

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LONDON KNIGHTS

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos (London North Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I understand you are something of a hockey fan and therefore it brings me great pleasure to let you know that the London Knights won the 2016 Memorial Cup last night.

Yesterday, the Knights defeated the Rouyn-Noranda Huskies in epic fashion to capture a national junior hockey championship. Matthew Tkachuk scored in overtime to secure London its second ever Memorial Cup. This was not a typical championship. It was a display of sporting dominance. The Knights won the cup with a 4-0 record, outscored opponents 23-8, and with last night's victory, won its 17th straight game.

The Knights is an extraordinary junior hockey franchise. The Hunter family, led by Dale, Mark, and their father Dick, has transformed this club into one of the top teams in all of junior hockey. With 9,000 fans coming to each home game, hockey in London and the Knights are synonymous.

I congratulate the team and the Hunter family.

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AUTOMOBILE INDUSTRY

Ms. Tracey Ramsey (Essex, NDP): Mr. Speaker, southwestern Ontario is the heart of Canada's auto sector, providing good jobs for tens of thousands of families in our communities. However, over the past decade, Canada has lost over 400,000 manufacturing jobs, with over 260,000 of those lost in Ontario.

Last month, auto industry leaders from business, labour, and academia gathered in Windsor for a policy and solutions forum. They reiterated calls for a national auto strategy that would attract investment, support research and innovation, and sustain good jobs. For years, our auto sector has worked collaboratively and has been united in its call for a national strategy. Our region knows how to work together like no other, because we share a vision for a stronger future.

Last week in Japan, the Prime Minister promoted auto investment in Canada. However, if the Liberal government is serious about supporting Canada's auto sector, it needs to say no to the job-killing TPP and implement a national auto strategy.

As the elected representative for Essex, I will do everything I can to get the job done.

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● (1415)

CONSERVATIVE PARTY NATIONAL CONVENTION

Mr. Matt Jeneroux (Edmonton Riverbend, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this past weekend the Conservative Party gathered in Vancouver for our national convention. While many of the pundits predicted a sombre affair, Conservatives took the opportunity to look forward. Our convention featured vigorous discussion, questioning of the status quo, and debate over the direction of our party. This convention was nothing short of inspiring.

Additionally, our convention this weekend was an open affair, with policy debates and discussions all open to the media. We showed that the Conservative grassroots were alive and well, as more than 3,000 people were on hand to participate.

Throughout the weekend, the Conservative Party showed how proud it was to be the party of hard-working Canadians. In opposition, our party is strong. We will continue to work hard every day to make Canada a better place.

* * *

[*Translation*]

14TH ÉLOIZES AWARDS CEREMONY

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on May 7, I had the great privilege of attending the 14th Éloizes awards ceremony, which recognizes artistic excellence in Acadia and was held at the Arthur-J.-LeBlanc Centre in Dieppe, New Brunswick. This multidisciplinary event celebrates excellence in various artistic disciplines and pays tribute to those who give fresh impetus to the development of modern Acadia.

In addition to celebrating the arts and homegrown artists, this event also showcases artists from the region, introduces their work to the public and allows them to garner an audience. In my opinion, the public is the biggest winner.

As the member for Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe, it gives me great pleasure to support this project. I am proud to be a member of a government that continues to invest in this type of project, which is vitally important to the francophone and Acadian community in the greater Moncton area.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[*Translation*]

DEMOCRATIC REFORM

Hon. Denis Lebel (Lac-Saint-Jean, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Democratic Institutions backed down on the weekend on the issue of electoral reform.

She said, “It means that there needs to be a conversation in the House of Commons including all parties.” Naturally, we agree with her, but she must go even further. I invite the minister to open up to the public.

Will the Prime Minister hold a referendum so that all Canadians can have a say on electoral reform? A referendum is required.

[*English*]

Mr. Mark Holland (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are absolutely committed to ensuring that the consultations we have on a pan-Canadian basis hear from all Canadians on how they want to modernize and improve our electoral system.

I encourage the members opposite to participate in that discussion. I have not heard any ideas or thoughts about how they want to modernize that system yet, but it is important they put those forward. I really invite all members of the House to engage in that process.

Hon. Denis Lebel (Lac-Saint-Jean, CPC): Mr. Speaker, all Canadians must have the opportunity to express their opinion on electoral reform.

This weekend, the Minister of Democratic Institutions said, “As far as any changes around democratic reform, we’re not going to proceed with any changes unless we have broad support.”

We have a good idea for the broad support: have a referendum.

Mr. Mark Holland (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me talk about what we will not do.

Last time major democratic changes were introduced, it was by the Conservatives. It was the Fair Elections Act, which disenfranchised many voters. There were no consultations that occurred during that process. They did not engage Canadians.

We want to do things differently. We want to ensure that the voices of Canadians are heard, that they are given the proper opportunity to be involved in modernizing their system. This was a clear campaign promise we made in the last election. More than 60% of Canadians voted for parties that said they wanted change. We are committed to making that change happen.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Denis Lebel (Lac-Saint-Jean, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Democratic Institutions also said, "So Canadians can rest assured that unless we have their broad buy-in, we're not moving forward with any changes."

Perhaps voting Canadians and those who contributed to greater voter participation in the last election because we did a good job want to keep the current electoral system.

Will the Prime Minister recognize that the best way to find out what Canadians want is to hold a referendum?

● (1420)

[*English*]

Mr. Mark Holland (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are absolutely committed to ensuring that the support of Canadians is behind the proposals we bring forward.

The process we are going to engage, of talking to Canadians from coast to coast, not just about changing our voting system but looking at electronic voting, looking at the possibility of mandatory voting, recognizing that in a modern age our electoral systems, like the rest of the world, need to evolve, is something to which we are committed.

I would ask the member opposite to engage constructively in that process, to engage in that dialogue, and work with us to create a better electoral system.

Mr. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister tried to seize total control of the House of Commons just because he did not get his own way.

Motion No. 6 was only withdrawn after a massive backlash. However, it is not his only undemocratic attempt to seize control.

Motion No. 5 sets up the committee to alter Canada's electoral system in the Liberals' favour. It gives Liberals a majority on the committee, ensures that the Liberal majority in the House will control the bill, and the final say will be made by the Liberal cabinet.

Will the Liberals do the right thing and withdraw this motion as well?

Mr. Mark Holland (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the motion to create the committee is coming forward.

There is going to be ample opportunity to hear from each and every member of the House around his or her ideas to improve and modernize our electoral system. The reality is that in the last election Canadians looked at the problems of the past, looked at the decade that preceded the last election, and said, in huge measure, that the status quo was not good enough, that we needed to do better.

That is precisely what we are working on. That is precisely what the committee is getting to the heart of. I encourage members to engage in that process.

Mr. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister thinks that tracking a topic on Twitter is a better way of consulting Canadians than a referendum; #logical?

Their motion gives Liberals on the committee total control of the process to fundamentally change the way Canadians vote; #thatseemsfair.

We know the Liberals do not respect Parliament, and now we can see that they do not respect Canadians either; #arrogance #out-oftouch #disrespect.

If the minister truly wants widespread consultations, could she finally agree to holding a #referendum?

Mr. Mark Holland (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I hear the hashtags opposite. I hear the member wanting to use different forums. Obviously there are many different ways that people can engage on this issue.

There will be forums held in nearly every riding. I encourage members to host town halls. I encourage members to engage with their constituents. We will have a digital portal where Canadians' voices can be heard. It will be a dynamic conversation, and as we said, we will ensure that the will of Canadians is behind whatever we put forward.

Help us to change the status quo, improve our system, and modernize our electoral system to bring us into the 21st century.

* * *

[*Translation*]

PHYSICIAN-ASSISTED DYING

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, more and more people are concerned about whether Bill C-14 on medical assistance in dying is constitutional.

On the weekend, we heard from some of the Liberal Party faithful, former prime minister Paul Martin, and former Liberal leader Bob Rae. The government cannot get such an important issue wrong. It is not too late. This evening, Bill C-14 can be amended.

Will the Liberals work with the opposition to ensure that Bill C-14 complies with the charter and the Supreme Court decision?

[*English*]

Hon. Jody Wilson-Raybould (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are committed to moving forward with Bill C-14 and have engaged very broadly on this really complex and deeply personal issue.

We have a deadline of June 6 to meet that has been directed by the Supreme Court of Canada. We are committed to having in place, it is our responsibility as parliamentarians, a legal framework in this country that ensures we find the right balance between personal autonomy, protection of the vulnerable, and ensuring there is access in this country.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government needs to stop giving incomplete information. There is no rush.

The professional associations are prepared. They have directives in place to protect the vulnerable. We need to get this right.

The government is insisting on passing a bill that a number of experts have deemed unconstitutional. We are talking about charter rights. The government knows very well that its law will be challenged if it is not amended.

When will the government work with the opposition to bring the bill in line with the charter?

● (1425)

[*English*]

Hon. Jody Wilson-Raybould (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are committed to working with all parliamentarians and have done so on this piece of legislation as we move forward.

We have the utmost respect for the Supreme Court of Canada. We are ensuring that we do everything possible to meet the deadline of June 6.

We have the utmost confidence that this is the best public policy approach to medical assistance in dying in this country right now. We will ensure that we can move forward with that legal framework to provide access as well as the protection of the vulnerable.

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the problem with the minister's response is that the Alberta Court of Appeal, the Canadian Bar Association, Barreau du Québec, constitutional experts, and now even former Prime Minister Martin all agree, Bill C-14 in its present form is likely not constitutional.

Even if the bill is passed next week, it will be tied up in legal challenges for years to come, and costly, exhausting court battles for suffering Canadians who just want to see their legal rights vindicated.

Why will the government not do the right thing and work with us to get the bill right the first time?

Hon. Jody Wilson-Raybould (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are committed to ensuring that we have in place by the Supreme Court deadline of June 6 a legal framework for medical assistance in dying in this country.

I know that there is an incredible diversity of opinion around this incredibly complex and challenging issue. As legislators, we need to answer the 36 million people who live in this country in terms of putting in place a regime.

Again, I am confident that this is the best approach for Canada in terms of medical assistance in dying right now, and it is the first step.

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, government members keep hiding behind the June 6 deadline, as they call it, as an excuse, but now even former Liberal leaders, Bob Rae and Paul Martin agree there is nothing to fear.

If this bill does not pass next week, the Carter decision itself provides the criteria for determining who is eligible and the provinces are now prepared and have already released guidelines for their physicians.

We have the time we need to fix this, so will the government stop ramming through this deeply flawed bill and work with us to get it right?

Hon. Jane Philpott (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this question gives me an opportunity to explain why it is so important that we get a piece of legislation in place at the soonest possible date.

Without legislation in place, health care providers will not have the legal framework that they require to proceed. They will be advised to seek legal consults. This will cause serious problems in accessing. Not only that, the Canadian Pharmacists Association has made it clear that there will be no protection for pharmacists to dispense medication.

We need to get this legislation in place as soon as possible.

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DEMOCRATIC REFORM

Mr. Blake Richards (Banff—Airdrie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on electoral reform the Liberals keep claiming that they are listening to Canadians but three-quarters of Canadians want a referendum on any changes to their system of democracy. It seems that Canadians have already spoken.

Will the Liberals drop the lip service and listen to Canadians and hold a referendum?

Mr. Mark Holland (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians have spoken. Over 60% spoke, voting for parties that said we need to modernize our electoral system. Canadians stood up in the last election and said they needed a system that would better reflect their will, that would better enfranchise their vote, and that would give them a better voice in our democratic process. We are committed to exactly that.

I would encourage the member opposite to work with us in this process. Let us improve our democracy. Let us get it done.

Mr. Blake Richards (Banff—Airdrie, CPC): No, Mr. Speaker, Canadians have spoken. Seventy-five per cent of them want a referendum.

The Minister of Democratic Institutions claims that a referendum is not the best way to consult Canadians but at the same time the minister is speaking out of the other side of her mouth by saying that she is listening to all Canadians.

How better to know that one has the broad-based support of all Canadians than with a referendum?

Will the Liberals stop pulling the wool over Canadians' eyes and hold a referendum, yes or no?

Mr. Mark Holland (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, public consultation comes in many forms. The ability to engage Canadians happens in many different ways. We are absolutely committed to making sure that all Canadians' voices are heard in this process.

What we want to do right now, and I would encourage the member to join us in the process, is to have a discussion on exactly how we are going to do it. Right now, I do not even know what the member would want a question on.

It is important to posit ideas, to have a debate and a discussion about how we can improve our system and once we get to that point let us look at the next steps.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind the parliamentary secretary that his government was elected by 39% of voters, not 60% as he has been saying.

For the past few weeks, the Minister of Democratic Institutions has repeatedly stated that the referendum option is not on the table. This despite the fact that 73% of Canadians are in favour of a referendum.

Will the Minister of Democratic Institutions and her government finally listen to Canadians and hold a referendum on the electoral system; #referendum?

● (1430)

[*English*]

Mr. Mark Holland (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we were not the only party to campaign on the idea of changing our electoral system, on modernizing our electoral and democratic institutions. The NDP did. The Green Party did. There were many different parties that posited this idea and in cumulative total that reaches more than 60%.

The bigger point here is that there is a historic opportunity to improve the way Canadians interact with their democracy, to empower them and give them a chance to have a stronger voice in this process. I would encourage the member to work with us in that process, to begin that process of debate and ideas. Let us start it right now.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister made it abundantly clear that the 2015 election would be the last to employ the first-past-the-post system and that the status quo is not an option. However, during the Liberal convention this weekend, the Minister of Democratic Institutions indicated that the government would not proceed with changes without the support of the people.

Will the minister commit to holding a referendum on a subject as important as the electoral system to find out whether there is public support?

[*English*]

Mr. Mark Holland (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, from the onset we have been committed to engaging Canadians to ensure that any proposal we bring forward has broad support from the Canadian public. Let us remember the objective we are trying to achieve here. The objective we are trying to achieve is to enfranchise voters, to give them more power, more say, a better spot at the table in our Canadian democratic system.

I would offer to members opposite who clearly are engaged in this issue, who clearly want to have a discussion about it, let us talk, let us have an opportunity to look at what the options are to improve our system and get to work on it.

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston, CPC): Mr. Speaker, maybe the parliamentary secretary could sort out some of the confusion left by his minister this weekend when she contradicted herself by saying on the one hand, "I haven't been persuaded that referendum alone is the best tool that we can use in the 21st century", but on the other hand she said, "And we will not proceed with any changes [to how Canadians vote] without the broad buy-in of the people of this country".

How do we get a broad buy-in if we do not actually consult broadly? How do we do this without having a referendum?

Mr. Mark Holland (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, to get broad buy-in we have to do what frankly has not occurred in the past, which is to reach out to Canadians in ridings across the country, to have real and genuine conversations around how to improve our democratic institutions, to take this historic opportunity to move our democracy to a new place where we empower voters to have a stronger say in our system.

In order to do that we have to talk about options and dialogue and something other than the status quo. That is what I have not heard from members opposite. I have not heard them positing ideas on how we can improve our system. I would like them to please start participating in this debate.

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston, CPC): Mr. Speaker, at some point the Liberals are actually going to have to come forward with some new proposal instead of suggesting everyone else should do it. When they do that we want to have a referendum. It is not just we who want a referendum, 73% of Canadians want a referendum. Sooner or later, there will be a proposal from the Liberals saying, "Here is the new electoral system we suggest". When that happens, will there be a referendum, as 73% of Canadians want, or will they deny Canadians their democratic say?

Mr. Mark Holland (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I realize this may not be something the member has seen a lot of, and we need to see a lot more of, which is the ideas brought forward by government are informed by not only broad-based consultations with the public but also all parties in the House. It is certainly our desire in this process to have each of the parties participating and helping form the modernization of our electoral system.

To get to the point where we have something to talk about we need them to engage in that dialogue, bring forward their ideas, and move away from just hanging on to the status quo.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government wants to change the electoral system, but it does not really know how to change it, so it is making things up as it goes along. Nobody knows how long this will take. All we know is that the key players are a bunch of confused Liberals.

The minister says she does not want to change anything unless she has broad public buy-in. She obviously has no idea where she wants to go with this. It is hard to have faith in the process when the Liberals have been dragging their feet for seven months and have stacked their committee with Liberals.

Will the government fix things by changing the committee membership so that no political party has a majority?

● (1435)

[*English*]

Mr. Mark Holland (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is true that we do not know where this process is going to conclude. The party opposite may already have an idea of where it is going to go, but we want to actually engage in a meaningful dialogue that finds middle ground and the best solution. I imagine that solution should and must evolve as the dialogue and input from Canadians take place. If we simply step forward and say that this is the system we want, here it is, and we put it to a vote, frankly, that is how things were done, but that is not how things should be done. We need to work in an inclusive manner and work together to find the best system.

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, if that were the case we would have to ask why Liberals stacked Liberal members on the committee picking the new voting system. Details matter, and Liberals have proposed a system in which Liberals could unilaterally change our voting system.

On the weekend, the minister said she is looking forward to, and I quote "broad support". Two-thirds of the House were elected on a promise of electoral reform. Some have accused the minister of damaging the credibility of the process with her platitudes and vague answers to straightforward questions. Therefore, we implore the Liberals to answer this one simple question. Are the Liberals actually willing to go it alone and unilaterally change our voting system, or will they require the support of at least one recognized party in the House?

Mr. Mark Holland (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have had many occasions to talk and work with the member opposite. I know that he is very earnest in his desire to improve our electoral system. I know that he has many ideas he wants to bring forward to the process. Let me tell him that in this process certainly each and every one of us is going to be given the opportunity to vote on that system. Each and every one of us is going to be given an opportunity to give input to it. Each and every one of us has a responsibility to engage our constituents and Canadians, on a pan-Canadian basis, to make sure their voices are heard. I look forward to working with him on it.

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FINANCE

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Milton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on Friday, Finance Canada confirmed what we always said would happen, that the government took a Conservative surplus and turned it into a Liberal deficit. We know how this works. They had the best March madness ever. It was fantastic. Therefore, what we want to know is whether cabinet ministers were actually urged to splurge in order to make sure that the finance minister got the deficit he predicted.

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have been saying in the House for many months, the government before us left us with a deficit. The "Fiscal Monitor", this past Friday, told us in black and white what is absolutely the case. Due to the economic realities left by the measures from the previous government we have a deficit, a deficit from the previous government.

Now the question is, what are we going to do moving forward? We are going to invest to make the future rosier than the past for Canadians by focusing on growth.

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Milton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the "Fiscal Monitor" confirms the fact that the Liberals inherited a surplus from the Conservative government. It also confirms, though sadly, that just one short month, at the very end of the year, they were able to turn that surplus into a deficit.

While they preach the gospel of deficit spending, they stand alone because their G7 partners are still stuck on this whole balanced budget thing.

Did the minister engineer this deficit? Is he just proving to Canadians that he can spend it as quickly as we left it for him?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, facts matter. The facts are that the "Fiscal Monitor" shows us—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. I am sure the minister appreciates the applause deeply. However, let us wait until he finishes his answer, please.

The hon. Minister of Finance.

Hon. Bill Morneau: Mr. Speaker, as I said, facts matter. I would urge the members on the other side to actually read the "Fiscal Monitor". What they will find is that the government before us left us with a deficit. What they will find is that, as in previous years, revenues go down and expenses go up at the end of the year. This year revenues went down precipitously because of the measures of the previous government.

That is the situation we face now. We are focused on how we are going to deal with what was left to us by the previous government.

Mr. Phil McColeman (Brantford—Brant, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the evidence continues to pile up that the finance minister has a serious problem when it comes to transparency. Page 7 of his own February economic update details how his Liberal spending spree was already well under way last year. Again in March he burned through billions in one month and has driven us into a deficit.

Why does the finance minister refuse to take responsibility for his own deficits?

● (1440)

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would urge the member to actually go through the "Fiscal Monitor" line by line to find out the facts. When we take out the measures that we have put in, what we find is that the previous government left us with a deficit. It is absolutely clear, and it is something that they are going to need to look at and realize.

We are going to do what Canadians asked us to do, which is to deal with what was left to us by the previous government. We are going to invest to make a real difference for Canadians in the future. We are improving our country through improved growth.

Mr. Phil McColeman (Brantford—Brant, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the issue here is transparency. The finance minister is cooking the books to suit his reckless political spending and agenda. He was left with a Conservative surplus. He did turn that into a Liberal deficit. The finance minister needs to come clean and show some transparency.

Will he tell Canadians exactly how he spent $10 billion on the reckless Liberal schemes in March?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would invite the member opposite to take a look at what has happened over the last number of years in March with the previous government. What happens is in March revenues go down. This year what happened was what has happened in previous years, only worse. The measures put in place by the previous government led revenues to go down at the end of the year, leaving us with a deficit. We are starting with a deficit left by the previous government and now we are making efforts to really improve our situation going forward.

Canadians expect growth for this generation and the next generation, and we are going to deliver it.

* * *

RAIL TRANSPORTATION

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Transportation Safety Board is reporting more accidents, runaway trains, and other serious, preventable accidents, yet Transport Canada is delaying tougher measures that could stop not only disasters like Lac-Mégantic but 500 runaway trains over the past two decades. Transport inspectors and rail workers have called for strengthened controls and stepped-up inspection and enforcement. So far there has been nothing.

When will the minister stop talking and start taking action to make our rail system safe?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yes, we have been taking action. I have been very clear since the beginning that rail safety is my top priority. In fact, I am very glad that in this last budget $143 million was put aside over three years for rail safety.

Yes, we have taken measures. In fact, the member's party was present when we announced some of these measures. Therefore, we are taking rail safety very seriously. I have said it many times. The measures put in place since Lac-Mégantic are a beginning but they are not sufficient and we will be doing more for rail safety.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Beloeil—Chambly, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this is a priority. I went to Lac-Mégantic with my colleague from Sherbrooke last week, and I can say to the minister that the residents are not impressed with how this government is dragging its feet.

The Lac-Mégantic tragedy was three years ago, and yet we still have a long way to go to ensure a safe rail system. The Transportation Safety Board of Canada is telling us that there have been more and more problems with runaway trains and that Transport Canada is not doing enough to improve safety procedures.

Will the minister stop with the rhetoric and finally do something to guarantee a safe rail system?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will repeat what I just said.

I have the utmost respect for the Transportation Safety Board of Canada. We listen every time it makes any recommendations.

As I have clearly stated, rail safety is my top priority. If my colleague would take a little time to look at the measures we have taken, he would see that we have already taken action. Is it enough? No. As we have said very clearly, additional measures are needed, and there is money in the budget for that purpose.

We will address rail safety, because it is my top priority.

* * *

AEROSPACE INDUSTRY

Mr. Ramez Ayoub (Thérèse-De Blainville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the aerospace sector is one of the most innovative in the country. The industry includes more than 180,000 quality jobs in Canada. Bell Helicopter Textron Canada recently announced the relocation of assembly operations to Mirabel, Quebec, which will maintain and create about 100 jobs.

Could the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development tell the House about the role played by the Government of Canada in relocating this assembly line?

● (1445)

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Thérèse-De Blainville for his question.

I am very proud of Bell Helicopter Textron Canada's decision to relocate its assembly line for the new helicopter to Quebec. We have worked with the Government of Quebec to create a positive business environment for companies. This collaboration has meant keeping 900 jobs and creating more than 100 new jobs.

* * *

FINANCE

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, every month that goes by under the leadership of the Liberal Party looks the same: deficit, deficit, deficit.

Last Friday, we learned from the Department of Finance's monthly "Fiscal Monitor" that the government is running a $9-billion deficit. That same department said that the Conservative government left a surplus of $1 billion last November. We leave surpluses and the Liberals leave deficits.

Will the Minister of Finance finally admit what all Canadians know? The Liberal government has completely lost control of the public purse. That is the reality.

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the facts are now clear.

The "Fiscal Monitor" has made two things very clear. The previous government left us a deficit. That is the situation. What is more, our level of growth is very low because of the measures taken by the previous government. Now, we are going to make investments to improve the situation for the future.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the "Fiscal Monitor", a publication of the Department of Finance, indicated that there was a $1-billion surplus. The latest edition shows that there is now a $9-billion deficit. That is what officials are saying. If the Minister of Finance does not believe his officials, does he at least agree with his Prime Minister, who said just a few days ago that the $30-billion deficit was an estimate and that it could be worse?

Can the Minister of Finance assure us that the deficit will not be worse than what he promised?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have said a number of times in the House, at the end of the year, revenues are lower and expenses are higher. That is nothing out of the ordinary. That was the situation in previous years. Now, things are more difficult because of the measures taken by the previous government. It is a different situation. The Conservatives left us with a deficit. That is why we are going to make investments to improve our economic growth.

[*English*]

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I do not think Canadians realized that sunny ways would be quite this expensive.

Here are the facts. The Conservatives left the Liberals a surplus. Canadians were enjoying the lowest tax burden in 50 years, and in one month the Liberals spent a $10-billion deficit, obliterating the Conservative surplus.

Why has the Minister of Finance been so reckless with the tax dollars of hard-working Canadians?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would invite the member opposite to actually look at the "Fiscal Monitor". What he would find is that the government before us left us with a deficit. Revenues are lower and expenses are higher in the last month. The only difference is that this year the revenues are even lower in March as a result of the measures put in place by the previous government. That is the situation we face.

This is why Canadians decided they wanted a new path: a path towards growth, a path towards making investments, and a path towards a better future for themselves and their families. We are going to do that for Canadians.

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: I know the member for Abbotsford is anxious to take part in the debate, but he can wait for his turn.

The hon. member for Foothills.

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I could just give him my question. It seems like he is ready.

I know the Liberals are in denial about the Conservatives and the surplus, but it is there. Those are the facts. It is clear they do not understand economics and they do not understand the consequences of deficit spending. They can deny it all they want.

They talk about decisions made by science. Here are the facts. We left them a surplus, and the spending habits of the Minister of Finance are simply out of control. Why is the finance minister doing what every other Canadian knows is dangerous, running a budget on a credit card? When will the finance minister admit his spending is out of control?

● (1450)

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we understand very clearly what inappropriate spending can do because we are witnesses to what happened in the last government: tens of billions of dollars of spending with the lowest growth rate in decades. We are faced with that now, as well as with a deficit left to us by the previous government because of the low growth that it left us with.

Something needed to be done and Canadians understood that. That is why they chose a new government that was going to be optimistic and invest in the future of our country, a new government that is going to bring in a new era of growth so that we can turn the page on this difficult time.

* * *

[*Translation*]

SMALL BUSINESS

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, during the election campaign, the Liberals promised to keep the tax cuts for small businesses, but now they are breaking that promise and cancelling those tax cuts in the omnibus bill. The government is going to take $2.2 billion away from the businesses that create the most jobs in Canada. Fortunately, it still has a chance to keep its election promise by voting in favour of the NDP's amendment to reinstate the tax cut for SMEs.

Will the Liberals join us in helping the best job creators in the country and vote in favour of our amendment?

[*English*]

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, small businesses are the backbone of the economy. Just this morning, I was at Ottawa 2017 where I spoke to the tourism industry because we know that is where growth can occur. We have to support the tourism industry. We have to support small businesses as well.

That is why we are investing in the middle class. Middle-class Canadians are our small business owners and they are our customers. By putting money into the pockets of Canadians, they can support our small business owners and they can support the products and services that they offer, because small business owners would prefer increased revenues over decreased taxes any day.

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Ms. Irene Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the current Liberal government promised during the election to restore Canada's historic relationship with our veterans. First and foremost was the pledge to end the Conservatives' court battle that would deprive veterans of the benefits they deserve. The Liberals promised to honour those benefits, but now we learn they are backtracking and again taking our veterans to court.

Why are the Liberals punishing our veterans and forcing them to fight in court for the benefits they deserve and have earned in service to Canada?

Hon. Kent Hehr (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the member is aware, this lawsuit emerged under the previous government. I can say that this government is moving forward on treating veterans with care, compassion, and respect. We are moving forward on an aggressive mandate that is ensuring financial benefits to them. We saw that in budget 2016 with a $5.6-billion investment that would improve the lives of our most disabled veterans and ensure financial security for them and their families.

* * *

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, over the weekend General Jonathan Vance acknowledged that today's conflicts do not have the characteristics of those in the past. The chief of the defence staff recognized that one of Canada's signature peacekeeping missions in the Sinai is growing more violent. As well, Canadian troops are now on the front lines in the fight against ISIS in Iraq.

However, the Prime Minister said we are only training Iraqi troops. Why is the Prime Minister misinforming Canadians about these dangerous combat missions?

Hon. John McKay (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, General Vance has actually done us all a service in pointing out that the conflicts that will be going on now and in the future will largely be conflicts that will not get easily resolved; hence, the important emphasis on assisting, training, advising, and intelligence. That is what the minister and the chief of the defence staff have been emphasizing as they engage further in Iraq.

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, reporters from Iraq noted that Canadian troops are on the front line in preparation for the coalition's efforts to take the city of Fallujah. As Roméo Dallaire said, "Canada's soldiers are first and foremost [combat] specialists". The CBC acknowledged that Conservatives were on the right track. It reported, "As for ISIS, it was the Liberals and the NDP who were out of step with public opinion".

Why is the Prime Minister misleading Canadians by saying that this is not a combat mission, but actually has our troops in combat against ISIS?

● (1455)

Hon. John McKay (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in response to the hon. member's question, I would quote the chief of the defence staff, who said that we are in a state of "armed conflict" with a "non-state actor". There is no doubt that this is a mission of significance. This is a mission where there will be danger. Our coalition partners have welcomed us into the theatre, and we are providing really useful and effective services to our coalition partners.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, by withdrawing our CF-18s in order to keep an election promise, the Liberals are putting our soldiers' lives at risk, even more so now that we are on the front line of the offensive in Fallujah. Officers with the U.S. Army have confirmed that our special forces are on the front line. There is no doubt that our troops will face enemy fire.

Can the minister tell us how we went from a training mission to a combat mission and whether our troops are risking their lives on the front line?

[*English*]

Hon. John McKay (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the goal of this mission is to achieve long-term success through self-sustainable security. Hence, we are in a mission that advises, trains, assists, and provides intelligence. That is the way forward in order to minimize the unwanted consequences of this conflict. As we go forward, I would encourage the hon. member to support our troops as we engage in this conflict with a non-state actor.

* * *

SRI LANKA

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Scarborough—Rouge Park, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, two weeks ago, torrential downpours and landslides in Sri Lanka created a humanitarian crisis across the island. Over 600,000 people have been displaced from their homes, and nearly 250,000 people are stuck in emergency evacuation centres. The crisis is ongoing and individual victims need our help. Over 100 people are still reported missing and 100 more have been confirmed dead.

Could the hon. Minister of International Development advise the House of Canada's efforts to assist these victims?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of International Development and La Francophonie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Scarborough—Rouge Park for the question.

I would like to begin by offering our deepest condolences to the people of Sri Lanka and expressing Canada's solidarity with them.

Our government acted swiftly by making a $310,000 contribution, which helped Oxfam Canada and the Red Cross provide water, sanitation and hygiene services, household items, living allowances, and protection to some 50,000 affected families. We continue to monitor the situation.

[*English*]

INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, over the past week, I have heard from many Canadians who strongly support our "free the beer" campaign. If we can free the beer by removing internal trade barriers, we can also create jobs and create growth in our economy without adding debt. Will the government raise the Comeau decision to the Supreme Court and free the beer?

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do share the enthusiasm by the member opposite, and I welcome expanded opportunities for alcohol between provinces and territories. This is a matter that I have raised with my provincial and territorial counterparts as we negotiate on a comprehensive agreement on internal trade. This is a broad agreement where we want to reduce barriers and harmonize regulations. It is about growing the economy and making sure that we benefit, not only businesses but consumers. I look forward to working with the member opposite on this file.

* * *

[*Translation*]

CANADA POST

Ms. Karine Trudel (Jonquière, NDP): Mr. Speaker, instead of keeping their promise to restore home mail delivery, the Liberals chose to create a committee to examine this issue. The problem is that we know nothing about the procedure or what this committee will do.

We learned that the deadline to make submissions is around June 23 for groups and some time in July for individuals. As of Friday, there was nothing anywhere. When the NDP called out the government, a date appeared on the website, as if by magic.

Is this the kind of transparency the Liberals promised us?

Ms. Leona Alleslev (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the national president of the Canadian Union of Postal Workers said that the review of Canada Post was welcome news for Canada Post workers and that the government had a historic opportunity to reinvent Canada Post.

Canada Post management indicated that it supported the review of postal services in Canada and that it looked forward to this national discussion.

The union supports the review, management supports the review, Canadians across the country support the review—

● (1500)

[*English*]

The Speaker: The hon. member for Northwest Territories.

* * *

INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Michael McLeod (Northwest Territories, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my riding of the Northwest Territories has significant infrastructure needs and faces particular challenges because of our northern climate.

In April, experts from Canada and the United States gathered in Inuvik to discuss new techniques for infrastructure projects at the International Symposium of Permafrost Scientists. One of the projects they discussed was the Inuvik to Tuktoyaktuk highway that has just finished its third construction season.

Could the Minister of Infrastructure and Communities please update the House on the progress of this important project?

Hon. Amarjeet Sohi (Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague, the hon. member for Northwest Territories for his tireless efforts on behalf of northern communities.

Our government has made unprecedented commitments to support public infrastructure. The Inuvik to Tuktoyaktuk highway will help to connect people, create jobs, and support economic development in the north.

We are very encouraged by the progress of this project, and I look forward to touring this exciting project with my colleague in the future.

* * *

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Hon. Deepak Obhrai (Calgary Forest Lawn, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals are all over the place on international development.

The minister has launched yet another review and another consultation to determine how Canada can refocus its international assistance. On one hand, the Liberals say they are reviewing the system, but at the same time, the minister keeps promising Canadian money at the international forums.

Does this not make the Liberals' consultative process a big sham?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of International Development and La Francophonie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very proud to have participated in three international summits recently. One was on the status of women, another was on humanitarian aid, and the third was on health.

My opposition colleague will not be surprised to learn that, as in past years, we pledged contributions to the Central Emergency Response Fund to ensure that Canada will always be among the first to respond to disasters. We also pledged to respond to major humanitarian organizations' annual appeals.

* * *

DAIRY INDUSTRY

Mr. Simon Marcil (Mirabel, BQ): Mr. Speaker, today, dairy producers began a three-day tractor trek from Quebec City to Ottawa to remind the government of its election promises.

They are travelling across Quebec to protest the importation of diafiltered milk, which robs them of thousands of dollars every week. They are criss-crossing Quebec to remind the government that compensation was promised when international agreements such as the trans-Pacific partnership and the European Union agreement were signed.

When will the 40 Liberal members from Quebec speak out in support of Quebec's dairy producers?

Mr. Jean-Claude Poissant (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government created supply management, and our government will defend it.

As promised, we are meeting with industry stakeholders from across the country. Over the past few weeks, we have listened to them and had many very productive discussions. We will help develop a sustainable, long-term strategy for the entire sector.

* * *

FORESTRY INDUSTRY

Mrs. Marilène Gill (Manicouagan, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on the softwood lumber issue, Quebec reaffirmed last week that our forestry regime is fully compliant with NAFTA in every respect and that there was absolutely no reason for Ottawa to accept the imposition of any quotas or tariffs on our exports.

However, in order to bail out British Columbia, the government is currently negotiating a protectionist agreement with the Americans, even though it could kill Quebec's forestry industry.

Will the Minister of International Trade clearly tell the Americans that our lumber is not subsidized and that she will never agree to a protectionist agreement, unless Quebec is exempt from it?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for her question.

Our government recognizes the importance of forestry to Quebec and to Canada. In fact, I am meeting with representatives from the Quebec sector next Monday, in Montreal. I spoke with my U.S. counterpart, Michael Froman, about this specific issue two weeks ago at the APEC meeting. We are working hard to reach a deal that will be good for Canada and for Quebec.

* * *

SENIORS

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development confirmed that he wants to automatically sign up seniors for the guaranteed income supplement by no later than 2018.

As this has been a long-standing demand from seniors and from the Bloc Québécois, we must therefore commend him. However, it has taken the federal government a quarter century to do it.

Since those affected have already waited too long, will the minister promise to make payment of the GIS automatic in the next tax season?

● (1505)

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this gives me the opportunity to also thank my colleague for all her efforts in recent years and to especially thank the FADOQ network for bringing this very important matter to our government's attention.

In addition to substantially increasing the guaranteed income supplement, restoring the retirement eligibility age to 65, and investing $200 million in housing for seniors, we are announcing today that the automatic enrolment process for the guaranteed income supplement will be completed in 2018.

* * *

[*English*]

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: I would like to draw to the attention of hon. members the presence in the Gallery of His Excellency Milan Štech, President of the Senate of the Czech Republic.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

* * *

[*Translation*]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would simply like to inform the House that next Thursday, June 2, will be an allotted day.

[*English*]

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Mr. Speaker, a few minutes ago the Minister of Finance said, "facts are the facts". We agree with that.

[*Translation*]

For that reason I ask for the consent of the House to table the "Fiscal Monitor", a Department of Finance publication.

It states, "April to November 2015: budgetary surplus of $1.0 billion".

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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 39 petitions.

INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

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, two reports of the Canadian delegation of the Canada-United States Inter-Parliamentary Group.

The first concerns the annual national conference of the Council of State Governments (CSG), held in Nashville, Tennessee, United States of America, December 10 to 13, 2015.

The second concerns the annual winter meeting of the National Governors Association, held in Washington, D.C., United States of America, February 19 to 22, 2016.

* * *

● (1510)

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

FINANCE

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the fourth report of the Standing Committee on Finance in relation to main estimates 2016-17.

* * *

EXTENDING THE TIME LIMIT FOR A BLOOD SAMPLE WARRANT ACT (HELEN'S LAW)

Mr. Kennedy Stewart (Burnaby South, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-276, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (warrant to obtain blood sample).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am proud today to introduce a private member's bill, Helen's law, which proposes to amend the Criminal Code of Canada.

On February 28, 2005, Helen Sonja Francis, a registered nurse from Burnaby, B.C. and a single mother of two, was tragically killed in a car accident involving an impaired driver. Due to a power outage that day, a warrant to obtain a blood sample from the perpetrator was signed 13 minutes after the current four-hour time limit contained in the Criminal Code. As a result, all of the evidence collected was ruled inadmissible in court and Helen and her family were denied justice.

For over 10 years now, Helen's brother, George Sojka, has tirelessly called on the government to fix our criminal justice system and gathered hundreds upon hundreds of signatures on a petition to Parliament. Helen's law would do exactly that by extending the time limit to obtain a blood sample warrant from four to six hours following an accident causing death where drug or alcohol consumption is suspected.

It is a straightforward, long overdue change, and I hope the government will consider it.

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

Routine Proceedings

FRAMEWORK ON PALLIATIVE CARE IN CANADA ACT

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-277, An Act providing for the development of a framework on palliative care in Canada.

She said: Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to bring forward my private member's bill on palliative care. In the previous session of Parliament, a parliamentary committee of all parties looked at the issue and came forward with recommendations. The bill is the result of that. It is a timely bill, especially in light of the Bill C-14 legislation. The committee that considered the Carter report stated that the request for physician-assisted death could not be truly voluntary if the option of proper palliative care was not available to alleviate a person's suffering.

My bill provides a framework to implement consistent access for palliative care for all Canadians. I hope all parliamentarians on all sides of the House will support it.

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

* * *

FOREIGN LOBBYIST TRANSPARENCY ACT

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-278, An Act to amend the Lobbying Act (reporting obligations).

She said: Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure, on behalf of the people of my riding of Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke and Canada, to introduce this bill, an act to amend the Lobbying Act (reporting obligations), to read as the foreign lobbyist transparency act. This legislation is about protecting Canadian jobs.

Thousands of Canadians rely on the working forest for their livelihood. Canadians should be shocked to learn that for every dollar spent by our forestry industry that correctly points out Canada is a world leader in sustainable, environmentally sound forestry practices, opponents of the Canadian forestry industry spend a thousand dollars and more on spreading wrong information.

Canadians do not know exactly how much money is spent to influence the attitudes of voters because much of the transfer of lobbying dollars is hidden. This legislation will shed light on something that threatens Canadian democracy.

All Canadians have built something very special in our country. Any time there is a national discussion on any topic, be it the environment, forestry, mining, national defence, or anything else, Canadians have a right to know whose voice is being heard and why.

Canadians need to know that foreigners have been secretly funding single or special interest groups whose lobbying efforts do not enjoy the support of regular hard-working Canadians. Many of these groups could not exist without foreign funding.

In my riding of Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, and indeed across Canada, thousands of hard-working Canadians depend on their livelihood from the working forest. Misinformation jeopardizes those jobs. Canadians have a right to know the sources of funding for those groups that seek to take away jobs from Canadians.

The foreign lobbyist transparency act would achieve financial transparency and improved accountability through the public reporting of payments made by foreigners to lobbyists.

● (1515)

The Speaker: I would remind hon. members that the introduction and first reading of a bill is not the time to make the case for it; it is the time to basically describe, very briefly, what the bill is about.

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

* * *

[*Translation*]

MAIN ESTIMATES, 2016-17 — PUBLIC SAFETY

The Speaker: The following motion in the name of the hon. Leader of the Opposition was placed on the Order Paper.

That, pursuant to Standing Order 81(4)(*b*), consideration by the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security of all Votes related to Public Safety in the Main Estimates for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2017, be extended beyond May 31, 2016.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

[*English*]

PETITIONS

AUXILIARY POLICE OFFICERS

Mr. Mel Arnold (North Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition initiated by Mr. Bob Spiers of Vernon, B.C. and signed by Canadians from coast to coast to coast.

The petitioners call on the Government of Canada to establish a tax credit for auxiliary police officers, similar to that already given to volunteer firefighters and search and rescue volunteers.

PHYSICIAN-ASSISTED DEATH

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to present a petition on behalf of my constituents.

The petitioners note that life is sacred until death and that it is our duty to provide compassionate hospice care. They say that God is the author of life and death, that he will determine when suffering ends and that some can be economically motivated to end life.

They call upon the House of Commons to prohibit euthanasia and assisted suicide.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Kennedy Stewart (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present electronic petition 128.

The petitioners call on the Government of Canada to reject Kinder Morgan's Trans Mountain expansion project proposal. They say that this project creates too much risk to land and surface waters, and aquifers along the route, and that the export of diluted bitumen by Kinder Morgan threatens the future of the planet through climate change.

I hope the government takes this seriously.

JUSTICE

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions to present today asking the House the Commons to pass legislation which would recognize pre-born children as separate victims when they are injured or killed during the commission of an offence against their mother, allowing two charges to be laid against the offender instead of just one.

Mr. Jim Eglinski (Yellowhead, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have three petitions calling upon the House of Commons to pass legislation which would recognize pre-born children as separate victims when they are injured or killed during the commission of an offence against their mothers, allowing two charges to be laid against the offenders instead of just one.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present two petitions.

The first petition is from many Canadians who are concerned about the process of persecution within the People's Republic of China of practitioners of Falun Dafa and Falun Gong.

The petitioners urge the government to make it clear to the People's Republic of China that it must respect the human rights of non-violent practitioners.

CBC/RADIO-CANADA

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is from many constituents in my riding of Saanich—Gulf Islands calling for the fulfilment of promises to provide stable, long-term and predictable funding for our national public broadcaster, CBC/Radio-Canada.

JUSTICE

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the privilege of presenting three petitions signed by a large number of residents from southwestern Ontario.

The petitioners call upon the House of Commons to pass legislation which would recognize pre-born children as separate victims when they are injured or killed during the commission of an offence against their mothers, allowing two charges to be laid against the offender instead of just one.

PALLIATIVE CARE

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to present a petition. It is very appropriate given that we are voting on Bill C-14 today.

The petitioners say that it is impossible for a person to give informed consent to assisted suicide or euthanasia if appropriate palliative care is unavailable to them.

They therefore call on Parliament to establish a national strategy on palliative care.

● (1520)

JUSTICE

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition in support of Cassie and Molly's law, a private member's bill put forward by the member for Yorkton—Melville, which deals with the issue of protecting the lives of pre-born children in cases where the mother wishes to carry the pregnancy to term.

PHYSICIAN-ASSISTED DEATH

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition signed by parishioners of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese in Winnipeg.

The petitioners ask Parliament to ensure there are safeguards to the right of all persons potentially involved in the provision of physician-assisted suicide or euthanasia to conscientiously object to provide any service that would assist physician-assisted suicide or euthanasia.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the following question will be answered today: No. 96.

[*Text*]

Question No. 96—**Mr. David Sweet**:

> With regard to the changes to the uniforms of Generals in the Canadian Armed Forces involving the removal of pips and the inclusion of metal maple leaves and gold braids: (*a*) what was the justification for making these changes; (*b*) what are the details of any documented evidence exists to support this justification; (*c*) what evidence exists to suggest that either Canadian Armed Forces members or Allied officers were confused or misled by the current ranking insignia; (*d*) what process was used to determine what insignia should be included on the new uniforms, in particular, (i) who was consulted, (ii) how were they consulted, (iii) what options were considered to be included in these changes; (*e*) how many uniforms will need to be changed in total; (*f*) what is the total cost incurred by the government to implement these changes; and (*g*) how will the government measure the effectiveness of these changes?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in response to part (a) of the question, the addition of the maple leaves and gold bar as sleeve rank will bring the Canadian Army general officers into harmony with the rank insignia of the flag officers of the Royal Canadian Navy and general officers of the Royal Canadian Air Force with whom they share senior military leadership responsibilities.

The change to one convention of rank insignia amongst general officers and flag officers will lessen the chance of confusion for Canadians and our international allies.

In response to part (b), the commander of the Canadian Army made a presentation to the chief of the defence staff regarding the merit of the proposed changes.

Regarding part (c), the Canadian Army has not formally documented instances of confusion by Canadian Armed Forces soldiers or allied officers regarding the current rank insignia in a manner that would allow it to be presented as evidence. That said, there have been instances where the rank of Canadian Army generals was not immediately identifiable by military personnel.

In terms of part (d)(i), the Minister of National Defence, the chief of the defence staff, the Canadian Army staff, and personnel in the directorate of history and heritage were consulted on the proposed change.

In response to part (d)(ii), consultations were held through a presentation and discussion of options.

In terms of part (d)(iii), the three options included: status quo, or no change; use of the pip instead of the maple leaf in the 1968-2013 system; and use of three alternative maple leaf metal designs.

Regarding part (e), there are 56 general officers in the Canadian Army who wear the Canadian Army general officer uniform in the Canadian Armed Forces.

Regarding part (f), the cost of issuing each of the 56 general officers in the Canadian Army with the new metal ranks for one existing service dress uniform is estimated at approximately $6,000. It is important to note that the move to a metal pin-on rank insignia on the shoulders of general officers eliminates the expense of embroidering the ranks on replacement shoulder straps, creating cost savings.

Finally, in response to part (g), the Canadian Army has not established measures of effectiveness for this initiative.

* * *

[*English*]

QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if Questions Nos. 86, 89 to 91, 93, 97 to 101 and 103 could be made an order for return, these returns would be tabled immediately.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[*Text*]

Question No. 86—**Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault**:

> With regard to the Prime Minister of Canada's state visit to the United States of America from March 9 to 11, 2016: (*a*) who was part of the Canadian delegation; and (*b*) what were the costs of the Canadian delegation, broken down by guest and for (i) transportation, (ii) accommodations, (iii) meals?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 89—**Hon. Diane Finley**:

> With regard to employment in the public service as of October 19, 2015: (*a*) what was the total number of full-time employees; (*b*) what was the total number of part-time employees; (*c*) what was the total number of casual employees; (*d*) what was the total number of contract employees; (*e*) how many employees were on leave; (*f*) how many employees worked in the National Capital Region; and (*g*) how many employees worked outside the National Capital Region?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 90—**Mr. Arnold Viersen**:

With regard to federal spending within the electoral district of Peace River—Westlock, for each fiscal year since 2010-2011 inclusively: (*a*) what are the details of all grants, contributions, and loans to any organization, body, or group, broken down by (i) name of the recipient, (ii) municipality of the recipient, (iii) date on which the funding was received, (iv) amount received, (v) department or agency providing the funding, (vi) program under which the grant, contribution, or loan was made, (vii) nature or purpose; and (*b*) for each grant, contribution and loan identified in (*a*), was a press release issued to announce it and, if so, what is the (i) date, (ii) headline, (iii) file number of the press release?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 91—**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant**:

With regard to the area defined by FEDNOR as Northern Ontario, since November 4, 2015, what is the list of grants, loans, contributions, and contracts awarded by the government broken down by (i) recipient, (ii) constituency, (iii) amount?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 93—**Mr. James Bezan**:

With regard to the process of administering pension payments to retired members of the Canadian Armed Forces: (*a*) how many staff, military and civilian, administered Regular Force pensions since 2012, broken down by fiscal year; (*b*) what are the longest, shortest and average lengths of time that a Reserve Force member in the part-time pension plan had to wait before receiving a pension cheque since 2012, broken down by fiscal year; (*c*) what are the longest, shortest and average lengths of time that a Reserve Force member in the full-time pension plan had to wait before receiving a pension cheque since 2012, broken down by fiscal year; (*d*) what is the average wait time for a General/Flag Officer for a pension since 2012, broken down by fiscal year; (*e*) what is the average wait time for an officer for a pension cheque since 2012, broken down by fiscal year; (*f*) what is the average wait time for a non-commissioned member for a pension cheque since 2012, broken down by fiscal year; (*g*) in comparison with the public service pension plan and the RCMP pension plan, what are the average wait times for a pension cheque; (*h*) are pensions that take longer than 30 days to implement, and that are paid in arrears to service members, paid with the prevailing interest rate as compensation for the unnecessary delay and, if not, why; (*i*) what is the government's policy regarding paying interest on pensions in arrears; and (*j*) what is the Canadian Armed Force's policy regarding paying interest on pensions in arrears?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 97—**Mr. Tom Kmiec**:

With regard to the Calgary Green Line Light Rail Transit (Green Line LRT): (*a*) what are the details, including but not limited to the sender, recipient, and dates that correspondence was sent or received, of all correspondence and briefing materials between all government departments, crown corporations and agencies, that were sent or received since December 31, 2009; and (*b*) what are the details of any briefings to ministers or staff which contain mention of the Green Line LRT and were sent or received since December 31, 2009?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 98—**Mr. Tom Kmiec**:

With regard to the federal electoral riding of Calgary Shepard: what is the total amount of government dollars received by businesses, corporations, and entities within the Calgary Shepard riding since October 19, 2015, specifying (i) each department or ministry the funding was received through, (ii) the name of the initiative or program providing the funding, (iii) the date of each transfer, (iv) the amount of each individual transfer?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 99—**Mr. Tom Kmiec**:

With regard to the Kurdistan Regional Government, the Department of Global Affairs and the Department of International Development: (*a*) what are the details of all correspondence and briefing notes from the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Minister of International Development and all documents presented to the said Ministries from all departments, corporations, and crown agencies regarding the Kurdistan Regional Government, since October 19, 2015, to the present; and (*b*) what are the details of any briefing notes which have been presented to the Ministers or their staff from government departments, ministries, corporations, or crown agencies, since October 19, 2015, to the present?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 100—**Mr. Scott Reid**:

With regard to the Independent Advisory Board for Senate Appointments for the period between January 19, 2016, and March 19, 2016: (*a*) what were the expenses incurred by the board, in total, and broken down by type, including, (i) date of the expense, (ii) board members who incurred the expense, (iii) purpose for the expense; (*b*) for each in-person, telephone, or video conference meeting of the board, (i) what was the date of the meeting, (ii) what type of meeting was it, (iii) who were its attendees, (iv) what was its duration, (v) what was its location; (*c*) for each occasion, on what date, by whose initiative, for what purpose, and by what means did the board, or any member of the board, communicate with or receive communication from (i) the Prime Minister, (ii) a member of the Prime Minister's Office, (iii) each of the 25 individuals provided to the Prime Minister, (iv) the Clerk of the Senate or a member of Senate administration, (v) the Minister of Democratic Institutions or a member of the minister's office, (vi) the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, or a member of the Leader's office, (vii) any other Member of Parliament or Senator, identifying the Member of Parliament or Senator; (*d*) in each province, which organizations submitted nominations; (*e*) were there any organizations that submitted more than one name and, if so, (i) which organizations, (ii) how many names, (iii) in which provinces; (*f*) was there any communication between the board, or any member of the board, and any successful or unsuccessful applicant; (*g*) if the answer to (*f*) is in the affirmative, in the case of those applicants who were subsequently appointed to the Senate, which ones were contacted; and (*h*) did the board, or any member of the board, approach any potential candidates to encourage him or her to submit an application?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 101—**Mr. Andrew Scheer**:

With regard to the transition of government on November 4, 2015: (*a*) what is the total cost of any spending on renovating, redesigning, and re-furnishing for each ministerial office following the transition to the new government, broken down by (i) total cost, (ii) moving services, (iii) renovating services, (iv) painting, (v) flooring, (vi) furniture, (vii) appliances, (viii) art installation, (ix) all other expenditures; and (*b*) what is the total cost of any spending on renovating, redesigning, and re-furnishing for each Deputy Minister's office in response to the new Cabinet, broken down by (i) total cost, (ii) moving services, (iii) renovating services, (iv) painting, (v) flooring, (vi) furniture, (vii) appliances, (viii) art installation, (ix) all other expenditures?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 103—**Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault**:

With regard to federal spending in the riding of Sherbrooke, and for each fiscal year since 2010-2011 inclusively: (*a*) what are the details of all grants, contributions, and loans to any organization, body, or group, broken down by (i) name of the recipient, (ii) municipality of the recipient, (iii) date on which the funding was received, (iv) amount received, (v) department or agency providing the funding, (vi) program under which the grant, contribution, or loan was made, (vii) nature or purpose?

(Return tabled)

[*English*]

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

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

PUBLIC SERVICE LABOUR RELATIONS ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-7, an act to amend the Public Service Labour Relations Act, the Public Service Labour Relations and Employment Board Act and other Acts and to provide for certain other measures, be read the third time and passed.

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is indeed an honour to stand before this House and once again speak to Bill C-7, as it deals with our brave men and women of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

As I stand today, I was looking over my previous speech. I think it is incumbent that we do that once again. We should always remember the sacrifices, not only of our veterans but of those who put their uniforms on and run toward danger every day when others would run away.

RCMP members are moms, dads, sisters, and brothers. They are volunteers within our communities. They coach minor sports. They work with charities. They contribute to the health and wellness of our communities, not just when they have their uniforms on but every day.

We spoke previously of the legend of the Mountie from 1873, the North West Mounted Police, the 150 first recruits, who had the core values of integrity, honesty, professionalism, respect, and accountability. We talked about the legend of the Mountie always getting his man, Dudley Do-Right and Captain Canuck. We also talked about our national symbols of the red serge and the campaign hat, travelling internationally with Mounties in the promotion of Canada, and how proud we are of our RCMP force. These brave men and women are indeed our silent sentinels, so that we can rest comfortably every night. They face human tragedy and danger every day.

Today, we are talking about Bill C-7 and how it impacts the 28,461 members.

As we talk about the history of our RCMP, we should talk about what our RCMP members face today. Today, the RCMP is among the lowest-paid police force in Canada. It has slipped from the number one ranked police force in the world to well below that.

Mr. Speaker, I should also mention that because I was very excited and very passionate about getting into this speech, I forgot to mention that I will be splitting my time with the member for Barrie—Innisfil. I apologize for not mentioning that sooner.

The RCMP are paid 30% lower than their municipal colleagues. Morale is indeed at a low point. We are seeing the numbers every day. Regular force members are faced with increasing workloads and capacity. Time and again, our RCMP members' rights and freedoms are secondary to that, and to those who are committing the crimes.

Since 1974, RCMP members have worked under a non-unionized labour relations regime. They had a secondary group staff relations representative program, SRRP. This was the group that represented the members' rights to management. That was the only group that was able to collectively represent the interests of the employees and our regular force members to management. Despite the consultative role of the SRRP, management has always had the final say in all human resource matters.

In 2015, the Supreme Court ruled, in Mounted Police Association of Ontario v. Canada, that the existing labour relations program, the one currently in place, violated the rights and freedoms of RCMP members.

Under subsection 2(d), "freedom of association", of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the Supreme Court found that indeed the rights and freedoms of RCMP members had been violated. Bill C-7 was introduced by this Liberal government in response to this decision last January. It was ruled that the Mounties should have the right to unionize and engage in collective bargaining. It should be noted that the RCMP are the only police force in Canada without that right.

● (1525)

The Liberals took this legislation a little too far. Bill C-7 contains a list of issues that are excluded from the bargaining table, as well as a controversial proposal to ship Mounties hurt on the job to the provinces they are working in. Among the items that were left out of collective bargaining were staffing levels, workplace harassment, sexual harassment, conduct, discipline, uniforms, and scheduling. These are clauses and issues that not just RCMP workers, but any workers should have. They should have the right for a safe environment, a safe workplace. They should have the right to a say in those areas.

The Conservatives and the opposition were able to strike down, through the Liberal majority on the committee, clauses 40 and 42. These are clauses that would have effectively moved RCMP members' health benefits to provincial entities. Indeed, workers' compensation claims would have been dealt with provincially. This would mean that Mounties would have a different standard of benefits, whether health or workers' compensation benefits, depending on the province they work in. Conservatives, through the committee, were able to strike that down. While this is a positive development, sadly, it took the spouses of existing and retired RCMP members to convince the Liberal government to finally see reason.

It was my sincere hope that through debate, the Liberals would listen to the other concerns, not just from the Conservative side but the NDP, and indeed other members in government, who also shared some of their concerns before the bill went to committee. We had hope on this side that by allowing that bill go to committee, there would be further amendments. Sadly, that was not the case.

Bill C-7 fails to support the brave men and women of the RCMP. It will take away their democratic right to a secret ballot and to negotiate other core issues that impact their work environment, their personal lives, and the lives of their families.

Let us talk about the democratic right to a secret ballot. The Conservatives will always stand behind the RCMP. We will always support legislation that allows for the democratic right for a secret ballot vote. However, we will not support legislation that so blatantly violates the wishes of its members.

I have been stopped a number of times on the street and in shopping centres. I have received emails and letters from RCMP members, wishing to be anonymous because they have been told not to speak about this issue. They have voiced their concerns about Bill C-7. Instead of forcing RCMP members to disclose their votes publicly, the Liberals should listen to the everyday rank and file, the RCMP members who are concerned that their vote will impact their workplace situations.

I think I speak for all members in the House when I say that we proudly support and defend the men and women who wear the RCMP uniform. We thank them for their service every day. However, we, as the official opposition, respect the Supreme Court's decision that RCMP officers are entitled to bargain collectively. Some Conservatives even voted in favour of Bill C-7 to get it to the committee, but we were only able to strike down clauses 40 and 42. The Liberal government, in its open and transparent ways, was unwilling to require secret ballot certification, an essential requirement in the democratic process.

● (1530)

We cannot support any legislation that would deny employees that fundamental right to vote in a secret ballot on whether to unionize. We do not use a show of hands or public petition in our democratic elections, nor should we in our workplace.

In closing—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I am sorry, but the time is up. You will be able to add more during questions and answers.

The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I find it unfortunate that the Conservatives have decided to vote against Bill C-7, given the importance of allowing our RCMP members to organize a union for collective bargaining purposes. I am a bit surprised. On the one hand, the member says that the Conservatives stand behind the members of the RCMP, but on the other hand, the Conservative Party would not support the unionization of RCMP members, which is something other law enforcement officers are already able to do.

Why does the member believe that not supporting the unionization of the RCMP is a good thing for its members?

Mr. Todd Doherty: Madam Speaker, it is not that we do not support the unionization of RCMP members. The fact is, Bill C-7 is such a stripped down piece of legislation that it would not allow our RCMP members, our everyday rank and file, to negotiate simple things, such as staffing, scheduling, or workplace harassment.

One other item is that we trust the 28,461 members to make life-and-death decisions every day. However, the Liberals will not trust that these members are able to vote or have a say on whether they want to unionize. It is not that we are against it, but we are against the non-secret ballot. Allow these members to have a say on whether they want to unionize.

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Madam Speaker, this is another example of what the Liberals have been doing lately. They are implying that if the bills they are putting forward, narrow and restrictive as they are, do not pass, there would somehow be a legal vacuum and RCMP members would lose their right to organize. That is not true. The Supreme Court decision will come into force and will allow the RCMP to unionize.

By the same token, my question is about the mistake I think the Conservatives are making by conflating the secret ballot with the way one organizes a union. Once the union is organized, it would be quite public as to who is a member of the union and who is not.

No one would be forced to join a union. If people do not wish to be associated with a union, they would not be a member of the union. There is no requirement of membership in any of our trade union facilities. There is a requirement to pay dues, because one receives the benefits of membership, but no one is required to join the union.

Therefore, I am not quite sure how the secret ballot for election applies to the idea of membership in a union.

● (1535)

Mr. Todd Doherty: Madam Speaker, we are here today talking about Bill C-7, which is a fundamental piece of legislation that will hopefully see our RCMP ranks on equal footing with other unionized employees. I think we can all agree that we want to make sure that our everyday rank and file have all rights afforded to them.

Our argument and position on this side is that the decision of a few, of a single small group, would impact 28,461 members of the RCMP. That is wrong. Why not give the 28,461 members of the RCMP, the brave men and women who put the uniform on every day, face human tragedy and run toward danger, a say on whether they unionize or not?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I have a very simple question for the member.

Here we have legislation that would allow RCMP members to unionize. Why, in principle, would the member not support the legislation that would enable that to happen?

Mr. Todd Doherty: Madam Speaker, again, I am going back to the decision of a few impacting the 28,461.

I have had a number of both existing RCMP members, everyday rank and file, as well as retired members, who are saying that fundamentally the bill is flawed. We are asking the Liberals to come back with a better bill. Prepare and provide the RCMP members with a voice.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for Cariboo—Prince George for sharing his time with me today.

I rise to speak to Bill C-7, but I would first like to thank all members of the RCMP for the incredible service they provide to our country not just from coast to coast to coast but across the globe. RCMP members are stationed all over the world, and they provide incredible service to our country and its residents. I am 100% supportive of the RCMP for what it does. I have tried to encourage my son to become an RCMP officer because of the pride and tradition the RCMP brings to our great country.

I would like to start with just how we arrived at this point, and my hon. colleague brought this up earlier. Since 1974, RCMP members have worked under a non-unionized labour relations regime in which the staff relations representative program, the SRRP, has been the only body recognized by management that represents the interests of employees. Despite the consultative role of the SRRP, management has the final word with respect to HR matters.

Section 2(1)(d) of the Public Service Labour Relations Act excluded RCMP members from unionizing. The Supreme Court of Canada ruled in the Mounted Police Association of Ontario v. Canada that the existing labour relations program violated the rights of RCMP members under section 2(d), freedom of association, of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. In the ruling in January 2015, the government was given one year to pass new legislation. In January 2016 that deadline was extended to April 2016.

Bill C-7 would allow members of the RCMP and its reservists to collectively bargain. According to the bill's summary, it would create a process for an employee organization to acquire collective bargaining rights for members and reservists and include provisions that regulate collective bargaining, arbitration, unfair labour practices, and grievances.

The certification of unions speaks to the three requirements it must meet. It must have a primary mandate, the representation of employees who are RCMP members. It cannot be affiliated with a bargaining agent or other association that does not have a primary mandate of the representation of police officers, and it cannot be certified for any other group of employees.

Bill C-4, and this is what I find to be somewhat disturbing, would strip employees of their right to a secret ballot, and I will speak more on that later on. On the certification and decertification of unions, the combination of Bill C-4 and Bill C-7 would leave RCMP members without a secret ballot vote on future union drives, and it runs contrary to my view, that of giving workers the right to a vote that is free of intimidation prior to being forced to join, pay dues, or be represented by a bargaining agent.

With respect to collective bargaining, the bill would restrict what is up for bargaining. The collective agreement cannot include any term or condition that relates to law enforcement techniques, transfers, appointments, probation, discharges, demotions, conduct including harassment, basic requirements of RCMP duties, uniform order, or dress.

Given the unique nature of the RCMP, there are several aspects of that part of the bill that I certainly agree with, such as postings, uniforms, demotions, conduct, etc., and the increase in the size of the Public Service Labour Relations and Employment Board to 12 from 10 and the requirement that at least two of those members have knowledge of police organization. It also speaks to dispute resolutions and grievances.

As I said earlier, one of the things that is somewhat disturbing to me is the fact that there would be no requirement for secret ballots.

● (1540)

The legislation was really watered down when it came to Parliament. I supported it at second reading because I thought there was more work that could be done at committee, and I was very glad to see that there was. With respect to clauses 40 and 42 of the legislation, it was actually amended, in large part because of a push on the part of our Conservative members of the committee.

With respect to the legislation itself, obviously this side of the House respects the Supreme Court of Canada decision. One of the things we do not respect, and I do not personally respect, concerns the right of an individual to have a secret ballot. I was president of a firefighters' union for 30 and a half years. I can say that everything was done with a secret ballot. I believe fundamentally and principally in the right of an individual to maintain a secret ballot, especially in an organization like this, because one of the unique natures of being a police officer or a firefighter, particularly a young firefighter or police officer, is the fact that one is on a career path and often some of the decisions made can have an impact later, on every aspect of one's career.

As the member for Durham said, it is one of the fundamental tenets of democracy. All of us in this House have been elected as a result of a secret ballot. The Speaker of the House was elected on a secret ballot. Leaders of political organizations are elected on a secret ballot. The irony of this whole thing is that, as I stated in my comments, not only are RCMP officers charged with protecting us domestically and protecting Canadian interests around the world, but they often go into new democratic countries and are there to ensure that the democratic process is adhered to. I think that is sometimes forgotten around here. Many times, RCMP officers will go to new democracies in Africa and in Europe and will actually be there to ensure that individuals' right to a secret ballot, free of intimidation, free of coercion, free of influence is ensured in those democracies. The irony I find in this whole process is the fact that RCMP officers are not being given the very right that they go and protect in faraway lands. That to me is a complete irony.

Why is it that the Liberal government would ensure we are seeing not just a continuation of Bill C-4 in Bill C-7 with respect to the secret ballot? That is up to speculation, but if one were to be a good speculator, it could be nothing more than just political payback to the promises that were made to the union leadership with respect to the last election, which was that there were going to be secret ballots.

Having been a union president myself, I have first-hand experience and I can say that there is some element of intimidation, especially, as I said earlier, with young police officers or young firefighters. They sometimes do not know what they do not know. When they get into a situation where they are voting or are in a process of unionization, it can be intimidating for young firefighters. In my involvement in the firefighter movement, at one point I was intimidated by the process of which I was not really aware. The fundamental right of the secret ballot is something that is Canadian. It is not just something that belongs in this legislation for RCMP officers, but it is something that is fundamentally rooted in Canada.

There are several aspects of this legislation that we are supporting but one that we cannot support, based on a fundamental principle of having a secret ballot. The fact that it is not in this legislation is something that I cannot support. I support 100% our RCMP officers, the men and women who protect our country and Canadian interests abroad, but this legislation in some ways is flawed, and I cannot support it.

● (1545)

Mr. Kyle Peterson (Newmarket—Aurora, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague opposite for his remarks, and I do appreciate his party's support for the components of the bill that he said he is supporting. I also want to thank him for his dedicated public service over the last three decades. We do appreciate that, as Canadians.

I want to be clear if he and his party understand what they are opposing. There seems to be some confusion about what impact and what effect the secret ballot component of the legislation would have. I want to make sure he is abundantly clear on what he opposes.

My understanding is that the secret ballot is not like one that would be used in an election, but these are members of unions who may or may not opt to be in the union. I wonder if he could clarify what he actually opposes. If they understood it better, maybe they would support the bill in its entirety.

Mr. John Brassard: Madam Speaker, I completely understand with respect to union certification. There are other aspects with respect to secret ballots that do happen within unions, but one of the fundamental things that is important for members opposite to understand is that, by virtue of paying their union dues, they are members of a union and have a right and duty to fair representation. As the president of a union, I can speak to that. The fact is that no one should be intimidated, coerced, or influenced in any way as to whether or not they will decide to join a union. Every other aspect that follows is different from this.

● (1550)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is odd, I hear my Conservative colleagues making speeches and I get the impression that they are not talking about Bill C-7 so much as the former Bill C-525, which forced a secret ballot for union certification processes.

The NDP believes that the ability to form a union is a fundamental right and that RCMP officers deserve to have the same rights as the members of the other unionized police forces in Canada.

I would like my Conservative colleague to say a few words about that. Why does he think that RCMP officers should not have the same rights as members of other police forces in Canada?

[*English*]

Mr. John Brassard: Madam Speaker, I do not think anyone on this side of the aisle is actually arguing about the RCMP's fundamental right to unionize. We are clearly arguing for the right for each individual member of the RCMP, as we would fight—as I would fight, as I did fight in Bill C-25—for the individual right of a member to have a secret ballot for union certification.

I would suggest to the hon. member, as I suggested earlier to the House, that it is a fundamental tenet of democracy to have secret ballots. When we go to the polls, we do not raise our hands when we vote. We walk behind a screen and cast our ballot in secret. Given the fact that it is that fundamental tenet of democracy, I would say that on the basis of union certification the same should hold true.

Mr. Marco Mendicino (Eglinton—Lawrence, Lib.): Madam Speaker, before I begin, I should say that I will be sharing my time with my hon. colleague from Oakville North—Burlington.

I am very pleased to rise today and speak in support of Bill C-7, which is an important piece of government legislation intended to recognize and give life to the constitutionally guaranteed freedom of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police members and reservists to engage in meaningful collective bargaining.

I want to take a moment to reiterate some of the comments made by hon. colleagues with respect to the RCMP. It is a world-class police service. In some respects it is very unique. It is the only police service in the country that provides protection and law enforcement at the municipal level, at the provincial level, and at the federal level, as well as internationally. It provides important services and protection for our communities and our country with respect to national security and terrorism. It provides protection with respect to monetary enforcement and fraud. It provides day-to-day protection for many of the local communities, including first nations and indigenous communities, right across the country.

As a former federal prosecutor and having played an important role in law enforcement, I know that I speak on behalf of my constituents, and hopefully on behalf of all members in the House, when I thank them for the service and sacrifice they are prepared to make every day.

Bill C-7 represents a watershed moment in the history of the RCMP. As I mentioned before, I was the president of an association representing the working interests of federal prosecutors and Department of Justice lawyers. I know first-hand how important the collective bargaining process is to provide employees with meaningful input in pursuit of their collective goals.

The purpose of Bill C-7 is to accomplish exactly that fundamental objective. From the point of first principles, it will do so in the following two ways. First and most fundamentally, it will provide RCMP members and reservists with the freedom to choose whether they wish to be represented by a bargaining agent. Of course, historically, all RCMP members were statute-barred from engaging in collective bargaining. However, the bill would remove that statutory prohibition, thereby giving members the opportunity to organize and associate under the auspices of a bargaining agent.

Second, assuming RCMP members and reservists choose to avail themselves of the opportunity to organize, Bill C-7 will also afford them with the ability to choose which bargaining agent will represent them. Once certified by the federal Public Service Labour Relations and Employment Board, this bargaining agent will have the capacity to collectively pursue workplace objectives.

As RCMP members and reservists embark on these two key decisions, I want to underline that Bill C-7 will ensure that they are able to make their choice freely and voluntarily, and in a manner that is independent of management.

Consistent with these two principles, our proposed legislation will also provide for a single, national RCMP bargaining unit composed solely of RCMP members appointed to a rank, and reservists; require that the RCMP bargaining agent have as its primary mandate the representation of RCMP members; and statutorily exclude certain officers, as well as other managerial and confidential positions, from representation, as is the case across the federal public service.

As I alluded to, the Public Service Labour Relations and Employment Board would be designated as the administrative tribunal for matters related to RCMP member and reservist collective bargaining, as well as for grievances related to a collective agreement. In making recommendations for an appointment to that board, the chairperson of the board must take into account the need to have two members with knowledge of police organizations. Both the board and the Public Service Labour Relations Act would be renamed to reflect the addition of RCMP members and reservists to collective bargaining and to that inherent jurisdiction.

Finally, the bill before us today would establish independent binding arbitration as the dispute resolution process for bargaining impasses, with no right to strike.

These are some of the highlights of what Bill C-7 sets out to accomplish. By no means is my summary exhaustive, and indeed there are many other detailed amendments that will have to be enacted in order to create this new regime in which RCMP members and reservists will be permitted to collectively bargain.

Let me say a few words about the broader historical context in which Bill C-7 has come to be presented in the House.

● (1555)

The proposed act is, in effect, a legislative response to a decision by the Supreme Court of Canada issued more than a year ago in January 2015. In that year, at that time, the Supreme Court of Canada released a case called Mounted Police Association of Ontario v. Canada (Attorney General). The court made a number of key findings flowing from that decision.

Among other things, the court struck down the exclusion of RCMP members from the definition of "employee" in the Public Service Labour Relations Act as unconstitutional.

In addition, the court held that sections of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police regulations infringed on the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Those regulations established the staff relations representative program as the labour relations regime for RCMP members. The aim of the program was that, at each level of hierarchy, staff relations representatives and management consulted on human resources initiatives and policies, with the understanding that the final word always rested with management.

The Supreme Court of Canada found that the staff relations representative program did not meet the criteria necessary for meaningful collective bargaining. RCMP members were represented by an organization they did not choose and did not control. They had to work within a structure that lacked independence from management. That process failed to achieve the balance between employees and the employer that is essential to a meaningful collective bargaining structure. Accordingly, the court held that this violated the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and in particular the right to freedom of association guaranteed under section 2(d).

The court suspended its judgment for one year to give the government time to consider its options. The government sought an extension and was given an additional four months to introduce legislation in the House of Commons that would provide a new labour relations framework for RCMP members and reservists. The government took steps, including consultations with RCMP members in the summer of 2015, to bring this framework into compliance with the Supreme Court of Canada's ruling.

I pause here to note that the consultation process was robust. Town hall meetings, teleconferences, and video conferences were conducted right across the country. A survey was also conducted, with thousands of members having participated and over 600 pages of comments received and reviewed. I believe that the input provided has been reflected in the drafting of the bill.

Bill C-7 passed second reading, as members know, and was given due consideration by the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security. The government has the utmost respect for the parliamentary process and for the role of committees in our system of government.

I am happy to say that changes, which were recommended in light of witness testimony and written submissions, were both discussed and approved by the committee. I would hasten to add that while the bill does include exclusions with respect to collective bargaining, those proposed exclusions are very much consistent with the rest of the public service where collective bargaining is permitted.

I also wish to point out that, aside from collective bargaining, there are other avenues that RCMP members and the bargaining agent can access to pursue their workplace goals. For instance, the labour-management committee is a forum where employee representatives and management can discuss issues collaboratively around the process for conduct and harassment. Those issues can be discussed and strengthened in that forum. Safety concerns with uniforms that are worn by members of the RCMP can also be discussed in the occupational health and safety committee. There they can study the issue and make evidence-based recommendations.

I also feel it imperative to emphasize that Bill C-7 permits collective bargaining on issues that are related to more than just pay and benefits. Leave and conditions of work, for example, can be collectively bargained, as well as matters that pertain to the National Joint Council directives on workforce adjustments.

As members can see, the purpose of Bill C-7 is to usher in a new labour relations regime for the RCMP. However, I would be remiss if I did not point out that the suspension of the Supreme Court of Canada's decision has now expired. As a result, this issue is of even more urgent importance.

Delaying the passage of this new legislation raises numerous problems. For one, there is currently an overlap between the RCMP Act and the Public Service Labour Relations Act in grievance processes, which could result in confusion and conflicting interpretations. In addition, RCMP members could be represented by multiple bargaining agents, making it difficult for the RCMP to maintain a coherent, national approach to labour relations.

Passing the legislation would avoid confusion and uncertainty among RCMP members. We owe this to the men and women of the RCMP, as has been expressed before the House, who protect Canadians on so many fronts.

● (1600)

The bill before us today gives the RCMP members and reservists the respect they are due and I know that all hon. members are committed to supporting the dedicated and proud members of Canada's national police service. That is why I encourage all members to vote in favour of the bill.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

Could my colleague elaborate on something that was raised by those who analyzed the bill? This was alluded to earlier in this debate on Bill C-7. As a result of the exclusions in the bill, some things cannot be brought to the bargaining table with the employer.

Can my colleague tell the members of the House why RCMP employees would not have the right to negotiate certain things, as they will be excluded from the negotiations, while other police forces across Canada have the right to negotiate similar items during negotiations with their employers?

[*English*]

Mr. Marco Mendicino: Madam Speaker, I do agree that there are a number of things that the bill would propose to exclude from the realm of collective bargaining. As I said during the course of my remarks in favour of it, the exclusions that are proposed are very much consistent with those that apply to all of the other collective bargaining agents across the federal public service.

With respect to the RCMP, I also want to take a moment to emphasize that there are many central issues that relate to workplace collective goals that they will be permitted to bargain over. That includes things like pay, benefits, and leave. These are matters that are of vital interest to the RCMP membership. They have expressed a very strong desire to be able to negotiate on these issues and Bill C-7 will allow them to do just that.

Mr. Jim Eglinski (Yellowhead, CPC): Madam Speaker, the hon. member talked about the independence of the members in this process, yet without the ability to have a secret vote, how does he guarantee their independence when he talks about the hundreds of thousands of detachments across this country where the rank and file work together on a daily basis? How do members vote when their sergeant is voting one way and they are going the other way and working relationships are not going to be great after that?

● (1605)

Mr. Marco Mendicino: Madam Speaker, the short answer is that we on the government side do not start with the assumption that there will be any duress or coercion. Rather we start with the assumption that employees and the RCMP membership will work collaboratively with their supervisors and upper management to achieve collective workplace goals.

The notion that a secret ballot is the only way in which free, fair, and full collective bargaining can take place is refuted by the example that is applied right across the federal public service. There are many other bargaining agents, both in the public service as well as beyond in the private sphere, where members stand and are counted in an open and transparent way. That is also consistent with what Bill C-7 proposes to enshrine.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would ask the member to reflect why we have the legislation before us today and to recognize how important it is that the legislation passes in a timely fashion. It is because of the Supreme Court, but it is also the right thing to do given the importance of the contributions our RCMP has made and the fact that other law enforcement agencies already have unions.

Mr. Marco Mendicino: Madam Speaker, as I said in my remarks, I can speak with some first-hand knowledge about the importance of those members of the federal public service who have fought long and hard to achieve important workplace goals. These are not just goals that are an end unto themselves; they are goals that assist in the protection of our communities and the law enforcement of the land. These are completely legitimate goals and those that are consistent with their fundamental rights under the charter. Bill C-7 is all about ensuring that the RCMP members and reservists are able to avail themselves of their section 2(d) rights under the charter.

Ms. Pam Damoff (Oakville North—Burlington, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise today in support of Bill C-7. The bill before us today would uphold the constitutionally guaranteed freedom of RCMP members and reservists to engage in meaningful collective bargaining.

Collective bargaining is a right that other police officers in Canada have enjoyed for many years, but it is a right that has not been given to the members and reservists of the RCMP, individuals who over the past 143 years have contributed so much to our proud, strong, and free nation.

As the Minister of Public Safety said when he appeared before the public safety committee, RCMP members are dedicated to their work and to serving Canadians and they must perform their jobs while often facing immense challenges and very real dangers. He stressed that it is important that our government support the work of our RCMP members and take all proper steps to ensure they can exercise their charter protected freedoms, including freedom of association. In fact, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police regulations imposed on members a specific form of employee representation called the staff relations representative program. This program was found to be unconstitutional as it was not independent of management and RCMP members could not choose the employee association that represented them. Moreover, staff relations representatives were limited to giving advice. Management still had the final decision.

Bill C-7 is a clear and reasoned response to the Supreme Court of Canada's decision in the case of Mounted Police Association of Ontario v. Attorney General of Canada. The Supreme Court found key parts of the current RCMP labour relations regime unconstitutional. In particular, the court struck down the exclusion of RCMP members from the definition of "employee" in the Public Services Labour Relations Act. The court also held that a section of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police regulations infringed on the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. However, the court affirmed that section 2*(d)* of the charter "...protects a meaningful process of collective bargaining that provides employees with a degree of choice and independence sufficient to enable them to determine and pursue their collective interests".

In the case of the RCMP, the court determined that the staff relations representative program did not meet the criteria necessary for meaningful collective bargaining. Therefore, the court held that this violated the charter right to freedom of association.

Bill C-7 would provide RCMP members and reservists their independence and freedom of choice in labour relations matters while recognizing the unique operational reality of policing.

The bill in question is a product of careful consideration of the results of consultations with key stakeholders. The first was with regular members of the RCMP through online and in-person consultations. The second was with the provinces, territories, and municipalities that have policing agreements with the RCMP.

Bill C-7 has a number of important features. First, it provides for independent binding arbitration as the dispute resolution process for bargaining impasses. Consistent with other police forces across the country, the members of the RCMP bargaining unit would not be permitted to strike. This was the strong preference of those members who participated in the 2015 consultation. The bill would provide for a single, national bargaining unit composed solely of RCMP members appointed to a rank and reservists. Also, the RCMP bargaining agent, should one be certified, would have as its primary mandate the representation of RCMP members. Again, regular members showed clear support for these provisions. The bill also excludes officers appointed to the ranks of inspector and above from representation in the union. Finally, the Public Service Labour Relations and Employment Board would be designated as the administrative tribunal for matters related to RCMP member and reservist collective bargaining, as well as for grievances related to a collective agreement.

The board, and the Public Service Labour Relations Act, would also be renamed to reflect the addition of RCMP member and reservist collective bargaining to its jurisdiction. In making recommendations for appointment to that board, the chairperson would take into account the need to have two members with knowledge of police organizations.

Bill C-7 was introduced on March 9. After second reading, the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security carefully studied the legislation.

● (1610)

The committee heard from numerous witnesses, both labour and management, and had a fulsome debate on the legislation. These witnesses spoke about the opportunity this legislation would provide to create improved working conditions and the importance that RCMP members placed on representation. As a result of their testimony, the committee amended the legislation to remove clauses 40 and 42, which dealt with health coverage for members.

There were concerns expressed about these clauses by almost every witness who testified. I am proud to be part of the committee that listened and, as a result, improved the legislation before us today.

I share the concerns expressed by some witnesses about harassment in the RCMP. The mandate letter of the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness states that he will take action to ensure that the RCMP and all other parts of his portfolio are workplaces free from harassment and sexual violence. Through conversations with the minister and his staff, I know that the minister has made it a priority to address harassment in the RCMP.

One of his first acts last February was to ask the chairman of the Civilian Review and Complaints Commission to evaluate how the force has responded to his 2013 recommendations. Since concurrence at report stage, the extension given to the government by the Supreme Court of Canada to put in place a new labour relations regime for the RCMP has expired. Given this, the delay in passing Bill C-7 could have numerous adverse effects. As it now stands, there is currently an overlap between the RCMP Act and the Public Service Relations Act regarding grievance procedures, which could result in confusion and conflicting interpretations.

The longer the delay, the greater the uncertainty among RCMP members regarding proposed labour relations and how it could apply to them. This is why we must show our support for the dedicated and proud members of Canada's national police service. It is incumbent upon us to give RCMP members and reservists the respect they are due by passing this legislation, so I invite all of my hon. colleagues to join me in supporting this bill.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I congratulate the member on her speech. I understand she had a constituency office opening last week, so I will congratulate her on that as well. I hear from my in-laws that it was well attended.

With respect to her speech, I want to ask about the issue of the secret ballot. It is one the official opposition has raised a number of times. Government members have told us that a secret ballot is still possible, but it is not guaranteed. It could happen, but it would not have to happen. Conservatives do not think it is good enough that members might have the opportunity to express themselves in the most democratic way, but there is no guarantee.

I wonder if the member could tell us why she thinks that members of the RCMP should not have the assurance of knowing that they will actually be able to use the most democratic way possible, a secret ballot, when they consider certification.

● (1615)

Ms. Pam Damoff: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague across the floor for congratulating me on my office opening. I am also proud to represent his in-laws in the House of Commons.

With regard to the secret ballot, there have been a great deal of questions about that. We feel it is very important that the RCMP has the same bargaining provisions as the remainder of the public service. In fact, we feel it is very important that they fall under the same legislation, which would be Bill C-4. It is a consistent approach for the federal public service and we feel the RCMP deserves to have the same certification and decertification processes that are available to other public servants included in Bill C-4. In addition, some of the provisions can be debated when we deal with Bill C-4, but we feel that they need to be part of the same certification process.

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Madam Speaker, I have a question about what the member just said. She said she thought the RCMP should fall under the same regulations as other public servants and yet that is not what Bill C-7 would do. It would take away fundamental issues from bargaining that in any other workplace would be bargainable, things like harassment in the workplace, staffing and deployment issues. Bill C-7 would actually take those away from RCMP members.

Really, from my point of view, everyone would be better off if this bill did not pass because then the Supreme Court decision would place the RCMP under the same regulations as all other public servants.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Madam Speaker, one of the things that has become very clear as we have talked about the RCMP is how unique it is.

We certainly heard that during our committee hearings, and there is not a one size fits all for the RCMP. It is a unique police service that serves a unique function across the country. I do not think we can treat every aspect of the RCMP in the same way that we treat the public service.

The members of the RCMP are deserving of this legislation. There is no doubt that they deserve to be able to form a union. We feel strongly that they should be subject to Bill C-7 and that this bill should pass quickly.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I wonder if my colleague could comment on the principle of unionization. The Supreme Court of Canada has recognized that our RCMP members should have the ability to organize for collective bargaining, and we see that as a positive thing. Many police agencies across Canada already have that right, which we would give members of the RCMP in this legislation.

In principle, what we are talking about today is allowing the members of the RCMP to unionize. Can the member reflect on that principle of what we are actually doing, and then provide comment as to why she believes it is important that they have that right?

Ms. Pam Damoff: Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for the question, and he probably put as well as I could the importance of members of the RCMP being allowed to form a union. Certainly where I come from, the members of the Halton Regional Police Service have had an association for many years. It is important for members in the RCMP to be able to have those bargaining rights that they would be afforded within a union.

Mr. Jim Eglinski (Yellowhead, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan.

I am pleased to rise today to speak to the third reading of Bill C-7, an act to amend the Public Service Labour Relations Act, the Public Service Labour Relations and Employment Board Act and other Acts and to provide for certain other measures.

Before I begin, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all RCMP members, both past and present, for their service and putting public safety before their own safety every day.

I had the opportunity to speak to the bill when it was at second reading. In my speech I stated that we supported Bill C-7 going to committee, where we would ask the government to amend its legislation to explicitly allow RCMP members the right to vote on whether to unionize through a secret ballot.

I respect the Supreme Court decision that RCMP officers are entitled to bargain collectively. The purpose of Bill C-7 is to satisfy this ruling and ensure the RCMP has the framework in place to bargain collectively if its members so wish.

If we look to the court's decision, we will see that employees' choice was the cornerstone. It is my opinion that a secret ballot is the most appropriate method of ensuring members have that choice free of intimidation and negative ramifications. A lot of young and new members may feel unsure about how they are supposed to vote when they are working in a ranked structure. Their management in the field detachments is older than they are and will have an understanding that is different from theirs.

Many members across the force want to see change. Speaking from personal experience as a former RCMP member for 35 years, people tend, especially in police roles, to be very private about individual concerns due to the chain of command structure in the police environment.

However, with a secret ballot, members would have the ability to vote honestly on whether they wished to unionize without fear of ramifications. That is why I believe it is very important that members feel secure in their decision that the choice should be something members are able to reflect on in private.

I will not be splitting my time after all, Madam Speaker. The member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan has a lot to say. I will take the full 20 minutes and leave him 20 minutes on his own. I apologize.

As promised during the second reading of the bill, our Conservative Party requested in committee that C-7 be amended to require secret ballot certification. I was very disappointed that the government was unwilling to make this essential change. While I support the intent of the legislation to allow the RCMP to collectively bargain, I cannot support the bill as it is currently written. In the certification process for a bargaining agent, a secret ballot should be in place to allow all members to freely express their own opinions.

The Supreme Court judgment was silent on the method of choice in that it did not clarify whether the certification process should be by 50% plus one majority or by secret ballot, and that is too bad.

It has been argued by other members that the principle of a card check should be upheld as a sufficient and appropriate method for the RCMP, because that is how workers in the private sector and other federally regulated groups will decide on collective bargaining once Bill C-4, an act to amend the Canada Labour Code, the Parliamentary Employment and Staff Relations Act, the Public Service Labour Relations Act and the Income Tax Act passes its final reading.

● (1620)

We do not use a show of hands or a public petition in our democratic elections, nor should we in the workplace, especially in this set of circumstances.

The right to peaceful association is granted to workers through the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, but the unmitigated right union leaders feel they have to represent a particular workplace is not protected by the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. This leadership is something that must be earned from the membership. Union leaders need to remember that representation is contingent upon workers placing their trust in the particular union of their choice through a democratic selection process. If union membership can elect its national president or any of its executives, directors, or leadership by way of a secret ballot, then in all fairness the workers should be afforded the very same right to have a secret ballot during the union certification process.

The right to be able to vote one's will free of intimidation or threat is a fundamental freedom and a right that should be extended to all workers. That is why when we were government we passed Bill C-525, the employees voting rights act, which required that certification of bargaining agents under the Public Service Labour Relations Act be achieved by a secret ballot vote based on the majority.

As noted earlier, Bill C-4 would reverse the procedures for the certification of bargaining agents that existed before Bill C-525; that is back to card check.

It has been argued that the RCMP, a public service, should not be treated any differently from other groups of workers. If it is good enough for every other federally regulated group to certify under a card check system, then it should be good enough for RCMP members.

I would like to remind my colleagues that the requirement to unionize was a consequence of a Supreme Court of Canada ruling. It was not a consequence of the majority of RCMP members wanting this type of method to govern the way they protected themselves.

Following the court ruling, the government launched a consultation process that took place over the summer of 2015. It consisted of a survey, town halls and video conferences. With over 9,000 members completing the survey, there was a clear expression that they would like a regime designed specifically for the RCMP. They did not want to be lumped in with other civil servants.

The government needs to realize that the RCMP is a police force with a unique role and a unique chain of command structure. It is clearly different from other federally regulated groups and therefore should be, in my view, treated differently. The RCMP should have the ability to decide whether to unionize through the most appropriate method for it, not for another group. Members deserve a secret ballot.

Recognition of this should have been taken by the government in order to realize the RCMP was not like other federal departments. However, the Liberals have refused to amend Bill C-7 to allow RCMP members the right to vote on whether to unionize through a secret ballot. Therefore, I cannot support the bill.

I am extremely proud of the RCMP and its members, and to have served in that organization myself. Its members risk their lives every day and should hold great pride in serving Canada's police force. The least we can do is give them the right to vote, free of all intimidation, on whether to unionize.

● (1625)

Earlier today there was talk about the staff relations program, which was brought in in the early 1970s. Unlike some of the comments that were made with respect to it, it was a program wherein the representatives were voted in by the members. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, it negotiated in good faith with the management of the RCMP and Treasury Board, and it provided strong representation to the members. We remained in the top three police forces per pay and benefits for many years under that program.

Somewhere throughout the1990s and 2000s, when things got tight in all governments, the system declined and the pay and benefits of the members of the RCMP declined with the cuts made by the Liberal government and by the Conservative government afterward.

The unionization of the RCMP is profoundly different than any other union that has ever been formed in our country. It is a legislated requirement. I do not believe any member in the House could stand before me and tell me of any other union in Canada that was formed by a legislated order and members told that they had to vote but not it could not be a secret vote. Right off the bat that is intimidation by the government down to the people in the field.

Yes, there are groups in the RCMP across Canada that want to see a union. Other members do not want to see a union. However, the one thing they all will agree on is that they are at the bottom of the police totem pole when it comes to salaries and benefits.

I mentioned earlier that in the 1970s, 1980s, and even into the early 1990s, we were always part of the top 10 police forces. In fact, we did not even recognize the police forces that ranked 11 down to 50-something. We only looked at the top 10. Staff relations negotiated to keep us in the top, and it kept us in the top three for many years.

However, today the RCMP is ranked 56th. It is a sad situation for Canada's national police force to be number 56 on the totem pole of police forces. It should be in at least the top 10, and it should be in the top 3. It is Canada's police force. It is Canada's international police force. It is internationally recognized as one of the best police forces in the world. Yet we are only paying its members at the bottom of the scale.

It was mentioned earlier that a survey was done in 2015 to determine how the members of the RCMP felt about unionizing, or to determine if there were concerns with respect to people representing them in some type of bargaining. Approximately 9,000 members said that they needed a better system. That is only roughly one-third of the membership.

Clearly, from speaking to the members of the RCMP who are stationed in my community, many are uncomfortable about the fact that the RCMP may become unionized. They are proud to serve their country. A lot of them joined the RCMP for one specific reason: not to be in a unionized organization. They wanted the freedom to serve and not be controlled by an internal organization. Now they will have to vote in that regard.

● (1630)

I just want to state an opinion here, which is this. If they voted against it, would we be back here in another year and a half when another group challenges it through the Supreme Court?

I want to talk a bit about the discomfort of the members in the field. I am talking about western Canada specifically, eastern Canada, those members who are stationed in small detachments. I will give a brief example of what I mean by small detachments. It could be a detachment of two members, with a corporal in charge. It could be a detachment of six members, with a sergeant in charge. It could be a detachment of eight members, with a sergeant and then a corporal. That is how the rank structure works within the force. As the numbers go up, so does the number of NCOs in the detachment. A staff sergeant would command a detachment of 14 members with one sergeant. Once it gets up to 18 or 20 members, there are two sergeants and then there is a corporal.

However, the problem is that the members all work together to protect their communities, to protect the safety of the people within that community, and to protect each other's safety. They go out there, as mentioned earlier by other members, and they are the first ones at the scene. They are the first ones to go to the shootings, the violent assaults, the fatal accidents. They have to work hand in hand with each other. How can the Liberals expect a young constable in, for example, a staff-sergeant detachment with a staff sergeant, two sergeants and two corporals, to vote, when he has to vote in front of them on the way he thinks it should be, knowing they or the other constables that he works with may feel totally different from how he does? However, he has to stand up there and wave his little card and vote. Do they think he is not going to be intimidated? Members will be completely uncomfortable about voting on whether they should become unionized if they have to vote in front of their peers.

The thing that is very unique about the RCMP, and very similar to fire departments, is that the rank and file in the smaller detachments, going even to an inspector's detachment, which comes in at 50 people, or a superintendent's, which comes in at 100 members, work hand in hand. Those members deserve the right to decide whether they want to unionize, but they should also have the right to vote privately and secretly so that they do not put themselves in an awkward position with their peers, with their supervisors, and with their buddies with whom they work side by side, with whom one day, or even the next day, they may have to go back to back in a scuffle in a hotel. Sometimes it is hard. One member might be mad because a guy voted the other way and might not work as hard as she or he should.

It is a dangerous precedent that we are setting here. The RCMP, fire departments, and even police departments are unique. They are a proud lot of people who go out there to fight for their communities, to keep their communities safe, and to keep each other safe. However, their pride is individual. They are proud of serving an organization, but they want to make their important decisions on their own, and we would take that fundamental right away from them. We should not. We must look at that aspect of it.

I cannot support the bill, simply because we would not give the members of the RCMP the right to vote secretly on the decision of whether they want to unionize.

● (1635)

Mr. Bob Bratina (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am delighted to address this issue because my son was standing in front of the Parliament Buildings for the last couple of months as a new member of the RCMP. I congratulate the hon. member for his service.

I am wondering about the notion of RCMP members being intimidated because I know a little about the training program they went through and it seems to me that a troop working together emphasizes character above everything else. It would seem that in this conversation they would talk to each other in the period leading up to whatever decision they would make on organization and probably would not be surprised that superintendent A voted this way, or another voted another way.

I would ask the hon. member, based on his years serving, if those conversations would not take place and whether intimidation would be a factor for these young men and women who have gone through such a tremendous training regimen and graduated with the great character that they have. Would they be afraid to speak their minds, especially in the context that they would have been having these discussions all along? I wonder if my colleague would reply to that.

● (1640)

Mr. Jim Eglinski: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member's son for his service. I am not sure if I met him yet, but I will make a point of doing that. I try to meet most of them on the Hill, but there are a fair number of them here.

Intimidation is a big word but it can also be a small word. The member said it very well. When 32 members go through training as a troop, they learn to work together and work as a team. The aspect behind this is that when they get out in the field, they might be in a two-man detachment, 10-man detachment, or a 20-man detachment, but they work as a team, especially on a watch. They become very close and may have frank discussions whether they believe this is right or wrong, and they may not want to disappoint their buddy. That is intimidation. That is where the problems come in.

RCMP members may not want to disappoint the guy on the right or left that they are working with, so they may just vote because they want to be part of the group. That is not right. They should be free to vote the way their conscience tells them to without having to worry about what a constable, or a sergeant, or a corporal might think or feel. They should be able to do it comfortably on their own as they work to protect their communities because they are proud to serve.

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Madam Speaker, my question for the member is about what I would call blue herrings, instead of red herrings, and the idea that the Supreme Court required a union. The Supreme Court decision does not require a union. It gives the RCMP members a choice of how they wish to be represented. It simply removed the prohibition on their being in a union. I know he said this is the only case where people are required to have a union, but they are not required by this decision to have a union.

All other police in Canada have chosen freely to have unions, so it seems to me there is a bit of a non-issue here about intimidation to join a union, when police across the country in all the other jurisdictions have joined unions of their own free will.

The second part of that is the idea of a secret ballot. What people are deciding is whether to join an organization or not. No one is required to join a union, even if the union exists and the fact that someone has joined or not joined a union is public. Ultimately, in police unions someone will know what decision a member has made anyway. The idea that somehow the secret ballot that applies in elections applies when members are signing up to be a member of a union or not, it is a completely different issue. I would ask the member for his comments.

Mr. Jim Eglinski: Madam Speaker, I am not sure exactly what the member was referring to, but the only way I can answer that is to ask if the person asking the question could stand and tell me of any police force in Canada or any union that when first formed did it with an open public vote. Or did they do it in secret? I believe that is what we are dealing with here. I focused mainly on the right of individual RCMP members to vote by secret ballot for the initial phase of deciding whether they want to unionize or not. I clearly understand that they have the right to have a union or not, but give them that right to decide with a secret ballot.

● (1645)

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for Yellowhead for his speech. I think all of us in the House, and all Canadians for that matter, should take note, given the fact that he has 35 years of experience with the RCMP and he knows what he speaks of. Until any of us have walked in those shoes, or those of any RCMP member across this country, I think we should be listening to the members.

In fact, what we saw through the committee process was that there were not enough members of the RCMP coming forward, for many reasons, to talk about what they wanted to talk about, and that is, at least from many of the emails that I am getting, the right to have a secret ballot.

The hon. member spoke to this specifically in another question, but I would like his view again, and perhaps he would like to add more with respect to younger members of emergency services, and I will not specifically direct it to the RCMP, and the influence that older members, those who are in positions of authority and rank, can have with respect to younger members through intimidation, and in some cases it could be coercion as well, to vote in a manner in which they did not intend for the purposes of pleasing somebody else. I wonder if the hon. member can speak to that a little bit more.

Mr. Jim Eglinski: Madam Speaker, I do not brag a lot about my service, but in my 35 years, I was one of the few members to get the opportunity to command five different detachments, from a two-man corporal detachment, to a sergeant, to a staff sergeant, to an inspector's detachment.

To answer the member's question, when a young constable comes to a detachment, especially a smaller detachment, he looks up to the guy in charge. He wants to impress the guy who is in charge, because the guy who is in charge is going to be rating his performance, his ability to interact with the community, and his future is going to stand on what this person says. Therefore, he wants to impress the commander, whether that be a corporal, sergeant, staff sergeant, inspector, or so on. He is probably going to follow the tone of the detachment commander or maybe his corporal if it is a watch commander or a sergeant watch commander. He is probably going to follow, and that is not quite right.

Yes, he should follow them, but he should have that liberty, especially when being asked to decide whether there should be a union within the RCMP, to make that decision in a secret ballot.

Mr. Kennedy Stewart (Burnaby South, NDP): Madam Speaker, I have been listening to the debate today. Drawing upon my colleague's years of experience, I wonder if he were in the position of a constable today, would he choose to unionize or not?

Mr. Jim Eglinski: Madam Speaker, that is a tough question.

I would say in the mid-1990s, and I left in 2001, things started deteriorating. The DSR program, as I call it, the division staff relations, was a great program initially, but government kind of destroyed it.

Initially, I would never have voted for a union, but if I were to put myself in the rank and file situation as I see it today, with the low level of pay they are getting, as well as the low level of compensation in isolated posts, and an isolated post in B.C. could have a $20,000 difference to that in Quebec, I would probably vote union.

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, Ethics; the hon. member for Sherbrooke, Ethics.

● (1650)

[*English*]

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a real pleasure for me to join this important debate on Bill C-7.

I appreciate hearing the thoughtful comments from all members in this House, especially the contribution of members like the member for Yellowhead who just spoke, who have significant experience themselves, or, in other cases, experience through their families with the RCMP. We are all very grateful for their service and for the context that members coming from different walks of life bring to this place.

For people elsewhere who may have just started watching this debate, I want to start my remarks by reviewing some of the basic groundwork in terms of what this bill does.

This legislation seeks to implement a Supreme Court decision that opened the door for the RCMP to form a union. We, in the official opposition, respect the decision of the Supreme Court and recognize that RCMP members are entitled to pursue membership in a union.

We think there are many aspects of Bill C-7 that are positive. In general, it is a reasonable response to the court ruling.

However, on this side of the House, we have consistently taken a very clear position on the importance of a secret ballot. I will talk more about why a secret ballot is important in this specific context and in general. However, that is the principal stumbling block on this legislation for those of us in the official opposition.

We think there are a lot of good things about this legislation, but it is not acceptable to us that a mechanism would be created for joining a union, for electing officials, for anything of that nature, that does not involve a proper democratic process.

Also, by way of context, it is important that the public knows that wage disputes will still be resolved through binding arbitration. This does not open the door to police officers being on strike or anything like that. That is an important element of context as we approach this legislation and the discussion around it.

As we are talking about the RCMP, I want to acknowledge the important work that RCMP officers do across this country, especially in my riding of Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan. We do not have municipal police forces in my constituency. We are fully served by the women and men in the RCMP, and the great work that they do.

The RCMP is an icon. It is one of those recognizable Canadian icons around the world. At the local level, I have personally seen the great work that the RCMP does with the community. That is not just front-end policing, but also engaging in a constructive way with members of the community and with community organizations on issues like education, crime prevention, and those kinds of things.

I am very grateful for the contribution of the RCMP in my constituency and across the country, as well as here on Parliament Hill. We are supported in our work and our functions here by the security that members of the RCMP provide.

I talked earlier about the importance of the secret ballot for us. It is surprising that the government does not get it. I have said before that I would have thought that the debate on the secret ballot was concluded in the 19th century. To coin a phrase, it is 2016. It is strange that there still is no recognition by the government and by other parties of the importance of the secret ballot.

I will say that it is not only this bill but the process that brings this bill forward that marks a double attack against democracy. We not only have an attack on the principle of the secret ballot, but we also have the government not respecting the prerogative of members who wish to speak to the bill by moving forward with their overly aggressive approach to time allocation.

I do think there are appropriate uses of time allocation, of course. These are cases where maybe opposition parties are engaging in deleterious tactics. The government does, in certain contexts, have to move legislation forward. However, in a fairly short time, we have seen the government ramping up the scales on the use of time allocation or closure. This bill is no exception, in spite of the goodwill from the opposition and the effort to work constructively on allocation of time around these things.

● (1655)

We have had this on the euthanasia and assisted suicide bill, and on the budget bill. With regard to this legislation, which is under the gun of time allocation, what the government is doing here is perhaps not as egregious as we have seen in some other cases. I have mentioned. Bill C-14 as one of the most difficult and challenging issues that Parliament has dealt with in a very long time. However, there is still a failure to recognize the importance of the secret ballot and the prerogative of members wanting to speak to and have a fulsome debate on legislation like this. It is a concerning pattern that we see of the government not respecting the principles that should be very important to a well-functioning democratic polity.

That puts this in some important context. On the substantive side, as we talk about the issue of the secret ballot, I want to start by talking about responses to some of the different kinds of arguments we have heard today in this debate, and some of the specific issues around the secret ballot in the context of the RCMP. After that, I will talk about some of the underlying foundational and motivating arguments about the secret ballot and why secret ballots are important. Again, I do not think these are arguments that should have to be made, but clearly they need to be made.

In the context of this specific bill and the RCMP, I want to talk specifically about secret ballots in the context of government certification. We can look at the workplace in some sense as a sort of negotiation, maybe a competition, between workers and their employers. There are certain tools that workers have, and there are certain tools that employers have. It is worth acknowledging that in that sort of imagined competition, public sector workers have an additional advantage. They can bring public pressure to bear on the government to try to bring about concessions in the process of collective bargaining or other forms of negotiation over wages. This is a strategic advantage in that competition or relationship that does not exist in the private sector.

A group of private sector employees cannot organize to vote out their employer, but that is something that public sector employees can do. Therefore, there are additional tools that are available to the public sector. That needs to be recognized and acknowledged as we talk about these dynamics. That helps us to understand the history of why there are higher levels of unionization in the public sector, and also why every certification vote in the public sector has happened via secret ballot, which has led to these higher rates of unionization. There is this strategic advantage.

To the extent that members may raise concerns about employer intimidation preventing certification, it would have to be acknowledged that it is much less plausible in the context of the public sector, again because of these strategic dynamics. Taking that into consideration, it is difficult to justify not allowing a secret ballot in this specific context. The worries that might exist around this in other sectors could be plausibly applied in the case of the public sector.

One of the other strands we have heard in this debate is members saying that a secret ballot could still happen, that, after all, the legislation does not effectively prohibit the use of a secret ballot but simply leaves that determination to a subsequent discussion and evaluation. That is true. There is nothing in this legislation that prohibits the use of a secret ballot. It is possible that a secret ballot could be used or not, but I do not think it is good enough. If one believes that a secret ballot is important, and I think members would acknowledge in many cases how critical a secret ballot is, I do not think it is sufficient to say that there might be a secret ballot.

If I told my constituents that in the next election some ridings in Canada will have secret ballots if we determine they need them and other ridings will not have secret ballots if we determine they do not need them, I do not think my constituents would be particularly satisfied with that. They would say that if a secret ballot is the most fair, honest, reasonable, and democratic way of conducting an election, then why should that not be available to everyone? Why should it not be a guarantee instead of just a possibility? I do not think the argument that there might be a secret ballot holds much water.

● (1700)

We have had some discussion in this debate about the extent to which the RCMP is like the rest of the public service and the extent to which the RCMP is different. It was interesting. I listened to the speech of my friend from Oakville North—Burlington. In the context of questions and comments, she effectively gave very different answers to that question, first in response to my question, and then in response to a question from the member for Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke. She said on the one hand that we need to have the same process as other public sector individuals, and then she said the RCMP is different. Which is it? This would be our take on that.

Certainly there are important differences between the RCMP and other organizations within the public service. That is why it was important to have some of the variations, some of the exclusions, which were put in this legislation. I think at least our party and the government acknowledged the importance of those exclusions, and our members worked very hard at the committee to refine and deepen those exclusions.

However, the secret ballot is important for everyone. We would advocate a secret ballot in all cases, as we have done on a variety of different measures. The principle of a secret ballot for choosing representatives, for choosing which bargaining unit, or if an individual would like to associate with a particular bargaining unit, is so important that it should not be left to chance. It should not be maybe sometimes and maybe not elsewhere. That is why we have advocated for this consistently across the board.

As well, it is particularly important to have a secret ballot in the case of the RCMP. These are, after all, the women and men on the front lines who are defending us, protecting the physical security of our democracy. We call on the RCMP to ensure the safety and stability of the democratic process and of our lives within this country. For us to then deny the RCMP the same rights that others have in other contexts when they elect people, to deny them the right to the secret ballot in this case, would seem particularly perverse, to me at least. At the same time that they are protecting our fundamental democratic rights, that we would deny those rights to them as members of the RCMP—notwithstanding that we think the secret ballot should be available to all—in that particular situation is quite perverse.

The discussion has also been around the alternative to the secret ballot and how that would look in practice in the RCMP. Some members favour a card-check system. For those who do not know, a card-check system basically involves some members who are seeking a certification asking other members of a potential bargaining unit who want to certify to then sign and check on a card that they would like to sign up. If a certain threshold is achieved in terms of these sign-ups, then there is no subsequent process of deliberation or election; the certification simply then occurs after that card-check system has been evaluated. It occurs automatically.

There are a lot of obvious problems with that. This is a form of public ballot. It does not respect the privacy of the individuals who are being asked to sign. However, a card-check system, as has been pointed out, is particularly inappropriate in the context of the RCMP. We have a very hierarchical structure in which people have to rely on each other all the time.

Members of the RCMP may wish to discuss their political conviction in the context of that environment. They may feel comfortable doing so, and they may feel that their ability to work with their colleagues is not compromised by that. However, that should be their choice. The effect of having a card-check system for certification in this context would be that members might be forced to declare their union convictions through other members. This could have a negative effect, in certain cases, on the collegiality that is so important for the functioning of our national police force.

● (1705)

Therefore, why not simply ensure that members have the privacy they deserve? Why not ensure we have a guarantee of a secret ballot?

My friend from Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke said something interesting. He said that the proposal for a secret ballot does not need to apply in this case because we are not talking about a public vote. He said that in a sense individuals could choose whether or not they want to join the organization and therefore there is no need for a secret ballot, if I understood what he was saying correctly.

Of course, it just needs to be said that we are talking about what would be a closed shop union. If the RCMP chose to certify, all members of the RCMP, even if they were individually not interested in being part of the union, would have to at least pay dues to the union. This is the process that exists. This is not analogous to simply whether or not an individual chooses to sign up with the local Rotary Club, or Elks, or something like that. This is a question of a whole professional group being brought into a union, potentially against the preferences of some of those members. This is more analogous to a general election in which we would respect and widely recognize the importance of a secret ballot.

Another comment that some members have made during this debate is that secret ballots reduce the rate of unionization. Frankly, that tips their hand a bit because the goal should not be to ensure the maximum level of unionization. The goal should be to ensure a fair process whereby workers can decide if they want to be part of a union. Of course, one could design a system, maybe a card check or something else, that would maximize the rates of certification, but if that happens at the expense of a fair and democratic process in which workers can actually express themselves, then that is not the best direction to go. The goal should be a fair process, and then we would let those who are involved in a fair process decide. A fair process in a democracy will produce the best outcome according to democratic principles, but if we do not have a fair process just because we want a particular outcome, that being higher rates of unionization, that is obviously hardly fair.

That deals with some of the strands in the debate today. I want to just mention what I see as the foundational motivating arguments for a secret ballot. Why do we generally accept that secret ballots are important? First, I think we all understand that people have a right to privacy with respect to their political opinions. Of course, people have the right to express their opinions on issues like certification and other issues, but they also have a right to not express their opinions, to not wish for their co-workers, their employees, even members of their family to know how they vote or how they feel about difficult political questions. This right to privacy really emanates from the idea of autonomy, the idea of self-ownership, that our political opinions are our own and therefore we have the right to decide if we wish to dispose of them in one particular way or another. This sense of the separation of the private space from the public space is foundational to our concept of liberal democracy. It is why we have a secret ballot.

Of course, the secret ballot ensures protection from reprisals. I talked before in the House on a previous bill about the history of secret ballots and how one time when we had public ballots people could be intimidated. They could face reprisals, or could lose employment as a result of how they voted in the then-public ballot. Thus we moved to a secret ballot.

Another reason we have secret ballots is protection against corruption. If we see how someone votes there is a greater risk of someone being offered an inducement. That cannot happen if there is a secret ballot.

Finally is the importance of a vote being preceded by deliberation. This is not possible in the context of a card check system, where someone might sign the card and then read an article or develop new information and think something different later on. One does not have the option of changing one's mind in a card check system but in a secret ballot process there is deliberation, debate, good discussion, and then individuals can come to their conclusions at the appropriate time.

● (1710)

For these reasons, despite some good aspects, I will have to oppose the bill unless the government accepts an amendment to respect the right of members of the RCMP to vote by a secret ballot.

[*Translation*]

Mr. David de Burgh Graham (Laurentides—Labelle, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have a fairly simple question.

I would like my colleague from Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan to tell me whether he believes that unions are a good thing in general.

Does he think that unions have improved the situation of workers in the west and throughout the world? Does he think unions are useful or would he rather they be done away with?

[*English*]

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, I am happy to answer a fairly easy question. Yes, unions have had and continue to have an important function. I know many individuals who have received valuable training support as well as advocacy through unions. Many of the basic things that we rely on today in terms of workplace safety and protection from harassment were advocated for and protected by unions long before they were protected in legislation.

It is not a reasonable or appropriate tactic to try and cast every discussion about the certification process in terms of whether or not one is pro or anti-union. I cannot speak for others necessarily, but personally I very much appreciate the value of unions but I also appreciate the importance of a fair process for determining certification. It strengthens unions when there is a credible and fair process that allows those who choose to join to do so or not using a secret ballot.

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Madam Speaker, I always find my colleague's contributions important even though I almost always disagree with him.

In this case I simply do not see where the issue is coming from in terms of whether or not the RCMP wishes to form a union. When surveyed, over half of the uniformed members replied they did wish to have collective bargaining rights. All the other police forces all across the country voluntarily selected to have unions to collectively bargain for them.

It seems to me we are creating some phantom problem here that the Conservatives are trying to solve in their opposition to the bill when no such problem actually exists. In most police forces the rank and file members are quite happy to elect their own representatives in collective bargaining.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the member's kind words. He and I worked together on the Canada-Tibet Interparliamentary Friendship Group. I appreciate his work there and the opportunity to work on that other important issue.

With respect to his comments here today though, he said that members seem to want to form a union according to surveys. If that is true, then what is the issue of having a secret ballot? It goes both ways. If it is going to happen anyway, then what is the harm of using a proper secret ballot process, a proper democratic process? There really is no harm in that.

I will just remind the member that the question in any certification discussion is not just whether or not to join a union, it is also whether or not to join that particular union and not to perhaps respond to a different, possible certification application. Even if members agree that they are interested in having a union, the question remains of what kind of union, which union might well be more contentious. That is why it is important to have the fair process of a secret ballot.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, could the member be clear and decisive in terms of why he believes that the RCMP should have the secret ballot? His vote later on today will clearly indicate that his party is against the bill.

In principle, this legislation would establish a union for the RCMP. Other law agencies across Canada have already been unionized. Many unions in every region of the country do not have the secret ballot. It seems to me that the Conservatives are using the secret ballot as a cop-out in order to justify voting against giving the RCMP the right to organize. The RCMP has been recognized around the world as a great institution.

● (1715)

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, I am sure the member listened to my speech and is well aware of my position with respect to this bill generally and with respect to unions more generally. Unions have an important role to play and it is certainly important that this Parliament respond to and indeed implement the Supreme Court decision with respect to RCMP entitlement to collectively bargain. There is no dispute around that, and of course Conservatives have been constructive throughout this process of Bill C-7.

However, good intentions are not enough. Good intentions in terms of implementing this process are not enough when there is this huge problem, what I would call for me a poison pill in this legislation, which is the refusal of the government to respect the right of those who play a critical function defending our democracy, standing up for our political and democratic rights; and that they would not be given the right, through a proper democratic secret ballot process, to be involved in determining whether to form a union and exactly which union they would form. These are important issues, and I just cannot vote in favour of legislation, however good some parts of it may be, that has that kind of lack of respect, I would argue, for this important Canadian institution.

If the government is keen on getting consensus, I hope the Liberals would consider even at this late stage working on a possible change for this legislation that would make it more supportable. However, at this stage of course the government has the votes to pass this legislation if members come for that vote. I cannot support legislation that contains such a significant problem for our democracy.

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Madam Speaker, I enjoy my hon. colleague's interventions as well.

I would like to ask this of my hon. colleague from Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan. Does he feel that the government continues to throw out the language that the Conservative Party and official opposition are against unionization, that we are against the front-line workers of the RCMP? Is this just another smokescreen, another deflection for the Liberals' mishandling of this piece of legislation?

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question and for the excellent work he is doing on this bill.

I do find it unfortunate when members make arguments that are about things unrelated to the legislation, when they try to dress this up in something that really is not about the substance of the bill. We have been clear on this side of the House about what our specific concerns are. Some members of the government are willing to engage on that point, but others would perhaps like to divert and make this discussion about something else. I and members on our side of the House have been very clear about the importance of implementing the Supreme Court decision and the important role that unions play.

I am grateful for the contribution of unions and union members in my community and I was grateful to have the active involvement of some union members as part of my campaign. Union members are not monolithic, and in general many are involved with the Conservative Party. Part of that is because our emphasis is on respecting process and on respecting them and the important role that unions play, but also on ensuring that certification happens through a proper, open, democratic process that ensures that people can express their views without having it be in a very public way.

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to start in a way that almost all members have when they began speaking to Bill C-7 and express my thanks to the RCMP for the work its members do every day in our communities and at the federal level in policing to keep us safe. We have one of the most dedicated and skilled police forces anywhere in the world, but it can be improved. It can be better.

I know it is going to get better because, like others who have already spoken, I know one of the new people out front this week. He is one of the people I met as a young leader when he was in high school in Esquimalt; he eventually became our house- and dog-sitter, and now he is out front as a new RCMP officer, defending this House instead of our house at home.

I have also seen the RCMP at work in my own constituency. The West Shore RCMP polices over half of my riding, by geography, with 65 sworn members, and it was fortunate enough to get four added in 2015, which did a little bit to catch up with the population growth. I have a riding that is growing very rapidly in population, and it is most rapid in the areas policed by the RCMP. They always have a challenge in keeping up with that.

I personally have also seen the RCMP at work as part of UN peacekeeping missions. I served in East Timor, where the RCMP played a very important role in training the new police force that was being established in that country, and it did a really excellent job, which was well respected by others who were also involved in police training. I also saw the RCMP at work in Afghanistan when I was part of an international human rights mission there, and I saw the very difficult task that Canadian RCMP members had taken on in trying to help train the Afghan police in a real absence of a tradition of independent and rights-based policing like the one we have in Canada.

I think there are some 84 RCMP members who are serving on UN peacekeeping missions around the world at this time. So like everyone in the House, we do appreciate the service of the RCMP and its dedication.

I am also familiar with the issues of policing because I taught criminal justice for 20 years in a program at Camosun College in Victoria, which is largely a police and prison guard training program. Many of my former students have gone on to be RCMP members. At very large demonstrations or walks in my riding I have been talking to some of the police, and once someone came over and asked if I was in some kind of trouble and offered to help. I said that, no, they were my ex-students and I actually knew the police and there was no problem.

I am probably also one of a very small number of members in the House who sat across from a police union as the employer in bargaining, so I started my public career as a member of a municipal police board. As a member of the police board, I drew the short straw, as we all thought it was, and I was assigned finance and collective bargaining. I actually did sit across from the police union of a very small municipal police force and hashed through the kind of issues that are of concern in the RCMP today. Therefore, I know something about that from personal experience, and I will come back to that.

As the NDP public safety critic for the last five years, I have worked very closely with the Canadian Police Association and also with the Mounted Police Professional Association. They have been very concerned to make progress after the Supreme Court decision almost a year and a half ago now toward getting organization in place to represent the rank and file RCMP. I want to credit the work of both Tom Stamatakis as president of the Canadian Police Association and Rae Banwarie as president of the Mounted Police Professional Association for working with all members of the House in trying to make sure we get the right kind of legislation in place.

There is a long history of controversy about police unions in this country. It stretches all the way back to when the first unions were certified, and that was in 1918, I believe, although I have not been teaching this now for a number of years. Toronto and Vancouver both certified unions for their police in 1918. We went through a series of strikes including the general strike in Winnipeg, a police strike in the U.K., and a police strike in Toronto. It ushered in a period of regulation of police unions and attempts to restrict rights to bargain and rights to strike. Up to World War II, we had periods of greater and lesser freedom of police to unionize, in all areas but never the RCMP.

● (1720)

At the end of World War II, in 1945, I think largely as a result of the idea that we had fought a great war for democracy and freedom, very large collective bargaining rights in the public sector began to be granted, including the Toronto police union, which was again certified as a bargaining agent for the Toronto police in 1945. That movement really grew over the next 20 years, until virtually all the police forces had unionized, except the RCMP.

In the 1960s, when public servants were granted the right to have unions, even to strike under some circumstances, the RCMP was specifically excluded. Therefore, what we are really dealing with today is that exclusion that was written down finally in law in the 1960s.

By the 1970s, there was already discussion about whether it would not be better to allow RCMP members to decide for themselves if they wished to have a union, rather than to keep them under a legislated prohibition. A predecessor here, the former MP for Burnaby—Douglas, Svend Robinson—I think it was in 1979—introduced one of the first bills calling for the removal of the restriction on the right of the RCMP to unionize.

Mr. Kennedy Stewart: He is here today.

Mr. Randall Garrison: I did see him in the precinct today, Madam Speaker. He now works for the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, so he is still doing very good work.

The Supreme Court of Canada decision is what brought us to where we are today. It is interesting that the Supreme Court has very rarely overruled itself. It has very rarely overruled its previous decisions. In 1999, it had upheld the prohibition on an RCMP union, so I would say it was very unexpected in the legal community that there was such a clear decision in January 2015 in favour of the right of the RCMP members to unionize. It was a six-to-one decision at that time.

Let me read a couple of quotes from the Supreme Court majority in that decision. It states:

> We conclude that the s. 2(d) guarantee of freedom of association protects a meaningful process of collective bargaining that provides employees with a degree of choice and independence sufficient to enable them to determine and pursue their collective interests.

It is saying that the regime that was in place, the staff representatives, did not provide what other Canadians were entitled to under the charter, which was to have a choice about who represents them and have those representatives be independent of the RCMP management in this case.

The decision went on to state:

> While the RCMP's mandate differs from that of other police forces, there is no evidence that providing the RCMP a labour relations scheme similar to that enjoyed by other police forces would prevent it from fulfilling its mandate.

What it is really saying is what we know to be true, that in order to have restrictions on rights in Canada, our Constitution requires that they be reasonable, demonstrably justified, and proportionate to some public interest. What the court found in this case is that there was no public interest that justified these kinds of restrictions on collective bargaining for the RCMP.

Quite often in the House, we have talked about "deadlines" set by the Supreme Court: in the case of assisted suicide and in the case of this bill on RCMP unionization. I have always argued, and will still argue, that these are not deadlines. What the court said in both of these cases is that it finds the existing laws unconstitutional, but it will give Parliament a chance to legislate if it wishes to do something different. If Parliament does not legislate by this date, then the law that was in existence will be unconstitutional and the normal legal framework will apply. If we did not pass this by the deadline, which we clearly have not, the RCMP would fall under the Public Service Labour Relations Act.

I am not arguing that we do not need a bill. I actually think there are some justifications for having a bill and for separating the RCMP out from other labour relations associations. The surprise, or not surprise, I guess I would say, is that the Canadian Police Association and the Mounted Police Professional Association also agree with that. There is no demand for all of them to become teamsters or steelworkers. That is not what they are looking for.

Bill C-7 says that there should be one national union representing police only, and that is not really a controversial point, so having a bill that would establish that framework is not a bad idea. However, that is probably about as far as I can go with Bill C-7, because the other main provisions of the bill take away all the aspects that really make meaningful collective bargaining.

● (1725)

I would submit that, just like the bill that was presented on assisted suicide, Bill C-14, Bill C-7 is probably unconstitutional. It is certain to launch another whole round of litigation and will force the spending of both RCMP members' money and public money, as well as the court's time on something we really do not need to do.

The court decision was quite clear at six to one. If we respected that decision in the proposed law, we would be done with this. The new regime of labour relations could then get on with the job of improving the RCMP and the working conditions, including the health and safety of RCMP members. Again, we must remember that our constitutional regime says that the limits are acceptable on rights only if they are reasonable and demonstrably justified in a free and democratic society, and if these limits are proportional to a specific public objective.

What is the public objective in saying that this new labour relations organization could not talk about staffing, deployment, harassment, or discipline? Again, in the quote I read earlier from the decision, it is very clear that the court said that there is no public objective that justifies limiting collective bargaining for the RCMP. Therefore, I would argue that, in parallel, there is also no public objective being achieved by these specific exclusions from collective bargaining.

I do not think we have heard from the government why it selected these things. I have not heard the justification for these exclusions, and the Liberals have not given me a legal argument of how they think this would stand up in court, if we get there again. As I said, I think Bill C-7 is bound for litigation, and that is an unfortunate thing.

Our courts are clogged with all kinds of important issues, and to have their time taken up with something that has been there in 1999 and 2015, to have it back sometime later this year or in 2017 is a waste of everyone's time and resources.

I, of course, as a member of the NDP, supported our position that these exclusions should have been taken out at committee stage. Unfortunately, the government failed to do that, and I believe the Conservatives also supported leaving these exclusions in. However, I will give credit to the government here that it did agree to remove clauses 40 and 42, which would have placed occupational health and safety under workers' compensation boards province by province.

Clearly, there are some exceptional things about the RCMP as a workforce, and it would not have been acceptable to establish a regime where RCMP members, depending on where they were stationed, would be eligible for different kinds of compensation, benefits, or rehabilitation. Therefore, I do applaud the government in agreeing with both the Conservatives and the NDP to take out clauses 40 and 42 and keep occupational health and safety a uniform regime across the country, so that it would not really matter where an RCMP member served, because RCMP members would be entitled to the same package of benefits and protections.

When we talk about staffing, deployment, harassment, and discipline being excluded, what does that actually mean? This is where I go back to all four things I dealt with almost 20 years ago when I first took on being the labour relations representative of my police board.

Staffing is the question of how much work one has to do, whether the vacant positions are filled, and how long is acceptable to leave positions vacant. I know from the RCMP in my own riding on the west shore, where the population was growing and the demands were very great, that there was concern from rank and file members over those four positions that they should have had, that were authorized, but I believe took six years to fill, and it could have been longer. My memory does not serve me so well, because it was so long in actually getting the people they needed.

What impact does that have on the operation of the RCMP? Well, one could say that it causes it to spend more money or it takes away management prerogatives. However, I can tell members that, from the point of view of rank and file people, staffing is about how much overtime they have to work that they do not want to work, that they would rather spend with their family, or rather spend, as most RCMP officers do, volunteering in community events. They wonder if they would be forced to work overtime because those vacancies have not been filled.

This is not to say that the new union of the members would fill the vacancies or decide when they are filled, but they might be able to argue in bargaining what a reasonable time frame would be when a position is not filled. They could say in their collective agreement that, when a position is vacant, it must be filled within six months or within a year. Why is that not something they could bargain about? It is something certainly that I bargained about with our police union: what is an acceptable time frame for filling vacancies?

● (1730)

I simply do not understand why that would not be subject to collective bargaining for the RCMP.

The second one would be deployment. The question of deployment was that of relief and backup, in particular, in municipal forces. How many officers per car? Was it safe to have one officer per car, or did it require two? Through negotiations, after I left the board, it was finally resolved that there were different hours of the day that required different deployment and staffing.

However, what we got through collective bargaining was the input of those rank-and-file members who said that in the daytime it was probably okay to have one officer per car because there were a lot of people on duty, and a lot of resources and backup to call on. However, at nighttime, one person in the car, at three a.m., was probably not a good idea. That was what we were discussing at that time. Again, I do not see how that does not do anything but contribute to better policing for the community and better working conditions for the RCMP, to be able to discuss deployment.

The RCMP also has a lot of very small detachments. One of the big problems that comes up in those detachments is relief. If the RCMP officer is the only officer or one of two officers in a community, how does he or she get any relief from the 24-hour a day demands? What would be wrong with negotiating that if he or she has been the only one, or the only two officers, for a certain period of time, then someone has to come in and relieve the officer of those duties? That would be discussed at collective bargaining. Again, it is about better community policing and better working conditions for RCMP members.

The question of harassment is the one that is the most shocking to me. We dealt with harassment in the police force. When I was appointed to the board, I was the first openly gay police board member in British Columbia. We sat down with the union. First, I had met with the chief, and I said, “Just so you know, my mother already knows.” The chief said, “We already know. We are not called the police for nothing.” We got off to a very good start by having harassment training.

The union met with the board, and we agreed to do harassment training. No one forced anyone to do training. The Board members said that they would go through the training first, and would then ask the union to agree to go through it.

The union president at that time said that it was a complete waste of time. At the end of it, he came back and said that he was wrong, that there were practices taking place in our force that he did not even recognize as harassment.

The last one is discipline. When there is bargaining about discipline, it is not saying the rank-and-file members get to decide if someone is disciplined. They need a voice on what is a fair process for discipline and a voice on what is fair representation.

Those are the kinds of issues with which I had to deal. What are the right time frames? What evidence should be available? Are police officers held to the legal standards of the court in their own disciplinary proceedings? Is that fair or should there be some other disciplinary process agreed to?

Again, all four of these things that are excluded are crucial to having a good working environment for RCMP rank-and-file members, and they also contribute to better policing of our communities.

I know my time is drawing short, but I want to talk about one more staffing issue which has been on my radar since I first got involved in policing. It is the question of recruitment and retirement. It will probably come to a shock to most members in the House that one out of ten police officers in the entire country is currently eligible to retire tomorrow. Officers are staying on and working because of their dedication, but they are already eligible to retire.

How will we deal with that crisis of person power in the RCMP? One of the best ways to do that is to work with the members of the RCMP who are serving now and ask them what are reasonable ways to conquer what is really a crisis.

The other one is recruitment. At the beginning there was some resistance, even in our police force, to using diversity as a criteria in recruiting. We worked with the union at the time. Again, the same union president came back to me and said that when I said that we were not a very diverse police force—we were are all white men—that this was obvious. What was not obvious were the benefits that would come to policing from having a more diverse police force.

They hired two people from the first nations community and two gay and lesbian police officers. He told me that they now had contacts in communities that they never had before, and it helped them do a better job of policing.

Again, negotiating with the rank-and-file unions about issues of staffing, like recruitment, retention, and retirement, will lead to better policing for all of us.

I am sorry I cannot vote for the bill that would establish a framework for a union for the RCMP, but my reason for doing that is the unacceptable exclusions from collective bargaining.

● (1735)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am somewhat surprised and definitely disappointed that the New Democratic Party has not recognized the principle of the legislation. The Government of Canada has said that it is committed to supporting our persons in both the regular force and the reserves of the RCMP by allowing them to organize collectively and to have that employee agency. This has come from the Supreme Court.

I appreciate the history lesson from the member. I thought he articulated that quite well.

What really surprises me is this. If we look at the principle, by voting against the legislation, which is what the member is doing, he is in essence saying no to the unionization of the RCMP. Would he not agree that it is better to at least allow for that organization to take place, recognizing that he or his party, the NDP, might have some concerns with respect to it, and that it does at least meet the Supreme Court decision and allows our RCMP officers to unite?

● (1740)

Mr. Randall Garrison: Mr. Speaker, I thank the parliamentary secretary for his question because it allows me to once again say that he is dead wrong on this. If this bill does not pass, the RCMP has the right to unionize. That is what the Supreme Court has said. Therefore, the principle is already there in the Supreme Court decision, that if we do not have this legislation, it can unionize.

I have said that this regime, which demands or requires one national union and one exclusive to policing, is a good idea. However, that is not just my opinion, that is the opinion of most of the police officers, and certainly of their associations.

When it comes to saying that by voting against this, I am voting against collective bargaining, I would say the opposite. Voting for a bill that leaves essentially only pay and benefits to be bargained is not collective bargaining. All of those other issues that are excluded are at the heart of what most people want to do as part of their union, not just to get more money or benefits, but to have a workplace that contributes to doing the job well.

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank our hon. colleague from Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, but I want to put a different spin on it.

We have talked a lot about unionization, secret ballot, and what is included in Bill C-7 for negotiations and what has been left out. However, the hon. colleague mentioned his experience in negotiating contracts at the municipal level.

In my riding of Cariboo—Prince George, our communities are struggling for the capacity to pay for increased policing costs. Ultimately, whatever costs are negotiated in collective bargaining are downloaded onto our provinces and our communities. In budget 2016, the Liberal government has failed to increase policing or any increased monies for police forces. Is this a further cause for concern and evidence that the bill and the government's point of view is flawed with respect to pushing this through?

Mr. Randall Garrison: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Cariboo—Prince George is one of the new members whose comments and contributions I have learned to respect in the House. He raises a very good point.

Having a union is not necessarily something that always increases costs. Given the context the government has given with respect to the RCMP, which is essentially a budget cut, it is not enough money to keep up with the increasing costs. We know that it is not enough money to backfill all of those empty positions that have been sitting there, unfortunately under the previous Conservative government.

However, the process of collective bargaining can also lead to more effective and efficient policing, which is less costly for those communities. When rank and file RCMP officers on the west shore were calling to have those positions filled, the municipalities were passing resolutions saying that they knew they would have to pay more but they needed to fill those positions to keep their communities safe.

Therefore, I recognize the challenge of increasing policing costs for municipalities as I sat on a municipal council after the police board. However, having a union can also promote efficiency and effectiveness as well.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague and commend him for his speech on an important subject that we, as progressive people and New Democrats, care a lot about, and that is the ability to unionize to improve working conditions.

However, the Liberal government seems to be following a certain pattern. It was forced by the Supreme Court to draft certain laws, but it did a sloppy job. The government is doing things that are not consistent with the Supreme Court's request.

The NDP does not understand why the government is proposing all of these exclusions and why it wants to limit RCMP officers' ability to negotiate, when that right has been recognized by a number of courts, including the Supreme Court, under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. This bill will likely be challenged and that will result in more legal fees.

I would like to hear what my colleague has to say about that.

● (1745)

[*English*]

Mr. Randall Garrison: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie for his work on a day-to-day basis in the House as an effective voice for working people.

His question gives me an opportunity to say again what I think has happened in Bill C-14 and again in Bill C-7. I do not know where the Liberals get these restrictions they have introduced in both bills. I think Bills C-14 and C-7 alike are headed to litigation.

Rather than solving the problem and getting on with the business of the country, we will be sending people back into the courts on both of these bills. I do not understand why the recommendations in Bill C-14 were not those of the special committee. In Bill C-7, I do not know who made these recommendations. There is no evidence about why things like staffing and harassment were excluded from collective bargaining. I do not know where this idea came from, but I certainly doubt that it is constitutional.

[*Translation*]

Mr. David de Burgh Graham (Laurentides—Labelle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, does my colleague know why the Conservatives always oppose unions and say that we should diminish their powers?

What does he have to say about that?

[*English*]

Mr. Randall Garrison: Mr. Speaker, earlier in a response to one of the hon. member's speeches, I trucked out what I called blue herrings, raising issues about unions and policing that really nobody shared. I have never met a rank and file police officer who is worried about being intimidated over the question of a union, and all of the police forces have unions.

It is one thing to deny the existence of unions or their value, but it is another thing to gut collective bargaining, as the government is doing in Bill C-7. To me, those are equally difficult to accept.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, the member seems to be somewhat confused with regard to the issue of urgency. We need to recognize that when the Supreme Court of Canada makes a decision, all members have a responsibility to respect that decision. The two bills the member had made reference to are in fact directives coming from the Supreme Court of Canada. Both issues have been granted extensions.

Could the member provide some comment on whether he believes that parliamentarians do not have to respect what the Supreme Court of Canada has said? Is that the New Democratic approach for dealing with decisions that have been made by the Supreme Court of Canada?

The Supreme Court of Canada has been very clear on this issue, and this legislation is before us today because of that. Just because the Conservatives did not do their homework on this bill or Bill C-14, as legislators, we have a responsibility to, at the very least, listen to what the Supreme Court says, and from the government's perspective, to take action to make corrective measures.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Mr. Speaker, that is probably one of the more absurd comments I have heard on the decisions.

The Supreme Court did not require the House of Commons to legislate. It said that existing law, both for Bill C-14 and Bill C-7, was unconstitutional, and if the House of Commons would like to legislate something else, this was the deadline by which it must do it. The Supreme Court suspended its judgment to a date to allow the House of Commons, if it so chose, to pass legislation, very much the same as what happened with the abortion legislation in Canada. When the Supreme Court ruled that abortion violated the security of the person, it gave a period of time for Parliament to act. Parliament tried twice to act and failed to pass any legislation. The world did not end, but the Supreme Court decision was implemented.

That is exactly what would happen on Bill C-14 and Bill C-7. The Supreme Court does not instruct Parliament to do anything. It gave us the opportunity to say that if we felt there were regimes or restrictions that would meet the constitution that we would like to put in place, we had this much time to do it.

I do agree with the member that the Conservatives wasted a lot of that time. However, the present government has wasted a lot of time calling all different kinds of bills instead of dealing expeditiously with those on which it feels it has a deadline.

● (1750)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today, and I want to inform you that I will be sharing my time with the member for Burnaby South, who works very hard to defend workers' rights here in the House.

Like other members in the House, I want to take 30 seconds to congratulate our RCMP officers and to thank them for all the work they do across the country. They work hard to keep us, our communities, and our children safe. As a member of Parliament from the Montreal area, I do not deal much with RCMP officers, since they do not directly serve Montreal. The SPVM serves Montreal. However, we are aware of the good work they do and of how dangerous and essential their jobs are.

I am very pleased to rise today to speak about fundamental rights like free collective bargaining, a topic that is close to our hearts as progressive, social democrats, as New Democrats. This topic is especially important to us because gathering, assembling, and fighting for the collective bargaining power to improve one's working and living conditions is a fundamental part of social progress and of the progress of our societies and our country.

We have seen what a positive impact the process of unionization can have on people's quality of life in terms of pay and benefits as well as in terms of respect for employees and ensuring that they are not subjected to discrimination or abuse by employers or ignored whenever they speak up.

People say that right-wingers are about defending the middle class, but not many people realize that the middle class exists primarily because of the union movement. In the 18th century, when unions were illegal, people had absolutely appalling working conditions. They had no rights, and they worked like dogs for pay that kept them forever poor. People were constantly being pauperized. That is why we need to recognize the work of the many men and women who decided to join forces and sit down to negotiate collective agreements and labour contracts that laid out the rules of the game and ensured healthy workplaces that enabled people to support their families, enjoy some recreation, travel, and so on.

Unions became legal in Canada in 1872. However, RCMP members have been in a rather unique situation since the force was created in 1918. RCMP members have always been denied the right to organize and negotiate their labour contracts, even though this clearly violates the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the right to free bargaining has been upheld by a number of courts, including the B.C. Supreme Court and the Supreme Court of Saskatchewan, as well as the Supreme Court of Canada.

I am pleased, in one sense, that the Liberal government is finally bringing such a long struggle to an end. For decades now, RCMP members have been wanting the same right that everyone else enjoys. However, I am bitterly disappointed in the drafting of the bill and the work done by the Liberal government. Once again, we are in a situation where, in an effort to follow a directive or ruling from the Supreme Court, the Liberal government is trying to respond to it, but is doing so carelessly and sloppily. It is making things up and forgetting things, and as I think my colleague said earlier, this could give rise to new legal debates. Bill C-7 will probably be challenged in the courts because it contains things that are clearly completely unacceptable and infringe on the right to free bargaining.

Some of the clauses violate the very principle that this bill is supposed to defend. What are they? For us, the most important thing is the exclusions. Bill C-7 excludes some issues, certain matters, from the collective bargaining process. RCMP officers are being told that they have the right to organize and to collectively negotiate a work contract, but they do not have the right to talk about certain things and the government is the one that decides. They are being told that they only have the right to talk about pay and benefits, period.

What are the exclusions? One of them is staffing, the ability to decide who will get a promotion or who will be hired.

● (1755)

Deployment is another: who will go to what city, town, or region. Shift work is yet another: will workers have to work alone or will they have backup?

There is also harassment and disciplinary action. That is an important issue. The Liberals are excluding anything related to harassment in the workplace from the RCMP's collective bargaining process. RCMP officers will therefore be unable to file a complaint in that regard. That is outrageous. Why would RCMP officers be deprived of that option?

There is also disciplinary action. It was excluded out of hand and no one knows why, as though these sorts of things magically take care of themselves.

Whose idea was it to exclude these issues? They are what can make the difference between a happy and healthy workplace and a workplace rife with conflict, competition, poor relations between colleagues, and even poor relations between managers and employees.

The NDP does not understand why these issues, which have a major impact on workplace health and safety, were dismissed out of hand by the Liberal government.

What will happen? It is pretty clear, and the writing is on the wall. If this bill passes, when RCMP officers become unionized, they will eventually claim their right to talk about these issues and to have an internal complaint process so that they can have their say. Why would they be denied this right, when all other unionized police forces in Canada can talk about these issues?

In no way has the Liberal government shown that the reliability, neutrality, or viability of the RCMP would be called into question as a result of these collective bargaining issues and that they therefore had to be excluded from the process. This makes absolutely no sense. This will result in more legal proceedings and additional costs, not only for taxpayers, but also for the RCMP officers' union. This is all completely unnecessary, since we could fix this problem right here, right now.

I urge the Liberal government to listen to reason, instead of forcing Parliament to pass botched, flawed bills that will be challenged in court. I urge the government to do its job and to respect the fundamental right to free collective bargaining.

This issue affects an important, though small, segment of our society. There is no reason why these people should not have the same rights as all workers. The work they do is recognized and respected by everyone. I think that we should give them the tools that will help them create a workplace where they feel comfortable and are heard, and where they are able to speak up when necessary.

For these reasons, the NDP cannot vote in favour of Bill C-7, even though it is well-intentioned and even though the Supreme Court issued its ruling. We cannot support the bill because the government did a sloppy job and this bill will be challenged in court.

I want to use the few minutes I have left to say that I do not understand why, in this debate, the people from the Conservative Party, who dragged their feet miserably after the Supreme Court ruling was handed down in January 2015, keep coming back to the issue of having a secret ballot for the union certification process. That has nothing to do with Bill C-7. It is like they are trying to relive the years of the previous government, when, in fact, a unionization process involving membership cards signed and submitted to the Canada Industrial Relations Board, the CIRB, is the best and easiest way to unionize a group. We often hear the Conservatives say that having people sign cards will lead to bullying and that is why they prefer a secret ballot. In the unionization process, any bullying is done by the employers and not by the workers. It is not documented and it does not exist.

I come from the union movement. In my previous life, I was a union activist and a union adviser. We know that a unionization process by secret ballot often leads to negative results for the workers. It is not as successful. The longer the vote, the more time the employer has to use blackmail or make promises or threats.

● (1800)

That is why we want to keep the current system. I would like our Conservative friends to understand that someday.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to be clear on a critical message. The Government of Canada is committed to supporting the dedicated and proud members of Canada's national police service.

Bill C-7 would allow RCMP members and reservists to choose whether they wish to be represented by an employee organization. The Conservatives have said they are going to vote against this legislation because they believe in the secret ballot. The New Democratic Party is going to vote against this legislation because it would not provide enough.

The very principle of this legislation would provide our RCMP officers and reservists with the option of organized labour. Why does the NDP oppose the principle of the bill that would allow for the unionization of our RCMP?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Mr. Speaker, thankfully, ironic comments are not offensive. The claim that the NDP is against a unionization process is one of the most absurd things I have heard in this place.

I am just going to respond to my colleague by repeating the comments made by Rae Banwarie, president of the Mounted Police Professional Association of Canada. He said that they would not support this bill in its current form because it does not respect the spirit of the Supreme Court ruling or the charter. In his opinion, the bill does not meet the constitutional test and it favours RCMP managers. It would continue to undermine the rights of RCMP members and their families. He feels that this bill, in its current form, will undermine and negate established protection mechanisms found in many union organizations and collective agreements of other forces.

[*English*]

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to correct something the member for Winnipeg North said. He said that voting against the bill would be a rejection of the principle of the bill. Both the NDP and the Conservatives are going to vote against the bill not because we reject the principle but because we reject the specific measures in it. The member who is in this place fairly frequently should know that at second reading we vote on the principle of the bill then at third reading we pronounce finally on the content of the bill.

I want to ask the member about the secret ballot. We have advocated the importance of ensuring that the secret ballot occurs. What is the harm in a secret ballot? Why not allow RCMP members to pronounce through a secret ballot on whether or not they want to join a union? If they want to join they can vote yes in a secret ballot with no problem. What is the harm of the secret ballot?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Mr. Speaker, I was expecting that question.

I will repeat that card-signing unionization processes are the most efficient and the least controversial processes and those that have the best success rate for workers who want to organize their workplace. In fact, before the workplace is unionized, the employer is free to do whatever it wants.

Card signing works well. If it's not broken, don't fix it. The secret vote creates obstacles for unions in the unionization process and gives the employer tools and weapons to break and prevent unionization. That is why we do not support the secret ballot.

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his speech.

I get the impression that the government intends to do as little as possible with this bill, and I wonder whether he agrees with me on that. The Supreme Court asked the government to do certain things to comply with the charter in accordance with certain criteria.

However, once again, the government is trying to do as little as possible to comply with the Supreme Court's decision and guarantee people the rights recognized by that decision.

I get the impression that the government is trying to do as little as possible to comply with the Supreme Court's decision. Does the member agree with me? The government does not seem to want to give very much to the people who deserve the rights that have been recognized.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Sherbrooke for his very relevant question. Yes, I feel the same way as he does and I agree with his analysis of the situation.

The government is trying to comply with a Supreme Court decision by doing the minimum. It is trying to do only what it has to by inventing concepts, contradicting itself, and even going against the Supreme Court's decision

This shoddy work is going to once again end up before the courts. The same thing happened with Bill C-14. It is the same principle, and that bill is a far cry from the Carter decision. The government needs to be more professional when drafting its bills.

● (1805)

[*English*]

Mr. Kennedy Stewart (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise to speak to this bill today.

However, before I do, I noticed that a number of members in this House have been talking about how much we respect the RCMP and value their service. I would like to point out one very special member of the RCMP in my own riding of Burnaby South, Chief Superintendent Dave Critchley. He is the officer in charge of the Burnaby RCMP detachment. I would like to thank him for his service to our community, because Chief Superintendent Critchley has informed me that he is retiring this year. All of us are going to miss him very much. I wish him and his wife Debra all the best.

It is worth going through a short bit of Chief Superintendent Critchley's career. He has spent 33 years in the RCMP, which included a posting here in Ottawa. He was seconded to the Privy Council Office as the RCMP federal liaison for the winter Olympics. We all thank him for the great job he did there on what was a spectacular event. Not to stop there, he was also posted to Kabul, in Afghanistan, as the Canadian police commander. He was the senior Canadian police officer in Afghanistan. He has done fantastic work, and I would like to thank him again for his service and for being so kind to me during my time as a member of Parliament in Burnaby.

I will move from the niceties of being able to stand in the House to thank people, to the unpleasantries. This is a general comment on the government and its seeming inability to get bills passed through this place, and of course the other place, the Senate. I have been here since 2011, and although I did not agree with many of the Conservatives' bills, I did agree with their professionalism. I think that the Conservatives did a good job in letting us know what bills would be put forward, and they did them in an orderly way in this House.

I find that the current Liberal government seems totally incapable of getting things passed. This is not because there is filibustering. It is not because there is any lack of work on our behalf. They seem confused. We look at the parliamentary website. We heard about 100 days of action. We heard about real change. Out of the 16 government bills that have been put forward here, only one has made it through the Senate, besides the three that were for budget spending. Of the things besides money that the Liberal government seems to care about, it seems incapable of getting them through this place, and who knows what is going to happen in the Senate? The Liberals have created complete chaos over there, and we are all waiting to see what happens.

This bill, again, is an example of incompetence on that side of the House. We all know what the Supreme Court has ordered. We have various points that we do not agree with in this bill, but the Supreme Court has struck down a law. It said that the RCMP is allowed to form a union or some kind of association, and the government on that side is playing politics. The bill that was put forward here is not robust enough, from our perspective.

I do not have a huge union background. I have been in faculty associations at universities. At Simon Fraser University, we have just been fully unionized. However, this is not something that I am that familiar with. I am proud to say that our political party is the only party that has a collective agreement with our employees, and we dutifully uphold it. I see the benefit of being an employer with a properly structured collective agreement. Therefore, when I read that the exclusions from this bill included discussions of staffing, employment, harassment, and discipline, it made me think that this is a hollow attempt to abide by the Supreme Court's decision that the members of the RCMP have the right to organize collectively. I do not agree with my colleagues on the Conservative side that some kind of secret ballot is needed; just sign a union card or association card and one is a member.

However, it seems strange that the government would restrict so many things from this discussion between employer and employee, for instance, that they cannot agree upon staffing levels. As my hon. colleague from Esquimalt said earlier, employers and employees should have a discussion about how many RCMP members would be in a car in an evening shift. There should be discussion and then agreement on what is appropriate.

● (1810)

I was fortunate enough to sit on the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights when the harassment issues were happening in the RCMP and finally came to light. These types of things have burdened the RCMP in the past. They have been one of the only marks against a very fine record and have caused numerous lawsuits and problems. Of course, that is something that should be negotiated through a collective agreement, and discipline too, to make sure that what is happening is fair to the members.

Although I have worked in a unionized environment, I was not familiar with the workings of that environment. Now, being an employer with unionized employees, I see how important that is. What unionization and collective agreements allow for is a discussion of these important issues. There are a lot of times as an employer that we do not understand or realize the perspective of the person hired and the constraints that they are under. Abiding by a collective agreement is a way to foster discussion within an organization.

The other huge advantage as an employer in a non-unionized environment, which I have worked in plenty of, is that the employer is the person overseeing the operations of the organization and is the enforcer of the work, the monitor of the quality of work. However, when a union is brought into a situation, there is almost a double monitoring. There is the regular management that sets the course of work and the direction of the organization, but there is also the union, which makes sure that union employees are protected and that they are working collectively toward the goals of the organization. That can only help to enhance any workplace. Again, not being familiar through most of my life with unions and how they operate, and now being very familiar with them, I see this only as a benefit to the RCMP.

The bill is a long time coming. Earlier today, I had the pleasure of seeing Svend Robinson, the very famous former MP from a number of Burnaby ridings with a lot of different names. He brought in the first bill to the House, in either the late seventies or early eighties, to allow the RCMP to organize. We have had the Supreme Court finally say that the laws that are on the books right now are not appropriate. They do not jibe with the Constitution and have been struck down. Now Parliament has an obligation, if we are going to put restrictions on the RCMP and their collective organizing, that it abides by the conditions laid out.

I am disappointed, in two ways. I am disappointed with the government side of the House and the way it has mishandled the flow of legislation through this place. Despite all the talk about consultation and working together that we hear from the Minister of Democratic Institutions daily, the Liberals are not listening. That is a problem. It is trying to railroad things through. While the Conservatives were quite good at railroading things through the House of Commons, I cannot say that is happening on the other side. That speaks to a level of competence that the Liberal government has not yet developed, which is distressing to Canadians. We are going to hit our June break, go back for barbeques, work with constituents, and there is hardly going to have been anything done here. It is because the Liberals are not listening, and that is a huge problem.

There is the larger problem of process in this place with the government not being able to get things through. There is also the problem in the bill, which is too restrictive. It should be altered to allow the union and the employer to negotiate things like staffing, deployment, harassment, and discipline.

● (1815)

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: It being 6:15 p.m., pursuant to order made Wednesday, May 11, 2016, it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the third reading stage of the bill now before the House.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

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

And five or more members having risen:

The Deputy Speaker: Call in the members.

● (1840)

[*English*]

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

(Division No. 64)

YEAS

Members

Aldag	Alghabra
Alleslev	Amos
Anandasangaree	Arseneault
Arya	Ayoub
Badawey	Bagnell
Bains	Baylis
Beech	Bennett
Bibeau	Bittle
Blair	Boissonnault
Bossio	Bratina
Breton	Brison
Caesar-Chavannes	Carr
Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)	Casey (Charlottetown)
Chagger	Champagne
Chan	Chen
Cormier	Cuzner
Dabrusin	Damoff
DeCourcey	Dhaliwal
Dhillon	Di Iorio
Dion	Drouin
Dubourg	Duclos
Duguid	Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Dzerowicz	Easter
Ehsassi	El-Khoury
Ellis	Erskine-Smith
Eyking	Eyolfson
Fergus	Fillmore
Finnigan	Fisher
Fonseca	Fragiskatos
Fraser (West Nova)	Fraser (Central Nova)
Freeland	Fuhr
Garneau	Gerretsen
Goldsmith-Jones	Goodale
Gould	Graham
Grewal	Hajdu
Hardie	Harvey
Hehr	Holland
Housefather	Hussen
Hutchings	Iacono
Joly	Jones
Jordan	Jowhari
Khalid	Khera
Lametti	Lamoureux
Lapointe	LeBlanc
Lebouthillier	Lefebvre
Lemieux	Leslie
Levitt	Lightbound
Lockhart	Long
Longfield	Ludwig
MacKinnon (Gatineau)	Maloney
Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)	
May (Cambridge)	
McCallum	McCrimmon
McDonald	McGuinty
McKay	McKenna
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)	McLeod (Northwest Territories)
Mendès	Mendicino

Mihychuk
Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Soeurs)
Monsef
Morneau
Morrissey
Murray
Nassif
Nault
O'Connell
Oliphant
Oliver
O'Regan
Ouellette
Paradis
Peschisolido
Peterson
Petitpas Taylor
Philpott
Picard
Poissant
Qualtrough
Ratansi
Rioux
Robillard
Rodriguez
Romanado
Rota
Rudd
Ruimy
Rusnak
Sahota
Saini
Sajjan
Samson
Sangha
Sarai
Scarpaleggia
Schiefke
Schulte
Serré
Sgro
Shanahan
Sheehan
Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)
Sidhu (Brampton South)
Sikand
Simms
Sohi
Sorbara
Spengemann
Tabbara
Tan
Tassi
Tootoo
Trudeau
Vandal
Vandenbeld
Vaughan
Virani
Whalen
Wilkinson
Wilson-Raybould
Wrzesnewskyj
Young
Zahid– — 177

NAYS

Members

Aboultaif
Albas
Albrecht
Allison
Ambrose
Anderson
Angus
Arnold
Ashton
Aubin
Barlow
Beaulieu
Benson
Bergen
Berthold
Bezan
Blaikie
Blaney (North Island—Powell River)
Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis)
Block
Boucher
Boudrias
Boulerice
Boutin-Sweet
Brassard
Brown
Calkins
Cannings
Caron
Carrie
Chong
Choquette
Christopherson
Clarke
Clement
Cooper
Cullen
Davies
Deltell
Diotte
Doherty
Donnelly
Dreeshen
Dubé
Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)
Dusseault
Duvall
Eglinski
Falk
Fast
Fortin
Gallant
Garrison
Généreux
Genuis
Gill
Gladu
Godin
Gourde
Hardcastle
Harper
Hughes
Jeneroux
Johns
Julian
Kelly
Kent
Kitchen
Kmiec
Kwan
Lake
Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Laverdière
Lebel
Liepert
Lobb
Lukiwski
MacGregor
MacKenzie
Maguire
Malcolmson
Marcil
Masse (Windsor West)
Mathyssen
May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
McCauley (Edmonton West)
McColeman
McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)
Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound)
Moore
Mulcair
Nantel
Nicholson
Nuttall
Obhrai
O'Toole
Paul-Hus
Pauzé
Plamondon
Quach
Raitt
Ramsey
Rankin
Rayes
Reid
Rempel
Richards
Ritz
Saganash
Sansoucy
Saroya
Scheer
Schmale
Shields
Sopuck
Sorenson
Stanton
Ste-Marie
Stetski
Stewart
Strahl
Stubbs
Sweet
Thériault
Tilson
Trost
Trudel
Van Kesteren
Van Loan
Vecchio
Viersen
Wagantall
Warawa
Watts
Waugh
Webber
Weir
Wong
Yurdiga
Zimmer– — 140

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

(Bill read the third time and passed)

* * *

CRIMINAL CODE

The House resumed from May 20 consideration of Bill C-14, An Act to amend the Criminal Code and to make related amendments to other Acts (medical assistance in dying), as reported with amendments from the committee, and of the motions in Group No. 1.

The Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded divisions on the motions at report stage of Bill C-14, An Act to amend the Criminal Code and to make related amendments to other Acts (medical assistance in dying).

The question is on Motion No. 1. If it is negatived, we will have to vote on Motions Nos. 3, 4, 6, 12, 13, and 14.

● (1850)

[*Translation*]

(The House divided on Motion No. 1, which was negatived on the following division:)

(Division No. 65)

YEAS

Members

Angus
Arseneault
Ashton
Aubin
Benson
Blaikie
Blaney (North Island—Powell River)
Boulerice
Boutin-Sweet
Cannings
Caron
Choquette
Christopherson
Cullen
Davies
Donnelly
Dubé
Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)
Dusseault
Duvall
Erskine-Smith
Garrison
Hardcastle
Hughes
Johns
Julian
Kwan
Lametti
Laverdière
MacGregor
Malcolmson
Masse (Windsor West)
Mathyssen
May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
Moore
Mulcair

Nantel
Quach
Rankin
Sansoucy
Stewart
Weir– — 47

Oliphant
Ramsey
Saganash
Stetski
Trudel

NAYS

Members

Aboultaif
Albrecht
Alghabra
Allison
Amos
Anderson
Arya
Badawey
Bains
Baylis
Beech
Bergen
Berthold
Bibeau
Blair
Block
Bossio
Boudrias
Bratina
Brison
Caesar-Chavannes
Carr
Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)
Chagger
Chan
Chong
Clement
Cormier
Dabrusin
DeCourcey
Dhaliwal
Di Iorio
Diotte
Dreeshen
Dubourg
Duguid
Dzerowicz
Eglinski
El-Khoury
Eyking
Falk
Fergus
Finnigan
Fonseca
Fragiskatos
Fraser (Central Nova)
Fuhr
Garneau
Genuis
Gill
Godin
Goodale
Gourde
Grewal
Harder
Harper
Hehr
Housefather
Hutchings
Jeneroux
Jones
Jowhari
Kenney
Khalid
Kitchen
Lake
Lapointe
Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)
LeBlanc
Lefebvre
Levitt
Lightbound
Lockhart

Albas
Aldag
Alleslev
Ambrose
Anandasangaree
Arnold
Ayoub
Bagnell
Barlow
Beaulieu
Bennett
Bernier
Bezan
Bittle
Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis)
Boissonnault
Boucher
Brassard
Breton
Brown
Calkins
Carrie
Casey (Charlottetown)
Champagne
Chen
Clarke
Cooper
Cuzner
Damoff
Deltell
Dhillon
Dion
Doherty
Drouin
Duclos
Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Easter
Ehsassi
Ellis
Eyolfson
Fast
Fillmore
Fisher
Fortin
Fraser (West Nova)
Freeland
Gallant
Généreux
Gerretsen
Gladu
Goldsmith-Jones
Gould
Graham
Hajdu
Hardie
Harvey
Holland
Hussen
Iacono
Joly
Jordan
Kelly
Kent
Khera
Kmiec
Lamoureux
Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Lebel
Lebouthillier
Leslie
Liepert
Lobb
Long

Longfield
Lukiwski
MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Maloney
Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)
May (Cambridge)
McCallum
McColeman
McDonald
McKay
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
McLeod (Northwest Territories)
Mihychuk
Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Soeurs)
Monsef
Morneau
Murray
Nault
Nuttall
O'Connell
O'Regan
Paradis
Pauzé
Peterson
Philpott
Plamondon
Qualtrough
Ratansi
Reid
Richards
Ritz
Rodriguez
Rota
Ruimy
Sahota
Sajjan
Sangha
Saroya
Scheer
Schmale
Serré
Shanahan
Shields
Sidhu (Brampton South)
Simms
Sopuck
Sorenson
Stanton
Strahl
Sweet
Tan
Thériault
Tootoo
Trudeau
Van Loan
Vandenbeld
Vecchio
Virani
Warawa
Waugh
Whalen
Wilson-Raybould
Wrzesnewskyj
Yurdiga
Zimmer– — 271

Ludwig
MacKenzie
Maguire
Marcil

McCauley (Edmonton West)
McCrimmon
McGuinty
McKenna
McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)
Mendicino
Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound)

Morrissey
Nassif
Nicholson
Obhrai
Oliver
O'Toole
Paul-Hus
Peschisolido
Petitpas Taylor
Picard
Poissant
Raitt
Rayes
Rempel
Rioux
Robillard
Romanado
Rudd
Rusnak
Saini
Samson
Sarai
Scarpaleggia
Schiefke
Schulte
Sgro
Sheehan
Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)
Sikand
Sohi
Sorbara
Spengemann
Ste-Marie
Stubbs
Tabbara
Tassi
Tilson
Trost
Van Kesteren
Vandal
Vaughan
Viersen
Wagantall
Watts
Webber
Wilkinson
Wong
Young
Zahid

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare Motion No. 1 defeated.

The question is on Motion No. 3. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Speaker: In my opinion the nays have it.

And five or more members having risen:

● (1900)

[*English*]

(The House divided on Motion No. 3, which was negatived on the following division:)

(Division No. 66)

YEAS

Members

Aboultaif
Albrecht
Ambrose
Arnold
Bergen
Berthold
Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis)
Boucher
Brown
Carrie
Clarke
Damoff
Diotte
Dreeshen
Falk
Gallant
Genuis
Godin
Harder
Jeneroux
Kenney
Kitchen
Lake
Lebel
Lightbound
Lukiwski
Maguire
McColeman
Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound)
Nicholson
Obhrai
Paul-Hus
Rayes
Rempel
Ritz
Scheer
Shields
Sorenson
Strahl
Sweet
Tilson
Van Kesteren
Vecchio
Watts
Wong
Zimmer– — 91

Albas
Allison
Anderson
Barlow
Bernier
Bezan
Block
Brassard
Calkins
Chan
Clement
Deltell
Doherty
Eglinski
Fast
Généreux
Gladu
Gourde
Harper
Kelly
Kent
Kmiec
Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Liepert
Lobb
MacKenzie
McCauley (Edmonton West)
McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)
Moore
Nuttall
O'Toole
Raitt
Reid
Richards
Saroya
Schmale
Sopuck
Stanton
Stubbs
Tassi
Trost
Van Loan
Viersen
Webber
Yurdiga

NAYS

Members

Aldag
Alleslev
Anandasangaree
Arseneault
Ashton
Ayoub
Bagnell
Baylis
Beech

Alghabra
Amos
Angus
Arya
Aubin
Badawey
Bains
Beaulieu
Bennett

Benson
Bittle
Blair
Boissonnault
Boudrias
Boutin-Sweet
Breton
Caesar-Chavannes
Caron
Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)
Chagger
Chen
Choquette
Cooper
Cullen
Dabrusin
DeCourcey
Dhillon
Dion
Drouin
Dubourg
Duguid
Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)
Duvall
Easter
El-Khoury
Erskine-Smith
Eyolfson
Fillmore
Fisher
Fortin
Fraser (West Nova)
Freeland
Garneau
Gerretsen
Goldsmith-Jones
Gould
Grewal
Hardcastle
Harvey
Holland
Hughes
Hutchings
Johns
Jones
Jowhari
Khalid
Kwan
Lamoureux
Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)
LeBlanc
Lefebvre
Leslie
Lockhart
Longfield
MacGregor
Malcolmson
Marcil
Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)
Mathyssen
May (Cambridge)
McCallum
McDonald
McKay
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
Mendès
Mihychuk
Monsef
Morrissey
Murray
Nassif
O'Connell
Oliver
Paradis
Peschisolido
Petitpas Taylor
Picard
Poissant
Qualtrough
Rankin
Rioux
Rodriguez
Rota

Bibeau
Blaikie
Blaney (North Island—Powell River)
Bossio
Boulerice
Bratina
Brison
Cannings
Carr
Casey (Charlottetown)
Champagne
Chong
Christopherson
Cormier
Cuzner
Davies
Dhaliwal
Di Iorio
Donnelly
Dubé
Duclos
Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Dusseault
Dzerowicz
Ehsassi
Ellis
Eyking
Fergus
Finnigan
Fonseca
Fragiskatos
Fraser (Central Nova)
Fuhr
Garrison
Gill
Goodale
Graham
Hajdu
Hardie
Hehr
Housefather
Hussen
Iacono
Joly
Jordan
Julian
Khera
Lametti
Lapointe
Laverdière
Lebouthillier
Lemieux
Levitt
Long
Ludwig
MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Maloney
Masse (Windsor West)

May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
McCrimmon
McGuinty
McKenna
McLeod (Northwest Territories)
Mendicino
Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Soeurs)
Morneau
Mulcair
Nantel
Nault
Oliphant
O'Regan
Pauzé
Peterson
Philpott
Plamondon
Quach
Ramsey
Ratansi
Robillard
Romanado
Rudd

Ruimy
Saganash
Saini
Samson
Sansoucy
Scarpaleggia
Schulte
Sgro
Sheehan
Sidhu (Brampton South)
Simms
Sorbara
Ste-Marie
Stewart
Tan
Tootoo
Trudel
Vandenbeld
Virani
Warawa
Weir
Wilkinson
Wrzesnewskyj
Zahid– — 229

Rusnak
Sahota
Sajjan
Sangha
Sarai
Schiefke
Serré
Shanahan
Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)
Sikand
Sohi
Spengemann
Stetski
Tabbara
Thériault
Trudeau
Vandal
Vaughan
Wagantall
Waugh
Whalen
Wilson-Raybould
Young

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare Motion No. 3 defeated.

[*Translation*]

The question is on Motion No. 4.

A vote on this motion also applies to Motion No. 9.

[*English*]

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Speaker: In my opinion the nays have it.

And five or more members having risen:

● (1910)

[*Translation*]

(The House divided on Motion No. 4, which was negatived on the following division:)

(Division No. 67)

YEAS

Members

Aboultaif
Albrecht
Ambrose
Arnold
Bergen
Berthold
Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis)
Boucher
Brown
Carrie

Albas
Allison
Anderson
Barlow
Bernier
Bezan
Block
Brassard
Calkins
Chan

Chong
Clement
Deltell
Doherty
Eglinski
Falk
Gallant
Genuis
Godin
Harder
Jeneroux
Kenney
Kitchen
Lake
Lebel
Lobb
MacKenzie
McCauley (Edmonton West)
McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)
Moore
Nuttall
Oliphant
Paul-Hus
Rayes
Rempel
Ritz
Scheer
Shields
Sorenson
Strahl
Sweet
Trost
Van Loan
Viersen
Warawa
Waugh
Whalen
Yurdiga

Clarke
Cooper
Diotte
Dreeshen
Erskine-Smith
Fast
Généreux
Gladu
Gourde
Harper
Kelly
Kent
Kmiec
Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Liepert
Lukiwski
Maguire
McColeman
Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound)
Nicholson
Obhrai
O'Toole
Raitt
Reid
Richards
Saroya
Schmale
Sopuck
Stanton
Stubbs
Tilson
Van Kesteren
Vecchio
Wagantall
Watts
Webber
Wong
Zimmer– — 96

NAYS

Members

Aldag
Alleslev
Anandasangaree
Arseneault
Ashton
Ayoub
Bagnell
Baylis
Beech
Benson
Bittle
Blair
Boissonnault
Boudrias
Boutin-Sweet
Breton
Caesar-Chavannes
Caron
Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)
Chagger
Chen
Christopherson
Cullen
Dabrusin
Davies
Dhaliwal
Di Iorio
Donnelly
Dubé
Duclos
Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Dusseault
Dzerowicz
Ehsassi
Ellis
Eyolfson
Fillmore
Fisher
Fortin
Fraser (West Nova)
Freeland

Alghabra
Amos
Angus
Arya
Aubin
Badawey
Bains
Beaulieu
Bennett
Bibeau
Blaikie
Blaney (North Island—Powell River)
Bossio
Boulerice
Bratina
Brison
Cannings
Carr
Casey (Charlottetown)
Champagne
Choquette
Cormier
Cuzner
Damoff
DeCourcey
Dhillon
Dion
Drouin
Dubourg
Duguid
Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)
Duvall
Easter
El-Khoury
Eyking
Fergus
Finnigan
Fonseca
Fragiskatos
Fraser (Central Nova)
Fuhr

Garneau	Garrison
Gerretsen	Gill
Goldsmith-Jones	Goodale
Gould	Graham
Grewal	Hajdu
Hardcastle	Hardie
Harvey	Hehr
Holland	Housefather
Hughes	Hussen
Hutchings	Iacono
Johns	Joly
Jones	Jordan
Jowhari	Julian
Khalid	Khera
Kwan	Lametti
Lamoureux	Lapointe
Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)	Laverdière
LeBlanc	Lebouthillier
Lefebvre	Lemieux
Leslie	Levitt
Lightbound	Lockhart
Long	Longfield
Ludwig	MacGregor
MacKinnon (Gatineau)	Malcolmson
Maloney	Marcil
Masse (Windsor West)	Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)
Mathyssen	May (Cambridge)
May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	McCallum
McCrimmon	McDonald
McGuinty	McKay
McKenna	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
McLeod (Northwest Territories)	Mendès
Mendicino	Mihychuk
Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Soeurs)	
Monsef	
Morneau	Morrissey
Mulcair	Murray
Nantel	Nassif
Nault	O'Connell
Oliver	O'Regan
Ouellette	Paradis
Pauzé	Peschisolido
Peterson	Petitpas Taylor
Philpott	Picard
Plamondon	Poissant
Quach	Qualtrough
Ramsey	Rankin
Ratansi	Rioux
Robillard	Rodriguez
Romanado	Rota
Rudd	Ruimy
Rusnak	Saganash
Sahota	Saini
Sajjan	Samson
Sangha	Sansoucy
Sarai	Scarpaleggia
Schiefke	Schulte
Serré	Sgro
Shanahan	Sheehan
Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)	Sidhu (Brampton South)
Sikand	Simms
Sohi	Sorbara
Spengemann	Ste-Marie
Stetski	Stewart
Tabbara	Tan
Tassi	Thériault
Tootoo	Trudeau
Trudel	Vandal
Vandenbeld	Vaughan
Virani	Weir
Wilkinson	Wilson-Raybould
Wrzesnewskyj	Young
Zahid– — 225	

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare Motion No. 4 defeated. I therefore declare Motion No. 9 also defeated.

[*English*]

The question is on Motion No. 6.

A negative vote on Motion No. 6 necessitates the question being put on Motion No. 7.

[*Translation*]

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Speaker: In my opinion the nays have it.

And five or more members having risen:

● (1920)

(The House divided on Motion No. 6, which was negatived on the following division:)

(Division No. 68)

YEAS

Members

Aldag	Angus
Arseneault	Ashton
Aubin	Beaulieu
Benson	Blaikie
Blaney (North Island—Powell River)	Boudrias
Boulerice	Boutin-Sweet
Cannings	Caron
Choquette	Christopherson
Cullen	Davies
Donnelly	Dubé
Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)	Dusseault
Duvall	Erskine-Smith
Fortin	Garrison
Gill	Hardcastle
Hughes	Johns
Julian	Kent
Kwan	Lametti
Laverdière	MacGregor
Malcolmson	Marcil
Masse (Windsor West)	Mathyssen
May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	Mendès
Moore	Mulcair
Nantel	Oliphant
Pauzé	Plamondon
Quach	Ramsey
Rankin	Saganash
Sansoucy	Ste-Marie
Stetski	Stewart
Thériault	Trudel
Vaughan	Weir– — 60

NAYS

Members

Aboultaif	Albas
Albrecht	Alghabra
Alleslev	Allison
Ambrose	Amos
Anandasangaree	Anderson
Arnold	Arya
Ayoub	Badawey
Bagnell	Bains
Barlow	Baylis
Beech	Bennett

Bergen
Berthold
Bibeau
Blair
Block
Bossio
Brassard
Breton
Brown
Calkins
Carrie
Casey (Charlottetown)
Champagne
Chen
Clarke
Cooper
Cuzner
Damoff
Deltell
Dhillon
Dion
Doherty
Drouin
Duclos
Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Easter
Ehsassi
Ellis
Eyolfson
Fast
Fillmore
Fisher
Fragiskatos
Fraser (Central Nova)
Fuhr
Garneau
Genuis
Gladu
Goldsmith-Jones
Gould
Graham
Hajdu
Hardie
Harvey
Holland
Hussen
Iacono
Joly
Jordan
Kelly
Khalid
Kitchen
Lake
Lapointe
Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)
LeBlanc
Lefebvre
Levitt
Lightbound
Lockhart
Longfield
Lukiwski
MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Maloney
May (Cambridge)
McCauley (Edmonton West)
McCrimmon
McGuinty
McKenna
McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)
Mendicino
Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound)
Monsef
Morrissey
Nassif
Nicholson
Obhrai
Oliver
O'Toole
Paradis
Peschisolido
Petitpas Taylor
Picard
Bernier
Bezan
Bittle
Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis)
Boissonnault
Boucher
Bratina
Brison
Caesar-Chavannes
Carr
Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)
Chagger
Chan
Chong
Clement
Cormier
Dabrusin
DeCourcey
Dhaliwal
Di Iorio
Diotte
Dreeshen
Dubourg
Duguid
Dzerowicz
Eglinski
El-Khoury
Eyking
Falk
Fergus
Finnigan
Fonseca
Fraser (West Nova)
Freeland
Gallant
Généreux
Gerretsen
Godin
Goodale
Gourde
Grewal
Harder
Harper
Hehr
Housefather
Hutchings
Jeneroux
Jones
Jowhari
Kenney
Khera
Kmiec
Lamoureux
Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Lebel
Lebouthillier
Leslie
Liepert
Lobb
Long
Ludwig
MacKenzie
Maguire
Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)
McCallum
McColeman
McDonald
McKay
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
McLeod (Northwest Territories)
Mihychuk
Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Soeurs)
Morneau
Murray
Nault
Nuttall
O'Connell
O'Regan
Ouellette
Paul-Hus
Peterson
Philpott
Poissant
Qualtrough
Ratansi
Reid
Richards
Ritz
Rodriguez
Rota
Ruimy
Sahota
Sajjan
Sangha
Saroya
Scheer
Schmale
Serré
Shanahan
Shields
Sidhu (Brampton South)
Simms
Sopuck
Sorenson
Stanton
Stubbs
Tabbara
Tassi
Tootoo
Trudeau
Van Loan
Vandenbeld
Viersen
Wagantall
Watts
Webber
Wilkinson
Wong
Young
Zahid
Raitt
Rayes
Rempel
Rioux
Robillard
Romanado
Rudd
Rusnak
Saini
Samson
Sarai
Scarpaleggia
Schiefke
Schulte
Sgro
Sheehan
Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)
Sikand
Sohi
Sorbara
Spengemann
Strahl
Sweet
Tan
Tilson
Trost
Van Kesteren
Vandal
Vecchio
Virani
Warawa
Waugh
Whalen
Wilson-Raybould
Wrzesnewskyj
Yurdiga
Zimmer– — 260

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare Motion No. 6 defeated.

[*English*]

The question is on Motion No. 7. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Speaker: In my opinion the nays have it.

And five or more members having risen:

● (1930)

[*Translation*]

(The House divided on Motion No. 7, which was negatived on the following division:)

(Division No. 69)

YEAS

Members

Aboultaif
Albrecht
Ambrose
Albas
Allison
Anderson

Arnold
Bergen
Berthold
Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis)
Boucher
Brown
Carrie
Clement
Doherty
Eglinski
Fast
Généreux
Gladu
Gourde
Harper
Kelly
Kitchen
Lake
Lebel
Lobb
MacKenzie
McCauley (Edmonton West)
McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)
Nicholson
Obhrai
Paul-Hus
Rayes
Rempel
Ritz
Scheer
Shields
Sorenson
Strahl
Sweet
Van Kesteren
Vecchio
Wagantall
Watts
Webber
Yurdiga
Barlow
Bernier
Bezan
Block
Brassard
Calkins
Clarke
Deltell
Dreeshen
Falk
Gallant
Genuis
Godin
Harder
Jeneroux
Kenney
Kmiec
Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Liepert
Lukiwski
Maguire
McColeman
Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound)
Nuttall
O'Toole
Raitt
Reid
Richards
Saroya
Schmale
Sopuck
Stanton
Stubbs
Trost
Van Loan
Viersen
Warawa
Waugh
Wong
Zimmer– — 86

NAYS

Members

Aldag
Alleslev
Anandasangaree
Arseneault
Ashton
Ayoub
Bagnell
Barsalou-Duval
Beaulieu
Bennett
Bibeau
Blaikie
Blaney (North Island—Powell River)
Bossio
Boulerice
Bratina
Brison
Cannings
Carr
Casey (Charlottetown)
Champagne
Chen
Choquette
Cooper
Cullen
Dabrusin
Davies
Dhaliwal
Di Iorio
Diotte
Drouin
Dubourg
Duguid
Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)
Duvall
Easter
El-Khoury
Erskine-Smith
Eyolfson
Alghabra
Amos
Angus
Arya
Aubin
Badawey
Bains
Baylis
Beech
Benson
Bittle
Blair
Boissonnault
Boudrias
Boutin-Sweet
Breton
Caesar-Chavannes
Caron
Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)
Chagger
Chan
Chong
Christopherson
Cormier
Cuzner
Damoff
DeCourcey
Dhillon
Dion
Donnelly
Dubé
Duclos
Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Dusseault
Dzerowicz
Ehsassi
Ellis
Eyking
Fergus
Fillmore
Fisher
Fortin
Fraser (West Nova)
Freeland
Garneau
Gerretsen
Goldsmith-Jones
Gould
Grewal
Hardcastle
Harvey
Holland
Hughes
Hutchings
Johns
Jones
Jowhari
Kent
Khera
Lametti
Lapointe
Laverdière
Lebouthillier
Lemieux
Levitt
Lockhart
Longfield
MacGregor
Malcolmson
Marcil
Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)
Mathyssen
May (Cambridge)
McCallum
McDonald
McKay
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
Mendès
Mihychuk
Monsef
Morneau
Mulcair
Nantel
Nault
Oliphant
O'Regan
Paradis
Peschisolido
Petitpas Taylor
Picard
Poissant
Qualtrough
Rankin
Rioux
Rodriguez
Rota
Ruimy
Saganash
Saini
Samson
Sansoucy
Scarpaleggia
Schulte
Sgro
Sheehan
Sidhu (Brampton South)
Simms
Sorbara
Ste-Marie
Stewart
Tan
Thériault
Tootoo
Trudel
Vandenbeld
Virani
Whalen
Wilson-Raybould
Young
Finnigan
Fonseca
Fragiskatos
Fraser (Central Nova)
Fuhr
Garrison
Gill
Goodale
Graham
Hajdu
Hardie
Hehr
Housefather
Hussen
Iacono
Joly
Jordan
Julian
Khalid
Kwan
Lamoureux
Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)
LeBlanc
Lefebvre
Leslie
Lightbound
Long
Ludwig
MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Maloney
Masse (Windsor West)
May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
McCrimmon
McGuinty
McKenna
McLeod (Northwest Territories)
Mendicino
Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Soeurs)
Moore
Morrissey
Murray
Nassif
O'Connell
Oliver
Ouellette
Pauzé
Peterson
Philpott
Plamondon
Quach
Ramsey
Ratansi
Robillard
Romanado
Rudd
Rusnak
Sahota
Sajjan
Sangha
Sarai
Schiefke
Serré
Shanahan
Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)
Sikand
Sohi
Spengemann
Stetski
Tabbara
Tassi
Tilson
Trudeau
Vandal
Vaughan
Weir
Wilkinson
Wrzesnewskyj
Zahid– — 236

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare Motion No. 7 defeated.

[*English*]

The question is on the Motion No. 12. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Speaker: In my opinion the nays have it.

And five or more members having risen:

● (1940)

Before the Clerk announced the results of the vote:

Hon. Kevin Sorenson: Mr. Speaker, I just want to be certain that my vote was recorded as yea, please.

(The House divided on Motion No. 12, which was negatived on the following division:)

(Division No. 70)

YEAS

Members

Albrecht
Anderson
Bergen
Bezan
Calkins
Clarke
Eglinski
Fast
Généreux
Gladu
Kenney
Kmiec
Lobb
MacKenzie
McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)
Nuttall
Reid
Ritz
Scheer
Sopuck
Strahl
Sweet
Van Kesteren
Vecchio
Wagantall
Wong
Zimmer– — 53

Allison
Arnold
Bernier
Block
Carrie
Clement
Falk
Gallant
Genuis
Harder
Kitchen
Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Lukiwski
McColeman
Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound)
Ouellette
Richards
Saroya
Shields
Sorenson
Stubbs
Trost
Van Loan
Viersen
Warawa
Yurdiga

NAYS

Members

Aboultaif
Aldag
Alleslev
Amos
Angus
Arya
Aubin
Badawey

Albas
Alghabra
Ambrose
Anandasangaree
Arseneault
Ashton
Ayoub
Bagnell

Bains
Barsalou-Duval
Beaulieu
Bennett
Berthold
Bittle
Blair
Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis)
Bossio
Boulerice
Brassard
Breton
Brown
Cannings
Carr
Casey (Charlottetown)
Champagne
Chen
Choquette
Cooper
Cullen
Dabrusin
Davies
Deltell
Dhillon
Dion
Doherty
Dreeshen
Dubé
Duclos
Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Dusseault
Dzerowicz
Ehsassi
Ellis
Eyking
Fergus
Finnigan
Fonseca
Fragiskatos
Fraser (Central Nova)
Fuhr
Garrison
Gill
Goldsmith-Jones
Gould
Graham
Hajdu
Hardie
Harvey
Holland
Hughes
Hutchings
Jeneroux
Joly
Jordan
Julian
Kent
Khera
Lake
Lamoureux
Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)
Lebel
Lebouthillier
Lemieux
Levitt
Lightbound
Long
Ludwig
MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Malcolmson
Marcil
Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)
Mathyssen
May (Cambridge)
McCallum
McCrimmon
McGuinty
McKenna
McLeod (Northwest Territories)
Mendicino
Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Soeurs)
Monsef
Moore

Barlow
Baylis
Beech
Benson
Bibeau
Blaikie
Blaney (North Island—Powell River)
Boissonnault
Boudrias
Boutin-Sweet
Bratina
Brison
Caesar-Chavannes
Caron
Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)
Chagger
Chan
Chong
Christopherson
Cormier
Cuzner
Damoff
DeCourcey
Dhaliwal
Di Iorio
Diotte
Donnelly
Drouin
Dubourg
Duguid
Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)
Duvall
Easter
El-Khoury
Erskine-Smith
Eyolfson
Fillmore
Fisher
Fortin
Fraser (West Nova)
Freeland
Garneau
Gerretsen
Godin
Goodale
Gourde
Grewal
Hardcastle
Harper
Hehr
Housefather
Hussen
Iacono
Johns
Jones
Jowhari
Kelly
Khalid
Kwan
Lametti
Lapointe
Laverdière
LeBlanc
Lefebvre
Leslie
Liepert
Lockhart
Longfield
MacGregor
Maguire
Maloney
Masse (Windsor West)
May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
McCauley (Edmonton West)
McDonald
McKay
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
Mendès
Mihychuk
Morneau

Morrissey
Murray
Nassif
Nicholson
O'Connell
Oliver
Paradis
Pauzé
Peterson
Philpott
Plamondon
Quach
Raitt
Rankin
Rayes
Rioux
Rodriguez
Rota
Ruimy
Saganash
Saini
Samson
Sansoucy
Scarpaleggia
Schmale
Serré
Shanahan
Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)
Sikand
Sohi
Spengemann
Ste-Marie
Stewart
Tan
Thériault
Tootoo
Trudel
Vandenbeld
Virani
Waugh
Weir
Wilkinson
Wrzesnewskyj
Zahid– — 267

Mulcair
Nantel
Nault
Obhrai
Oliphant
O'Regan
Paul-Hus
Peschisolido
Petitpas Taylor
Picard
Poissant
Qualtrough
Ramsey
Ratansi
Rempel
Robillard
Romanado
Rudd
Rusnak
Sahota
Sajjan
Sangha
Sarai
Schiefke
Schulte
Sgro
Sheehan
Sidhu (Brampton South)
Simms
Sorbara
Stanton
Stetski
Tabbara
Tassi
Tilson
Trudeau
Vandal
Vaughan
Watts
Webber
Whalen
Wilson-Raybould
Young

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare Motion No. 12 defeated.

[*Translation*]

The question is on Motion No. 13. May I dispense with the reading of the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

[*Chair read text of amendment to House*]

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Speaker: In my opinion the nays have it.

And five or more members having risen:

● (1955)

(The House divided on Motion No. 13, which was negatived on the following division:)

(Division No. 71)

YEAS

Members

Albrecht
Ambrose
Arnold
Bergen
Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis)
Brassard
Calkins
Chong
Cooper
Doherty
Falk
Gallant
Genuis
Harder
Jeneroux
Kenney
Kmiec
Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Lukiwski
Maguire
McColeman
Nicholson
O'Toole
Rempel
Ritz
Scheer
Shields
Strahl
Sweet
Trost
Van Loan
Viersen
Warawa
Wong
Zimmer– — 69

Allison
Anderson
Barlow
Bezan
Block
Brown
Carrie
Clement
Diotte
Eglinski
Fast
Généreux
Gladu
Harper
Kelly
Kitchen
Lake
Lobb
MacKenzie
McCauley (Edmonton West)
Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound)
Nuttall
Reid
Richards
Saroya
Schmale
Sorenson
Stubbs
Tilson
Van Kesteren
Vecchio
Wagantall
Watts
Yurdiga

NAYS

Members

Aboultaif
Aldag
Alleslev
Anandasangaree
Arseneault
Ashton
Ayoub
Bagnell
Barsalou-Duval
Beaulieu
Bennett
Bernier
Bibeau
Blaikie
Blaney (North Island—Powell River)
Bossio
Boudrias
Boutin-Sweet
Breton
Caesar-Chavannes
Caron
Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)
Chagger
Chan
Choquette
Clarke
Cormier
Cuzner
Damoff
DeCourcey
Dhaliwal
Di Iorio

Albas
Alghabra
Amos
Angus
Arya
Aubin
Badawey
Bains
Baylis
Beech
Benson
Berthold
Bittle
Blair
Boissonnault
Boucher
Boulerice
Bratina
Brison
Cannings
Carr
Casey (Charlottetown)
Champagne
Chen
Christopherson
Clement
Cullen
Dabrusin
Davies
Deltell
Dhillon
Dion

Donnelly
Drouin
Dubourg
Duguid
Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)
Duvall
Easter
El-Khoury
Erskine-Smith
Eyolfson
Fillmore
Fisher
Fortin
Fraser (West Nova)
Freeland
Garneau
Gerretsen
Godin
Goodale
Gourde
Grewal
Hardcastle
Harvey
Holland
Hughes
Hutchings
Johns
Jones
Jowhari
Kent
Kwan
Lamoureux
Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)
Lebel
Lebouthillier
Lemieux
Levitt
Lightbound
Long
Ludwig
MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Maloney
Masse (Windsor West)
Mathyssen
May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
McCrimmon
McGuinty
McKenna
McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)
Mendès
Mihychuk
Monsef
Morneau
Mulcair
Nantel
Nault
O'Connell
Oliver
Ouellette
Paul-Hus
Peschisolido
Petitpas Taylor
Picard
Poissant
Qualtrough
Ramsey
Ratansi
Rioux
Rodriguez
Rota
Ruimy
Saganash
Saini
Samson
Sansoucy
Scarpaleggia
Schulte
Sgro
Sheehan
Sidhu (Brampton South)
Simms
Sopuck
Spengemann
Dreeshen
Dubé
Duclos
Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Dusseault
Dzerowicz
Ehsassi
Ellis
Eyking
Fergus
Finnigan
Fonseca
Fragiskatos
Fraser (Central Nova)
Fuhr
Garrison
Gill
Goldsmith-Jones
Gould
Graham
Hajdu
Hardie
Hehr
Housefather
Hussen
Iacono
Joly
Jordan
Julian
Khalid
Lametti
Lapointe
Laverdière
LeBlanc
Lefebvre
Leslie
Liepert
Lockhart
Longfield
MacGregor
Malcolmson
Marcil
Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)
May (Cambridge)
McCallum
McDonald
McKay
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
McLeod (Northwest Territories)
Mendicino
Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Soeurs)
Moore
Morrissey
Murray
Nassif
Obhrai
Oliphant
O'Regan
Paradis
Pauzé
Peterson
Philpott
Plamondon
Quach
Raitt
Rankin
Rayes
Robillard
Romanado
Rudd
Rusnak
Sahota
Sajjan
Sangha
Sarai
Schiefke
Serré
Shanahan
Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)
Sikand
Sohi
Sorbara
Stanton
Ste-Marie
Stewart
Tan
Thériault
Trudeau
Vandal
Vaughan
Waugh
Weir
Wilkinson
Wrzesnewskyj
Zahid– — 253
Stetski
Tabbara
Tassi
Tootoo
Trudel
Vandenbeld
Virani
Webber
Whalen
Wilson-Raybould
Young

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare Motion No. 13 defeated.

[*English*]

The question is on Motion No. 14.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Speaker: All those opposed to the motion will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Speaker: In my opinion the nays have it.

And five or more members having risen:

● (2005)

[*Translation*]

(The House divided on Motion No. 14, which was negatived on the following division:)

(Division No. 72)

YEAS

Members

Aboultaif
Albrecht
Ambrose
Angus
Barlow
Bernier
Bezan
Block
Brassard
Calkins
Chong
Clement
Davies
Diotte
Dreeshen
Falk
Gallant
Genuis
Godin
Harder
Jeneroux
Kenney
Kitchen
Lake
Lebel
Albas
Allison
Anderson
Arnold
Bergen
Berthold
Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis)
Boucher
Brown
Carrie
Clarke
Cooper
Deltell
Doherty
Eglinski
Fast
Généreux
Gladu
Gourde
Harper
Kelly
Kent
Kmiec
Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Liepert

Lobb
MacKenzie
May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
McColeman
McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)
Nicholson
Obhrai
Ouellette
Raitt
Reid
Richards
Saroya
Schmale
Shields
Sorenson
Strahl
Sweet
Trost
Van Loan
Viersen
Warawa
Waugh
Wong
Zimmer– — 97

Lukiwski
Maguire
McCauley (Edmonton West)
McKay
Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound)
Nuttall
O'Toole
Paul-Hus
Rayes
Rempel
Ritz
Scheer
Sgro
Sopuck
Stanton
Stubbs
Tilson
Van Kesteren
Vecchio
Wagantall
Watts
Webber
Yurdiga

NAYS

Members

Aldag
Alleslev
Arseneault
Ashton
Ayoub
Bagnell
Barsalou-Duval
Beaulieu
Bennett
Bibeau
Blaikie
Blaney (North Island—Powell River)
Bossio
Boulerice
Bratina
Brison
Cannings
Carr
Casey (Charlottetown)
Champagne
Chen
Christopherson
Cullen
Dabrusin
DeCourcey
Dhillon
Dion
Drouin
Dubourg
Duguid
Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)
Duvall
Easter
El-Khoury
Erskine-Smith
Eyolfson
Fillmore
Fisher
Fortin
Fraser (West Nova)
Freeland
Garneau
Gerretsen
Goldsmith-Jones
Gould
Grewal
Hardcastle
Harvey
Holland
Hughes
Hutchings
Johns
Jones
Jowhari
Khalid

Alghabra
Amos
Arya
Aubin
Badawey
Bains
Baylis
Beech
Benson
Bittle
Blair
Boissonnault
Boudrias
Boutin-Sweet
Breton
Caesar-Chavannes
Caron
Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)
Chagger
Chan
Choquette
Cormier
Cuzner
Damoff
Dhaliwal
Di Iorio
Donnelly
Dubé
Duclos
Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Dusseault
Dzerowicz
Ehsassi
Ellis
Eyking
Fergus
Finnigan
Fonseca
Fragiskatos
Fraser (Central Nova)
Fuhr
Garrison
Gill
Goodale
Graham
Hajdu
Hardie
Hehr
Housefather
Hussen
Iacono
Joly
Jordan
Julian
Khera
Kwan
Lamoureux
Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)
LeBlanc
Lemieux
Levitt
Lockhart
Longfield
MacGregor
Malcolmson
Marcil
Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)
Mathyssen
May (Cambridge)
McCrimmon
McGuinty
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
Mendès
Mihychuk
Monsef
Morneau
Mulcair
Nantel
Nault
Oliphant
O'Regan
Pauzé
Peterson
Philpott
Plamondon
Quach
Ramsey
Ratansi
Robillard
Romanado
Rudd
Rusnak
Sahota
Sajjan
Sangha
Sarai
Schiefke
Serré
Sheehan
Sikand
Sohi
Spengemann
Stetski
Tabbara
Tassi
Tootoo
Trudel
Vandenbeld
Virani
Whalen
Wilson-Raybould
Young

Lametti
Lapointe
Laverdière
Leboutthillier
Leslie
Lightbound
Long
Ludwig
MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Maloney
Masse (Windsor West)

McCallum
McDonald
McKenna
McLeod (Northwest Territories)
Mendicino
Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Soeurs)
Moore
Morrissey
Murray
Nassif
O'Connell
Oliver
Paradis
Peschisolido
Petitpas Taylor
Picard
Poissant
Qualtrough
Rankin
Rioux
Rodriguez
Rota
Ruimy
Saganash
Saini
Samson
Sansoucy
Scarpaleggia
Schulte
Shanahan
Sidhu (Brampton South)
Simms
Sorbara
Ste-Marie
Stewart
Tan
Thériault
Trudeau
Vandal
Vaughan
Weir
Wilkinson
Wrzesnewskyj
Zahid– — 222

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare Motion No. 14 defeated.

[*English*]

The question is on Motion No. 16.

● (2010)

(The House divided on Motion No. 16, which was negatived on the following division:)

(Division No. 73)

YEAS

Members

Aldag
Arseneault
Aubin
Beaulieu

Angus
Ashton
Barsalou-Duval
Benson

Blaney (North Island—Powell River)
Boudrias
Boutin-Sweet
Caron
Choquette
Cullen
Donnelly
Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)
Duvall
Fortin
Gill
Hughes
Julian
Laverdière
Malcolmson
Masse (Windsor West)
May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
Mulcair
Oliphant
Plamondon
Ramsey
Saganash
Ste-Marie
Stewart
Trudel– — 57

Boucher
Boulerice
Cannings
Chan
Christopherson
Davies
Dubé
Dusseault
Erskine-Smith
Garrison
Hardcastle
Johns
Kwan
MacGregor
Marcil
Mathyssen
Moore
Nantel
Pauzé
Quach
Rankin
Sansoucy
Stetski
Thériault

NAYS

Members

Aboultaif
Albrecht
Alleslev
Ambrose
Anandasangaree
Arnold
Ayoub
Bagnell
Barlow
Beech
Bergen
Berthold
Bibeau
Blaikie
Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis)
Boissonnault
Brassard
Breton
Brown
Calkins
Carrie
Casey (Charlottetown)
Champagne
Chong
Clement
Cormier
Dabrusin
DeCourcey
Dhaliwal
Di Iorio
Diotte
Dreeshen
Dubourg
Duguid
Dzerowicz
Eglinski
El-Khoury
Eyking
Falk
Fergus
Finnigan
Fonseca
Fraser (West Nova)
Freeland
Gallant
Généreux
Gerretsen
Godin
Goodale
Gourde
Grewal
Harder
Harper
Hehr

Albas
Alghabra
Allison
Amos
Anderson
Arya
Badawey
Bains
Baylis
Bennett
Bernier
Bezan
Bittle
Blair
Block
Bossio
Bratina
Brison
Caesar-Chavannes
Carr
Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)
Chagger
Chen
Clarke
Cooper
Cuzner
Damoff
Deltell
Dhillon
Dion
Doherty
Drouin
Duclos
Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Easter
Ehsassi
Ellis
Eyolfson
Fast
Fillmore
Fisher
Fragiskatos
Fraser (Central Nova)
Fuhr
Garneau
Genuis
Gladu
Goldsmith-Jones
Gould
Graham
Hajdu
Hardie
Harvey
Holland

Housefather
Hutchings
Jeneroux
Jones
Jowhari
Kenney
Khalid
Kitchen
Lake
Lamoureux
Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Lebel
Lebouthillier
Leslie
Liepert
Lobb
Long
Ludwig
MacKenzie
Maguire
Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)
May (Cambridge)
McCallum
McColeman
McDonald
McKay
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
McLeod (Northwest Territories)
Mendicino
Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound)
Monsef
Morrissey
Nassif
Nicholson
Obhrai
Oliver
O'Toole
Paradis
Peschisolido
Petitpas Taylor
Picard
Qualtrough
Ratansi
Reid
Richards
Ritz
Rodriguez
Rota
Ruimy
Sahota
Sajjan
Sangha
Saroya
Scheer
Schmale
Serré
Shanahan
Shields
Sidhu (Brampton South)
Simms
Sopuck
Sorenson
Stanton
Stubbs
Tabbara
Tassi
Tootoo
Trudeau
Van Loan
Vandenbeld
Vecchio
Virani
Warawa
Waugh
Weir
Wilkinson
Wong
Young
Zahid

Hussen
Iacono
Joly
Jordan
Kelly
Kent
Khera
Kmiec
Lametti
Lapointe
Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)
LeBlanc
Lefebvre
Levitt
Lightbound
Lockhart
Longfield
Lukiwski
MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Maloney

McCauley (Edmonton West)
McCrimmon
McGuinty
McKenna
McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)
Mendès
Mihychuk
Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Soeurs)
Morneau
Murray
Nault
Nuttall
O'Connell
O'Regan
Ouellette
Paul-Hus
Peterson
Philpott
Poissant
Raitt
Rayes
Rempel
Rioux
Robillard
Romanado
Rudd
Rusnak
Saini
Samson
Sarai
Scarpaleggia
Schiefke
Schulte
Sgro
Sheehan
Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)
Sikand
Sohi
Sorbara
Spengemann
Strahl
Sweet
Tan
Tilson
Trost
Van Kesteren
Vandal
Vaughan
Viersen
Wagantall
Watts
Webber
Whalen
Wilson-Raybould
Wrzesnewskyj
Yurdiga
Zimmer– — 264

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare Motion No. 16 defeated.

● (2015)

Hon. Jody Wilson-Raybould (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.) moved that the bill, as amended, be concurred in at report stage.

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: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Speaker: In my opinion the yeas have it.

And five or more members having risen:

● (2020)

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

(Division No. 74)

YEAS

Members

Albas
Alghabra
Amos
Arseneault
Ayoub
Bagnell
Baylis
Bennett
Bibeau
Blair
Bossio
Bratina
Brison
Carr
Casey (Charlottetown)
Champagne
Chen
Clarke
Cuzner
Damoff
Deltell
Dhillon
Dion
Dubourg
Duguid
Dzerowicz
Ehsassi
Ellis
Eyolfson
Fillmore
Fisher
Fragiskatos
Fraser (Central Nova)
Fuhr
Gerretsen
Goodale
Gourde
Grewal
Hardie
Hehr
Housefather
Hutchings
Joly
Jordan
Kelly
Khalid
Lamoureux
Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)
LeBlanc
Lefebvre
Leslie
Liepert
Lockhart
Longfield
MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Maloney
May (Cambridge)
McCrimmon
McGuinty
McKenna
McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)
Mendicino
Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Soeurs)
Monsef
Morneau
Murray
Nault
O'Connell
O'Regan
Peschisolido
Petitpas Taylor
Picard
Qualtrough
Rayes
Rioux
Rodriguez
Rota
Ruimy
Sahota
Sajjan
Sangha
Scarpaleggia
Schmale
Serré
Shanahan
Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)
Sikand
Sohi
Spengemann
Tabbara
Tassi
Tootoo
Vandal
Vaughan
Whalen
Wilson-Raybould
Young
Aldag
Alleslev
Anandasangaree
Arya
Badawey
Bains
Beech
Berthold
Bittle
Boissonnault
Boucher
Breton
Caesar-Chavannes
Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)
Chagger
Chan
Chong
Cormier
Dabrusin
DeCourcey
Dhaliwal
Di Iorio
Drouin
Duclos
Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Easter
El-Khoury
Eyking
Fergus
Finnigan
Fonseca
Fraser (West Nova)
Freeland
Garneau
Goldsmith-Jones
Gould
Graham
Hajdu
Harvey
Holland
Hussen
Iacono
Jones
Jowhari
Kent
Khera
Lapointe
Lebel
Lebouthillier
Lemieux
Levitt
Lightbound
Long
Ludwig
Maguire
Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)
McCallum
McDonald
McKay
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
McLeod (Northwest Territories)
Mihychuk
Morrissey
Nassif
Obhrai
Oliver
Paradis
Peterson
Philpott
Poissant
Ratansi
Reid
Robillard
Romanado
Rudd
Rusnak
Saini
Samson
Sarai
Schiefke
Schulte
Sgro
Sheehan
Sidhu (Brampton South)
Simms
Sorbara
Stanton
Tan
Tilson
Trudeau
Vandenbeld
Virani
Wilkinson
Wrzesnewskyj
Zahid– — 192

NAYS

Members

Aboultaif
Allison
Anderson
Arnold
Aubin
Barsalou-Duval
Benson
Bernier
Blaikie
Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis)
Boudrias
Boutin-Sweet
Brown
Cannings
Carrie
Christopherson
Cooper
Davies
Doherty
Dreeshen
Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)
Duvall
Erskine-Smith
Albrecht
Ambrose
Angus
Ashton
Barlow
Beaulieu
Bergen
Bezan
Blaney (North Island—Powell River)
Block
Boulerice
Brassard
Calkins
Caron
Choquette
Clement
Cullen
Diotte
Donnelly
Dubé
Dusseault
Eglinski
Falk

Fast
Gallant
Généreux
Gill
Godin
Harder
Hughes
Johns
Kenney
Kmiec
Lake
Laverdière
Lukiwski
MacKenzie
Marcil
Mathyssen
McCauley (Edmonton West)
Mendès
Moore
Nantel
Nuttall
O'Toole
Paul-Hus
Plamondon
Raitt
Rankin
Richards
Saganash
Saroya
Shields
Sorenson
Stetski
Strahl
Sweet
Trost
Van Kesteren
Vecchio
Wagantall
Watts
Webber
Wong
Zimmer– — 129

Fortin
Garrison
Genuis
Gladu
Hardcastle
Harper
Jeneroux
Julian
Kitchen
Kwan
Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Lobb
MacGregor
Malcolmson
Masse (Windsor West)
May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
McColeman
Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound)
Mulcair
Nicholson
Oliphant
Ouellette
Pauzé
Quach
Ramsey
Rempel
Ritz
Sansoucy
Scheer
Sopuck
Ste-Marie
Stewart
Stubbs
Thériault
Trudel
Van Loan
Viersen
Warawa
Waugh
Weir
Yurdiga

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

● (2025)

[*English*]

ETHICS

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on February 26 of this year I asked the Prime Minister to explain how it was ethical to appoint a Liberal Party lobbyist, David MacNaughton, to be the country's representative in Washington. The arrogance in the response was astounding.

Let us be clear. When it comes to outrageous political appointments like David MacNaughton, this is one at the same level as appointing a family member, like a nephew, to such a position. It is who one knows in the PMO for the government.

In the case of MacNaughton, his appointment at taxpayer expense is his reward for having sat in the same office as the Prime Minister's principal secretary, the individual who controls everything the Prime Minister says and does, and for being the Prime Minister's bully. This is the same David MacNaughton who is jointly named with the Prime Minister in a libel and slander lawsuit in the amount of $1.5 million. Is this the way the Liberal Party is getting the taxpayer to pay MacNaughton's legal bill? Give him a cushy job in Washington where he can lobby for his lobbying clients and add to his clientele list.

The libel and slander lawsuit tells us that David MacNaughton, and I quote from the lawsuit, "...intentionally or recklessly published the following false, defamatory and malicious comments...without regard to the truth or falsity of their contents".

The lawsuit informs Canadians that comments to libel and slander another person were initially done by MacNaughton as an anonymous "party official", until he was outed in response to a legal demand declaring an intention to apply for a court order to reveal the anonymous "party official's" identity if they did not do so voluntarily.

What was the basis of the lawsuit? The person who launched the lawsuit had fallen for the broken Liberal promise that democracy in the nomination process would be respected.

This is what Liberal riding president Julia Metus is quoted as saying, "There was absolutely no due or fair process...No one picked up the phone to contact me, there was no opportunity to discuss their concerns, and there was zero local involvement. This is contrary to everything the Liberal Party — new or otherwise — is supposed to stand for", and "the party made unproven and malicious allegations against the candidate and her family... to cover up its desire to control the nomination process...".

The Prime Minister's bully. MacNaughton is cursed by the taxpayers of Ontario for his time spent as principal secretary to Dalton McGuinty. Today, the people of Ontario are suffering from the highest electricity rates in North America. Ontario has the highest debt of any subnational government. Ontario went from being a well-managed to a have-not province, relying on western taxpayers to pay the bills.

It is important for the current government to hear what Canadians think about this unethical patronage appointment. Here are some comments from average, middle-class Canadians, which were printed in response to a story about this sordid appointment in Postmedia:

> [The former prime minister] impressed me some years back by appointing former NDP Premier Gary Doer as our Ambassador to the USA. I never expected him to do so but he did. [He] put skill and merit above party loyalty and service that time. Here, [the current Prime Minister], rewards one of his cronies. Once again the Liberals have rolled back part of [the former Conservative government's] agenda and we're the worse for it. Merit over cronyism

This is another comment from *Postmedia* :

> The Liberals have not missed a beat. Although they did have 10 years to plan their payoffs. These appointments should be more transparent, real independent appointments instead of ap"oink"ments. Way to go junior you've shown us that you really are ready to porkbarrel as well as anyone.

The next comment is:

> I agree! The bottomline is Canadians need leaders who will address our needs and act in our best interests. [The Prime Minister] stands for nothing and he will bend over to every left leaning country in the world.

Then there is this comment:

> Ahh, the age old rewarding of political sycophants, mandarins and bootlickers. The very essense of the French saying, "the more things change, the more they stay the same". Bravo....Repaying those with eminence grise who whisper in your ear.

Finally, there is this comment. "As much as there—

● (2030)

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the first thought that comes across my mind is, wow, what a job on character assassination. It is a good thing the member is standing inside the chamber. I wonder if she would have the courage to say outside the chamber some of the things she has put on the record inside the chamber.

It is important to put a few facts on the record with regard to Mr. MacNaughton. This appointment was subject to the appropriate controls of the Ethics Commissioner as are all appointments that are made by this government. The ambassador ensured that all of his previous business arrangements were, and continue to be, in compliance with his role. The Ethics Commissioner is the person whose advice we will always follow on such matters.

In listening to the member across the way, one can understand and appreciate why that would be the case.

Ambassador MacNaughton has worked with members on both sides of the aisle, and that includes members of the Conservative Party, and with governments abroad, including the United States at the federal and state levels.

Ambassador MacNaughton brings with him an expertise that will provide the Canadian public, businesses and governments at every level a deep understanding of the various systems and leaders that will help Canada champion its interests in a renewed spirit of co-operation and promotion of every aspect of that relationship.

His resume speaks for itself. He has worked with various industries, sectors of our economy, key stakeholders, public and private alike, and countless governments from coast to coast to coast. He will do a fantastic job representing our business and stakeholder interests abroad.

We are proud that Mr. MacNaughton represents Canada in the United States and we look forward to great things to come. One only needs to take a look at the outstanding work and the preparation that was involved with regard to what was the first official visit since 1997 by a prime minister to the United States.

It is important that we recognize just how critical that bilateral relationship between Canada and the United States is. I would suggest that already this government has accomplished so much more in its eight months than the previous government did in many years.

Ambassador MacNaughton will have an important role to play in strengthening this relationship to build a closer partnership between Canada and the United States, especially on the climate change front where we will work together to provide leadership to promote clean growth and combat climate change.

We will continue to work together to strengthen the North American energy security and accelerate clean energy development and technology innovation.

There is so much that can be said. The member needs to reflect on the comments she has put on the record today and recognize just how critically important it is to have an ambassador like Mr. MacNaughton, who will be able to do so much more to enhance the relationship between two great nations. With the most recent trip by the Prime Minister of Canada, we have already seen a huge success story and that will ultimately benefit all Canadians in all regions of our great country.

● (2035)

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Speaker, for taxpayers who live in Ontario are these observations. Anyone whose name is linked directly or indirectly to former premier McGuinty should be disqualified for life from holding any government position.

MacNaughton worked in the McGuinty government. Cronyism is at its finest in the Liberal tradition. It is ironic the reference to hydro potential in B.C., Manitoba, and Quebec when MacNaughton was part of the McGuinty inner circle, with the green initiatives of wind turbines and gas plant scandal. Is it coincidental there is no reference between economic opportunities for Ontario? This is patronage without accountability.

This comment is from a citizen in western Canada: "He has only one duty and that is to get Keystone built but since the principal secretary wants the oil to stay in the ground along with his Alberta friends...that aint happening. Might as well stay home. The appointment it makes it even worse. It shows a disrespect to both Canadians who have to pay for a mouthpiece appointed purely for partisan reasons and to the Americans who were not given the respect of an honest appointment. Canadians would be mistaken if they thought the Liberal Party had learned any lessons from the sponsorship scandal."

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I will respond as I did at the beginning of my remarks in response to her question. It is amazing how the member feels she can come into the chamber and assassinate the character of an individual Canadian who has done so much in serving his province and the country. The important relationship between Canada and the United States will be well-served by Ambassador MacNaughton.

The manner in which the member has brought forward issues, which are so beyond what is good parliamentary decorum, is completely uncalled for. There is no foundation in truth or merit to her arguments. I highly recommend that the member do a little more homework and look at what this individual has done for our country.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to follow up on a question I asked on March 22 during question period in order to obtain a more substantive answer. I especially want to reiterate the facts at issue.

I would first like to explain what led to the question of March 22, 2016. An investigative report revealed what is known as the "Lake Champlain scheme". This report also revealed that the deputy minister of public safety directly intervened in the matter even though he is responsible for the Canada Border Services Agency, which is obviously involved in this infamous Lake Champlain scheme. The deputy minister intervened directly in an attempt to ensure that this scheme, if I may call it that, would continue.

I will recall the facts. Through this scheme, owners avoid paying taxes on the purchases of vessels. I can provide a simple and quick explanation. When you buy a good intended for export, you do not pay the taxes, including duties, if the good comes from another country. That applies to European vessels, for example. When you buy this item for export, it obviously has to be exported. You buy the vessel in Lake Champlain, in Canada, and then you export it to the United States. The border is right there; it is not very complicated. You then navigate to the United States on a vessel registered and licensed in Canada, which is deemed to be free of duty when it is in U.S. waters. In this case, when you cross the border, you do not have to pay U.S. taxes because the boat is not considered to have been imported.

The most disgusting thing about this scheme is that people can come back to Canada to put their boats in storage. The Canada Border Services Agency allows what can rightly be called a scheme because boat owners can come back to Canada to store their boats at marinas around Lake Champlain for the winter. People are bringing goods that were initially intended for export back here for the winter. The next summer, that boat is back in American waters.

Even the Canada Border Services Agency called this procedure a scheme in an internal memo. I would like to quote from the Radio-Canada article that mentions the Canada Border Services Agency's email:

> A Border Services Agency internal email confirms the existence of this practice, calling it a "scheme" and stating that there are at least 600 boats on which no tax or duty has been paid on Lake Champlain.
>
> This problem facilitates and perpetuates the violation of Canadian laws and perhaps American laws too. It costs Canada significant revenue. This scheme needs to be stopped as soon as possible.

That message was revealed in the investigative report.

In response to the message, the Gosselin marina expressed concern. It said:

> We also obtained an email chain dated August 14. The chain begins with Christine Gosselin, one of the owners of Marina Gosselin in Saint-Paul-de-l'Île-aux-Noix, who writes directly to François Guimont, the deputy minister responsible for the RCMP, CSIS, and the Canada Border Services Agency.
>
> "I heard from a reliable source that as of next week, customs officers will no longer be allowing boats on which no tax or duty has been paid to enter Canada without written directions from Ottawa", she writes.

In response to my question, the minister said:

> Mr. Speaker, the deputy minister has engaged with the Ethics Commissioner on this file, and she will provide any advice that is necessary.

Accordingly, could the parliamentary secretary who is here today tell us what advice the Ethics Commissioner had to give and what has been done about this issue since I asked the question on March 22, 2016?

● (2040)

Mr. Michel Picard (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for the question and for coming back to the matter.

Our government is committed to preserving the integrity of the tax system and ensuring compliance. Like my hon. colleague, we are concerned about the allegations that owners made false statements on their status to both U.S. and Canadian customs with the intention of avoiding paying taxes.

My colleague might know more or less how many federal laws and regulations apply to the purchase, export, or import of a private vessel, a responsibility that falls under a number of different departments and agencies.

[*English*]

If a private vessel is being purchased in Canada for export, that is for personal use outside of Canadian waters, the Canadian owner may not be obligated to pay Canadian sales tax or customs duties. In this type of scenario, these vessels, which are considered exported from Canada, are only permitted to be imported back into Canada temporarily for storage and repair free from Canadian taxes and duties as long as they adhere to the prescribed rules governing time frames and use. However, a vessel purchased for export may not be imported back into Canada by the owner for personal use on Canadian waters, nor is it eligible for entry into our country as a good that originated in Canada, unless all taxes and/or duties owed under the Customs Act have been paid to the crown. Non-compliance may result in enforcement measures, including the collection of duty and taxes.

As I have mentioned, multiple pieces of federal legislation and regulation govern the importation and exportation of these vessels. For example, as noted by the Minister of Public Safety in the House of Commons on March 22, taxation policies and rules are within the purview of the Minister of National Revenue. Accordingly, the collection of any outstanding debts owing to the crown, such as duties, fees, taxes, or any other amount under the Customs Act, customs tariffs, Excise Tax Act, and related regulations, would fall within the mandate of the Canada Revenue Agency, which may take legal action to collect the outstanding debt in the absence of an acceptable payment arrangement.

Additionally, the licensing and registration of pleasure craft vessels in Canada is the responsibility of Transport Canada under the Canada Shipping Act. Transport Canada uses administrative monetary penalties to enforce compliance, and any pleasure craft owner found to be operating a vessel in Canada without a licence or registration may be issued a fine.

Finally, any duties owed are calculated according to the relevant tariff classification, which is defined by the Department of Finance. As part of its mandate, the Canada Border Services Agency, which falls under the purview of Public Safety Canada, assists other federal departments in enforcing their acts. With respect to this issue, the agency is required to verify that vessels that have been exported from Canada are not being used in Canadian waters. In cases where violations are discovered, the agency pursues any applicable enforcement, including collection of duties and taxes. As part of its responsibilities, the agency makes information available to raise awareness about Canadian laws and to encourage compliance.

The Canada Border Services Agency functions 24 hours a day and 365 days a year, at approximately 1,200 points of service, including marine ports. Last year, the agency processed approximately 97.5 million travellers, and collected about $29 billion in duties and taxes, accounting for 10% of the Government of Canada's revenues.

● (2045)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his answer. Unfortunately, he did not address the fundamental question about ethics, which is the topic of the adjournment debate I proposed this evening.

The ethics question has to do with the deputy minister's direct involvement in a situation. He is one of the most senior officials at the Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness.

I want to remind the House of what happened after Ms. Gosselin, from Marina Gosselin, sent an email.

At 6:24 a.m., she sent an email to the deputy minister; she had his personal email address, since she sent him an email directly. At 8:50 a.m., the deputy minister forwarded the email directly to the president of the Canada Border Services Agency. At 10:26 a.m., the president forwarded the email to three subordinates, talking about Mr. Guimont's request. That same day, the request made its way through the organization in five new messages identified as a priority.

A conference call was set up, and 24 people became involved in fixing Marina Gosselin's problem.

Mr. Michel Picard: Mr. Speaker, naturally, we expect Canadians to comply with the law regarding the purchase, exportation, and importation of vessels. The Canada Border Services Agency has a mandate to enforce the act.

Whether a vessel arrives in Canada by water or by land, every person who temporarily or permanently imports a foreign boat must declare it to the Canada Border Services Agency.

If owners wish to use their foreign vessels for recreational purposes in Canadian waters, they must permanently import the vessel and pay the applicable Canadian taxes and duties. Non-compliance may result in enforcement measures, including the collection of duty and taxes.

The government will continue to work with the Canada Border Services Agency and to ensure that these boat owners and marinas know their responsibilities and that they meet them.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Pursuant to Standing Order 81(4), the motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been withdrawn, and the House will now resolve itself into committee of the whole for the purpose of considering all votes under Finance in the main estimates for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2017.

[*English*]

I do now leave the chair for the House to resolve itself into committee of the whole.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

● (2050)

[*Translation*]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

FINANCE—MAIN ESTIMATES 2016-17

(House in committee of the whole for consideration of all votes under Finance in the Main Estimates, Mr. Bruce Stanton in the chair)

The Chair: The House is in committee of the whole for the purpose of considering all votes under Finance in the main estimates for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2017.

Tonight's debate is a general one on all of the votes related to finance. The first round will begin with the official opposition, followed by the government and then the New Democratic Party. After that, we will follow the usual rotation for the House.

[*English*]

Each member will be allocated 15 minutes at a time, which may be used for both debate and opposing questions. Should members wish to use this time to make a speech, it can last a maximum of 10 minutes, leaving at least 5 minutes for questions to the minister.

When a member is recognized, he or she should indicate to the Chair how the 15-minute period will be used. Members should also note that they will need the unanimous consent of the committee if they wish to split their time with another member.

[*Translation*]

When the time is to be used for questions and comments, the Chair will expect that the minister's response will reflect approximately the time taken by the question. I also wish to indicate that, in committee of the whole, ministers and members should be referred to by their titles or riding names, and of course, all remarks should be addressed through the Chair. I ask for everyone's co-operation in upholding all established standards of parliamentary language and behaviour.

[*English*]

We will begin tonight's session. As a reminder to all hon. members, they will be recognized at the seat of their choice in the chamber.

The House is in committee of the whole, pursuant to Standing Order 81(4)(a), for consideration of all votes related to finance in the main estimates for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2017.

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Milton, CPC): Mr. Chair, as members of the House know, the main estimates represent the government expenditure plan or its overview of spending for 2016-17. Spending, of course, is of great concern and interest to Her Majesty's loyal opposition, because that is exactly where we think the government goes off the path to true prosperity.

I am going to have questions for the minister for the full 15 minutes. I will start with revenues going forward.

In the budget of the government that was tabled in this place in March, the minister indicated that there would be revenues of approximately $291.2 billion. Also, he projected that there would be program expenses of $270.9 billion. That is very similar to what we had predicted in terms of the revenues for budget 2015-16 of $290.3 billion, the big difference, of course, being program expenses.

My question for the minister is this. Can the minister not recognize that the issue is with spending and not with revenues?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Chair, we recognize that the fundamental challenge for Canada at this time, faced with the demographic challenges that we face, is to make investments that will actually grow the size of the economy.

Those investments will in fact enhance the revenue for the government, but that is not the core reason that we are doing them. We are doing them because we are coming out of an era of low growth. The last decade has been an era of low growth. It was a decade in which all of the deficits that were put in place during those years led only to low growth.

Our approach is different. Our approach is to make investments that will allow us to expand the growth rate and improve the revenue to the government.

● (2055)

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, does the minister realize that his expenses are up 8.6% over last year, and looking forward, there are extremely higher interims of program expenses?

Hon. Bill Morneau: Mr. Chair, I would like to identify, again, that we are faced this year with the challenges that have been left to us by the previous government.

Those challenges include an era that was lower growth. When lower growth comes, we often find we have some challenges with increased program expenditures to deal with challenges faced by the economy. That is the situation we find ourselves in.

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, on the topic of economic growth, does the minister not agree with the fact that the entire world economy has experienced low growth in the past 10 years?

Hon. Bill Morneau: Mr. Chair, what I can agree with, quite clearly, is the fact that the economy over the last decade, the period in which the previous government was in place, was growing at the lowest rate it has grown for the last eight decades.

We found ourselves in a low-growth era. That is what we are facing right now. That is exactly why we have decided to move forward with investments that can enhance our growth rate.

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, the minister is fond of assessing the economy by saying that there has been a disproportionate increase in incomes in this country over the past 10 years.

Can the minister not confirm for me that the OECD has stated that between 2005 and 2011, household income has increased in Canada in the same proportion across the distribution of incomes?

Hon. Bill Morneau: Mr. Chair, I would like to say that we are very focused on the notion of inclusive growth.

We realize that middle-class families are facing real anxiety. They are facing the anxiety of raising their children when costs are going up for education, and anxiety when they consider the retirement that is looming large to them.

That is one of the reasons we are focused on investing in order to improve the economy and improving growth from the situation we have found ourselves in.

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, let us talk about retirement for a moment.

The minister said in committee this afternoon that moving the retirement age from 65 to 67 was an arbitrary decision made by the previous government.

I would like to know if the minister believes that 28 out of 34 countries doing the same thing indicates arbitrariness.

Hon. Bill Morneau: Mr. Chair, when defining "arbitrary", what I mean is that when a prime minister leaves their country to go to another country to decide what that country is going to do rather than presenting it to their own countrymen, that presents as an arbitrary decision. That is a decision without any pre-communication to the population. That is an arbitrary decision.

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, does the minister realize that his Prime Minister actually announced that it would be moderate deficits to *The Wall Street Journal* in New York City, which is not in our county either?

Hon. Bill Morneau: Mr. Chair, we have been very clear with Canadians that we want to be open and transparent.

In fact, during the entire course of our election campaign, we told Canadians that we wanted to make investments in our economy. We were clear all the way.

Once we got into office, we were clear again. Investments were the path that we were going to be on. Investments are the path, because we know what we are facing is an era that has been low growth. It has been low growth because the previous government did not make those kinds of investments in Canadians.

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, does the minister realize that the OECD actually recommended that countries move to 67 years of age for eligibility and indeed said the following?

> Bold action is required. Breaking down the barriers that stop older people from working beyond traditional retirement ages will be a necessity to ensure that our children and grand-children can enjoy an adequate pension at the end of their working life. Though these reforms can sometimes be unpopular and painful, at this time of tight public finances and limited scope for fiscal and monetary policy, these reforms can also serve to boost much needed growth in ageing economies.

Why does the minister not agree with the Secretary-General of the OECD?

● (2100)

Hon. Bill Morneau: Mr. Chair, we believe that retirement security is a critically important issue. It is an issue on which we are very focused. We also believe that retirement security is not a simple one-size-fits-all solution. We recognize that those people, the most vulnerable in our society, rely on the guaranteed income supplement and the old age security program. That is why we have reformed the guaranteed income supplement, so that we could help some of the most vulnerable in our society. That is why we have moved the old age security system back to age 65, so that those people who are most vulnerable could actually get access to it at a time when they need it.

Together with that, we are moving forward on a plan to enhance the Canada pension plan, so that we can focus on the long-term security of Canadians, ensuring that they save enough for their retirement, so they can retire in dignity.

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, perhaps the minister will agree with this quote, which states:

> If we were to retire three years later than we do now, any concerns about having adequate retirement income would practically vanish. It would also alleviate any shortages in the workforce due to the aging...population.

Does the minister agree with this quote?

Hon. Bill Morneau: Mr. Chair, if the hon. member is saying "we" and including herself and me, I could probably agree with that, because I do think that those people who are most capable of retiring later can indeed do so. I would say that the people in her or my income category absolutely qualify for that quote.

What we are trying to say to Canadians is that one size does not in fact fit all. Those people who have jobs that are the most difficult or those people who are earning lower incomes often find themselves in a situation where they cannot work past the age of 65. Those are the people who we are focused on helping. We know that providing retirement dignity for them is critically important.

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Good gymnastics, Mr. Chair, but not a 10, because later on in his book, from which this quote came, the minister then went on to say, "Phasing in the eligibility age for OAS and GIS from 65 to 67 is a step in that direction", "that direction" being a good direction.

Can the minister comment this time on whether or not he thinks that raising the real retirement age from 65 to 67 is an arbitrary decision?

Hon. Bill Morneau: Mr. Chair, I am pleased to answer the question. As I have said, there are efforts we should make to deal with the different requirement needs of different cohorts of society. We are very clear that we recognize that middle-class Canadians and those who are struggling to get into the middle class were faced with a very difficult situation when the previous government arbitrarily moved the age to 67 from age 65. The kind of quote that is being presented by the hon. member is actually quite a different idea. It is an idea of phasing something in, and it may be an idea that is vastly more nuanced. The key point here is that different Canadians have different situations.

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, that is an admirable effort by the Minister of Finance to distance himself from his previous good ideas, as he tries to pay lip service to the terrible budget he has presented in this House.

I will move on to a different topic of conversation, if we may.

I am very interested in whether or not the Department of Finance has produced any reports for the minister with respect to the effect of the income tax increase on a higher band of earners and what it would do in terms of being able to attract talent to our country.

Hon. Bill Morneau: Mr. Chair, what I can say is that we are very committed to our view that we need to help middle-class Canadians and help those people striving to get into the middle class. We on purpose took a look at our tax code and made it more progressive. What we did was increase the tax rate on the top 1%. That enabled us to consider how we could lower the tax rate on those in the $45,000 to $90,000 tax bracket. We believe this is absolutely the right thing to do, helping nine million Canadians with lower taxes. We agree as well that it is a good thing that we have created more progressivity in our tax code.

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, ironically again coming from the book called *The Real Retirement*, the minister himself wrote, "Canada is among the most highly taxed countries in the world, which leaves little room for increased taxation to cover future increases in healthcare costs".

I am going to ask again whether or not the minister has in his possession any reports that indicate to him that increasing this tax rate would be detrimental to the attraction of young and older talent to smart talent in order to grow our economy in this country.

Hon. Bill Morneau: Mr. Chair, I do want to say that part of our innovation agenda that we are working toward is creating a more innovative and progressive Canadian society. We are convinced that focusing on sectors that can be exciting and high growth is the right thing to do for our economy. We are convinced that will also enable us to attract people from around the world to what is, after all, the Canadian success story.

We believe this is a great country. We believe it is a country to which we have the capacity to attract people from around the world to help us to do even better in the future.

● (2105)

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, with no documents to quote and no reports to speak of, how can the minister be convinced of anything? I will ask him one more time. Does he have any reports that can give this House comfort that we will not be inordinately affected by having this rate increase?

Hon. Bill Morneau: Mr. Chair, what I can say with absolute confidence is that we will have an opportunity later this year to come forward with our plans around innovation. We will have an opportunity to come forward with the kind of exciting ideas that Canadians will see will be part of the higher growth future and that people from around the world will see make Canada an exciting and attractive place to move to.

That is something we believe will be part of our future, part of the higher growth future for the next generation of Canadians.

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, the minister will have to excuse us if we have a hard time digesting that, because quite frankly, what the Liberals have said in the past and what they have done currently are completely different.

I will give an example, and I would like the minister to comment. Prior to the deposit of the budget in this House of Commons, the Prime Minister went to New York and told the *Wall Street Journal* that these would be moderate deficits, nothing like the $50 billion deficit that our government ran in a time of great recession.

Is it not the case that it was exactly what the Prime Minister said at that time in New York?

Hon. Bill Morneau: Mr. Chair, we believe that investing in the economy is the right thing to do. We also recognize that, because we were left with a lower growth scenario than foreseen, because the situation we found ourselves in was more difficult, in fact the challenges we face are even greater. That, for us, gives us double resolve to move forward with plans to actually make a difference for Canadians.

We know that, now more than ever, as a result of where we found ourselves from the previous government, it is the time to make investments, the time to make a real difference for Canadians.

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Following up on that, Mr. Chair, my last question for the minister would be this. The Prime Minister told the *Wall Street Journal*, before the budget was deposited, to expect a moderate deficit, nothing like what we had already run during the great recession. In May, most recently, the same Prime Minister indicated to Reuters in a separate interview that he expected to have no caps on the deficit.

Why so many moving targets and moving numbers? Is there anything we can believe from this minister and this Prime Minister ?

Hon. Bill Morneau: Mr. Chair, we were very pleased to be able to present a budget to Canadians, a budget that articulated quite clearly what our plans are and what our approach is to grow our economy.

We know that in that budget we have outlined some investment plans. We know as well that we have told Canadians that we will continue to make investments, providing more information on our infrastructure plan and our renovation plan later this year.

These are the ideas that will allow us to grow the economy so that we do not find ourselves in the situation in which we found ourselves when we came into office. We will improve the situation for future generations.

The Chair: Resuming debate, the hon Minister of Finance.

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Chair, it is a pleasure for me to rise in this chamber today to address the committee of the whole.

I would like to use my time to speak about the investments our government is making to keep Canada's economy strong and growing for the long term.

We bring a fundamentally new and optimistic approach to managing Canada's economy, one that is focused squarely on the middle class and on those working hard to join it.

Budget 2016 would help those who need it most, while charting a new course for economic growth and prosperity over the long term. It would take an important first step in our plan to grow Canada's economy and provide Canadians with a sense of hope and optimism, and it would answer the call of millions of Canadians who told us, both before the budget and after, that they want real change.

[*Translation*]

The general economic situation in our country can be assessed by how middle-class Canadians are doing. Canadians have long believed that with a bit of luck and a lot of hard work, they can give their children a brighter future.

However, the reality is that while our economy is still growing, middle-class Canadians are having difficulties. Many Canadians are working even harder and even longer, and the cost of living continues to rise. Middle-class families simply do not feel as though their situation is improving.

● (2110)

[*English*]

They need a government that acts to restore hope and brings about opportunities. What they need is more than temporary half measures. That is why I tabled a budget on March 22 that recaptures the hope and optimism that existed in previous generations.

I can tell members that our plan for the middle class is resonating with Canadians. Since the day after I tabled budget 2016, I have been travelling across Canada from the Maritimes, Quebec City, Waterloo, west to Vancouver. I have met with everyday workers, business owners, and innovators. I have met with economists, representatives of the financial sector, and investors. They think we are onto something.

Canadians are telling us that we are on the right path to long-term growth. I have also taken our message internationally to Chicago, New York, Paris, London, Washington, and earlier this month, Japan. At the G7 finance ministers' meeting in Sendai, Japan, I shared Canada's plan for a strong middle class, inclusive growth, and prosperity with my counterparts from the world's most advanced economies. I heard the same thing there as I have heard elsewhere internationally: “I really like what you are doing in Canada”.

The *Financial Times* called Canada a glimmer of light. The *Wall Street Journal* called Canada the poster child for the International Monetary Fund's global growth strategy. Christine Lagarde herself, head of the International Monetary Fund, praised our approach.

Our budget earned these endorsements because, I firmly believe, our government is focused on exactly the right things. Measures in budget 2016 would give Canadians the opportunity to build better lives for themselves. For some, that would mean being able to afford to send their kids to a quality day care or helping their teenagers with college tuition. For others, it would mean a secure and dignified retirement.

We have chosen to invest in Canadians because they are this country's most precious resource. Canadians are among the most highly skilled and educated citizens in the world. As a result, we are poised to lead on many fronts owing to their strength, the soundness of our policy choices, and our strong fiscal position.

[*Translation*]

As we predicted, the March 2016 "Fiscal Monitor" reported a significant drop in revenues at the end of the last fiscal year because of the economic downturn and low oil prices. How can the government help reverse the trend towards declining revenues and promote a more resilient economy? How can we ensure that every dollar invested generates maximum benefits?

If we want to act responsibly, we must seize the opportunity before us. In total, our budget injects about $11.5 billion into the Canadian economy in 2016 and $15 billion in 2017. Through these major investments, we plan to increase our real gross domestic product by 0.5% over the next two years, and by 1% the year after that.

[*English*]

We believe the time to act is now. We have the lowest net debt-to-GDP ratio in the G7. Interest rates are at historic lows. This allows the Government of Canada to borrow on favourable terms and boost the economy over the long term. By the end of 2020-21, our GDP level will be even lower than where it stands today.

Having the fiscal capacity to act is not enough. We also must demonstrate a willingness. That is why, even before tabling the budget, our government set to work to create the conditions that help middle-class Canadians and their families. In December, we took a significant first step to strengthen the middle class by cutting taxes for nearly nine million Canadians. To help pay for this middle-class tax cut, we raised taxes on the wealthiest 1%, those making more than $200,000.

Building on this tax cut, budget 2016 introduced the new Canada child benefit, which would give nine out of 10 families more in child benefits than they currently receive. The benefit would be simpler, tax-free, and more generous. Families that benefit would see an average increase in child benefits of almost $2,300 in 2016-17.

● (2115)

[*Translation*]

What is even more important is that this new benefit will lift approximately 300,000 more children out of poverty in 2016-17 compared to 2014-15. The Canada child benefit will give families more money and also represents the most important innovation in social policy in a generation.

Mr. François-Philippe Champagne (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I would first like to thank the minister for his excellent speech on Canada's economic situation.

Could the minister explain what the government is doing to lay the foundation for sustainable economic growth in Canada and how these measures will help middle-class Canadians prosper?

Hon. Bill Morneau: Mr. Chair, I would like to thank the parliamentary secretary for his question.

The measures in budget 2016 strengthen the middle class and will lay the foundation for sustainable growth. We must implement measures that will improve Canada's competitiveness and productivity in order to be the driving force of our own achievements, now and for the next generation. First and foremost we will make unprecedented investments in infrastructure of $120 billion over the next ten years.

[*English*]

These infrastructure investments would accelerate our transition to a low-carbon, clean-growth economy, make traffic flow more smoothly, create and repair affordable housing, deliver faster and more efficient trade corridors, and so much more. In practical terms, these investments would make it just a little easier for busy parents to get their kids to soccer practice, or for business owners in rural Quebec to get their websites up and running. Most of all, they would deliver a long-term boost to the Canadian economy—

The Chair: Order, please. The time in relation to questions and responses applies also to the government side when their members are posing questions to a minister or a parliamentary secretary. Again, keep the responses generally in proportion to the time taken to pose the question.

Questions and comments. The hon. member for Cape Breton—Canso.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour, Lib.): Mr. Chair, during the minister's speech he had made reference several times to the fact that as a new government we did implement the initial budget, but we are really just setting the table. I know he has worked closely with several other ministers, in particular the Minister of Innovation, in coming forward and investing in Canadian innovation. I would like to give the minister the opportunity to elaborate somewhat on the plan going forward, or at least where the discussions are now with the Minister of Innovation as to when we could expect those investments to roll out and what Canadians can expect from them.

● (2120)

Hon. Bill Morneau: Mr. Chair, I want to thank the hon. member for his question, and I hope it will be okay if I answer part of it in French and part of it in English.

[*Translation*]

Innovation is the other important sector in which we will make significant progress. That is why I am answering in this way. It is a vast sector that includes education, research, development, the entrepreneurial ecosystem and business investment, support, incubation, and commercialization, which allows us to transform our ideas into products and solutions for the future.

[*English*]

In budget 2016, we take an important step to position Canada as a centre of global innovation renowned for its science, technology, resourceful citizens, and globally competitive companies. Achieving this goal will become the central aim of the new innovation agenda to be articulated in the next 12 months in consultation with the vast network of stakeholders and participants who will help inform its success.

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Status of Women, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I would like to ask the Minister of Finance a little about the advisory council that he is putting together. I am very interested in who he might be thinking about and what kind of advice he anticipates the council will be providing him.

Hon. Bill Morneau: Mr. Chair, looking forward, as members know, we are looking toward closing the gap between our level of investment and the positive outcomes achieved through commercialization.

I firmly believe that when faced with a challenge like this one, our best way forward is to work as a team. That is why the government established an advisory council on economic growth. The group is made up of 14 Canadian and international business and academic leaders, all of whom were selected because they are recognized forward-thinking individuals in their respective fields. The Minister of Status of Women would be interested to know that out of those 14, eight are women.

Just a few weeks ago we held our first meeting, and I tasked them with finding the solutions to a number of the key challenges facing Canada, including how to transform innovative ideas into high-value goods and services, how to ensure the government's historic investments in infrastructure make it easier for Canadians to get to work and get products to market, and what things can be done so that we can take advantage of the job opportunities of tomorrow.

Mr. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.): Mr. Chair, our government is putting a premium on the integration between the environment and the economy, which is something we believe has not been properly dealt with over the last decade or so. Could the minister take a few seconds to explain to Canadians why this is so important, what he is seeing internationally in terms of our competitors, and what measures he brought to bear in the recent budget?

Hon. Bill Morneau: Mr. Chair, I would like to thank the member for that question and reference our absolute commitment to the environment. We recognize that in a world in which we are facing real climate change, the time to act is now.

The member asked what we are seeing internationally. I can say that our government was extremely proud to be at the Paris conference of COP 21 to talk about what we can do collectively around the globe in order to make a real difference in the environment of tomorrow. That is where we started. Our initiatives then moved into our budget where we committed to Canadians that we are going to make a real difference in everything we do.

We put in place the effort around a low-carbon energy trust, and we talked about how all of the investments we make are going to be focused on how they can actually help the environment at the same time. We are going to continue working on this, including working on a pan-Canadian approach to carbon pricing together with our provinces and our provincial leaders.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Chair, I would like to begin by thanking the minister for being here.

Economic outlooks from the department, the private sector, the parliamentary budget officer, and the Bank of Canada have varied significantly for some time now.

Can the minister share his GDP estimates for the next three years?

Hon. Bill Morneau: Mr. Chair, what I can say is that we really intend to invest to boost economic growth in our country.

We know that this is a huge challenge. In light of the level of economic growth over the past decade, it is very important to make those investments now.

We know that the parliamentary budget officer, the Bank of Canada, and the Department of Finance are all on the same page. We have to make investments that will result in higher levels of growth in the future.

● (2125)

Mr. Guy Caron: Mr. Chair, I was really hoping that the minister would provide an estimate in terms of numbers and economic growth percentages. Maybe he can do so in his answer to the next question.

[*English*]

The main estimates show that there is a $10-million cut under the economic and fiscal policy framework. I would like to know how many fewer analysts the department will employ, and what that will mean for the forecasting function of the department.

Hon. Bill Morneau: Mr. Chair, I would like to start by just giving the response to the previous question and say that our projection for real GDP growth in 2016 is 1.4%. In 2017 it is 2.2%. In 2018 it is 2.2%, and in 2019 it is 2%.

I can tell the hon. member that we intend on ensuring that we have the resources to continue the great work that the Department of Finance does in working on the budget and working on our economic forecast so that we can ensure that we make the right kinds of investments for growth in this country, the kinds of investments required after facing a low-growth era in the last decade.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy Caron: Mr. Chair, I would like to move on to the so-called middle-class tax cut.

Can the Minister tell us how many Canadian taxpayers will not benefit at all from the tax cut the Liberal government promised?

Hon. Bill Morneau: Mr. Chair, it is very important to us to improve things for the middle class and those who aspire to join it. That is why we started with a tax cut for the middle class and people who are going through tough times.

We started with the tax cut, and what I can say is that nine million Canadians now have more money in their pockets every time their company or organization pays them. These tax cuts really mean a lot to Canadians.

Mr. Guy Caron: Mr. Chair, in fact, since there are about 28 million taxpayers, this means that 19 million Canadians will not get a dime from those tax cuts.

The problem lies with the definition of "middle class". If the average income in the country is about $40,000, according to Statistics Canada, and the median income is $31,000, we can all agree that a large portion of the middle class will not get one red cent.

My question is very simple. Given these definitions from Statistics Canada, what is the minister's definition of the middle class?

[*English*]

Hon. Bill Morneau: Mr. Chair, I am pleased to respond to that question. When looking at what we are doing, in order to really help people in the middle class, in order to really help those who are striving to get into the middle class, one must look at the measures we are taking on tax reductions, which are so important because they would help nine million Canadians, and also the other measures in our budget that would make a real difference. By putting in the Canada child benefit, we would help an enormous number of Canadian families. We would help nine out of 10 Canadian families with children have a much better situation. It would make an enormous difference for them and help them at the time in their life when they are facing real challenges. That is at a time in their life when they are raising children.

Mr. Guy Caron: Mr. Chair, can the minister tell the House how much someone making between $100,000 and $200,000 would get from this tax cut?

Hon. Bill Morneau: Mr. Chair, I am pleased to say that our tax cut would help a large number of Canadians. As I have said, it would help nine million Canadians. It would help all Canadians earning over $45,000, and it would decline once people get into the highest tax brackets in such a way that by the time they hit $200,016 in income they would have no advantage from that tax cut.

What we have focused on really, though, is how we can help those who are struggling to get into the middle class, people who are at the lowest end of the income scale. The Canada child benefit would put benefits where people really need them, for people who are challenged to do well for their families.

● (2130)

Mr. Guy Caron: Mr. Chair, someone earning between $100,000 and $200,000, which is most of the members of the House, would actually get $679 in tax cuts, which is about three times more than somebody earning $60,000.

Has the department conducted an analysis on how much revenue the government loses on tax evasion using tax havens every year? If so, how much?

[*Translation*]

Mr. François-Philippe Champagne (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I am pleased to say that our government is the one that is fighting tax evasion. We have made a record investment of $444 million to give the Canada Revenue Agency the teams and technologies needed to combat tax evasion.

I can also say, as my colleague knows, that the Minister of National Revenue has indicated to the Standing Committee on Finance that she will be conducting a study to analyze the issue of the tax gap in Canada.

Mr. Guy Caron: Mr. Chair, before assessing the quality of the solution, we need to find out what the problem is.

I will ask my question again. Has the government conducted a study to determine how much revenue the government is missing out on because of tax havens? If such a study has been done, how much are we talking about?

Mr. François-Philippe Champagne: Mr. Chair, as I said, when the Minister of National Revenue appeared before the Standing Committee on Finance, she indicated that Canada would begin that study. My colleague is well aware of the response given by the minister.

The hon. member has to understand that we are going to take steps to start this study and we will come back to the House with precise figures on the tax gap in Canada.

Mr. Guy Caron: Mr. Chair, will the tax treaties that Canada has with certain tax havens be evaluated, and if so, when?

Mr. François-Philippe Champagne: Mr. Chair, when the Minister of National Revenue appeared before the Standing Committee on Finance, she was clear. She struck a committee to review all of Canada's tax treaties.

When the minister has concluded that work with her special committee, which was created in order to propose measures to deal with international tax evasion, I think she will be able to come back to the House with some recommendations.

Mr. Guy Caron: Mr. Chair, on a different topic, what does the department estimate is the annual cost of the deduction for stock options for employees?

[*English*]

Hon. Bill Morneau: Mr. Chair, I am pleased to say that we are focused on innovation. We are focused on how we can help our economy grow through innovation. We see stock options as a legitimate form of compensation for innovative companies. We recognize that in order to encourage companies to invest and to grow they can use this form of compensation to help their companies. We have decided that is going to continue to be a measure that they can utilize.

Mr. Guy Caron: Mr. Chair, the question was about how much was actually lost by the government in tax expenditures on the employee stock option adoption. That is about $800 million.

I would note that this is a different discourse than what the government was saying during the campaign. The government promised to phase out tax measures that primarily benefit the wealthy and that is the case for this specific measure which goes primarily to the most well off.

I would like to know why the government broke its promise that was made during the election to close this tax loophole that subsidizes largely wealthy CEOs.

Hon. Bill Morneau: Mr. Chair, I would like to reinforce that we decided to leave this measure in place because it can help us to have innovative companies.

When looking at calculations, we cannot only look at the expense side of the ledger. We also have to look at the revenue side.

Unfortunately the member is not thinking about the potential good news that might come from having more innovative companies in this country, companies that can actually provide growth, that can provide opportunities for Canadians to have jobs. We are focused on that revenue opportunity and think that it will vastly exceed any tax expenditures that are in place.

More importantly, we recognize that this provision in our tax code does not merely benefit one small category of individual but benefits many small businesses that are striving to grow and make a real difference in our economy for the long term, innovative companies that can be the exact companies that we need to have in this country to be successful.

● (2135)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy Caron: Mr. Chair, the Liberal government also promised major spending on infrastructure, but presented a deficit of roughly $3.4 billion.

More importantly, the budget contained a privatization strategy called “asset recycling”.

Can the minister tell us what infrastructure projects or what assets are being considered for this type of privatization?

[*English*]

Hon. Bill Morneau: Mr. Chair, I am pleased to answer the question around infrastructure. We have put forward for Canadians the most significant infrastructure plan in the history of this country. We have said that we want to spend $120 billion over the next decade in making a real difference in infrastructure in this country. We laid out the first phase in our plan, the first amount that we put forward. We have also said that we are going to come forward with bigger plans in the fall.

We have also said that we are going to invest some additional amounts that are important right now. We said we are going to invest $2 billion over the next three years in research at universities and research infrastructure. We have said we are going to invest $3.5 billion over the next three years in federal infrastructure. It is making a significant difference on our growth.

Mr. Guy Caron: Mr. Chair, I still did not get an answer.

We are talking about asset recycling, which was an item in the budget. I would like to know what is actually under consideration for privatization under this asset recycling scheme that the government included in its budget.

Hon. Bill Morneau: Mr. Chair, I am pleased to say, as the member knows, that we did mention in our budget that we would look at the possibility of asset recycling, that we would do so in places where we think it might be in the public interest to do so, such as mature assets that might possibly be able to be recycled, so that we could, in fact, enhance the long-term growth of our country by making sure that the government is using the resources that we have in the most effective and positive way, resources that we know can actually help us to grow the economy over the long term by investing them wisely, investing them in ways that can make a difference for this generation and the next generation.

Mr. Guy Caron: Mr. Chair, I take it that the minister actually agrees with the fact that asset recycling is a form of privatization of our public assets.

[*Translation*]

As part of its infrastructure investments, the government also promised that it would create an infrastructure bank, but so far details on that have been scarce.

Could the minister tell us where the funding will come from? Will it be largely public funding? Do we know how much will come from Canadian pension funds and how much will come from the private sector?

[*English*]

Hon. Bill Morneau: Mr. Chair, I am pleased to say that, yes, we did talk about developing an infrastructure bank in our campaign. That was an idea that we believed had merit. We believe that thinking about ways that we can maximize the impact of our infrastructure spending is critically important. Canadians expect no less than for us to be creative in the way that we can actually make a real difference in our economy.

We are working diligently on this idea, thinking about how we can maximize our infrastructure investment, about how we can work together with provinces and municipalities and institutional investors, about how we can get the lowest cost of capital in infrastructure investments so that we can, in fact, make a real difference over the long term for Canadians. That is something that the hon. member will hear more about in the coming months and something that, I am sure he will agree, will make a real difference for Canada.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy Caron: Mr. Chair, budget 2016 did not include any details on the compensation that would be required for dairy producers as a result of the free trade agreement with the European Union.

Could the minister tell us how much he estimates the compensation will be, since this amount was not included in the budget?

[*English*]

Hon. Bill Morneau: Mr. Chair, as members in the House may know, the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and the Minister of International Trade have committed to meeting with the dairy industry in the near term to consult on a plan to help the industry adjust to market access concessions under the Canada-Europe trade agreement. We are focused on having that discussion. It is, as we know, an important discussion when we enter into trade agreements.

However, I would like to step back and talk about the benefits of this trade agreement that we see as critically important. We know that opening up a market the size of Europe for Canada, doing it in a way that puts us in advance of other countries doing the same sort of deal, is critically important and will help us in our efforts to grow our economy.

● (2140)

Mr. François-Philippe Champagne: Mr. Chair, I will go to the podium, if you do not mind.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Much like we saw when questions were asked to the minister, members of the government may ask questions to the parliamentary secretary during the five-minute period.

[*English*]

Since the parliamentary secretary is addressing the House, during the five-minute period for questions and comments, much like we saw during the minister's time, other members of the government may pose questions to the parliamentary secretary during the five-minute period for questions and comments, or the parliamentary secretary can pose questions to the minister, if he wishes.

[*Translation*]

Mr. François-Philippe Champagne (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Chair, thank you for the clarification. I am pleased to have this opportunity to address the committee members today on behalf of the Government of Canada. A strong economy is based on a strong middle class. Canadians understand that, as do we. That is why our highest priority is to build an economy that works for middle-class Canadians and their families.

By strengthening the middle class, we will help hard-working Canadians look forward to a good standard of living and a bright future for their children. When the middle class succeeds, we all succeed.

We must immediately make investments to strengthen the middle class and enable it to grow, to help young Canadians succeed, and to support people who need help getting a job.

Budget 2016 invests in Canadians and sets the stage for ongoing growth in Canada in the years to come. In December, the government took the important first step in strengthening the middle class by lowering taxes for nearly nine million Canadians.

To help pay for this middle-class tax cut, we raised taxes for the top 1%, those who earn over $200,000 per year. We took an important step with budget 2016 by introducing the Canada child benefit, which will give nine out of 10 families more money than the current child benefit system.

The Canada child benefit will be simpler. Families will receive just one payment every month. It will be tax-free. Families will not have to pay back a portion of the payments they receive when they pay their taxes. The Canada child benefit will be better targeted. Lower- and middle-income families will receive more money, while those who have higher incomes will receive less money than under the current system. The Canada child benefit will be far more generous. Families who receive it will see an average increase in benefits of over $2,300 in 2016-17.

Even more importantly, thanks to this new benefit, some 300,000 fewer children will live in poverty in 2016-17 compared to 2014-15.

Fairness is extremely important to Canadians. They know that paying legitimate taxes owed to a responsible and transparent government is the basis of our shared prosperity. They do not like it when people bend the rules, and they expect their government to take stringent measures to stop people who try.

The Government of Canada is determined to tackle aggressive tax avoidance and tax evasion that leverage international taxation strategies. We have launched an action plan to strengthen existing efforts in Canada and abroad and to introduce new measures. This work will protect the tax base and boost Canadians' confidence in the fairness of a system that ensures everyone pays their fair share of the tax burden.

Here is what we are doing in Canada. On April 11, the Minister of National Revenue announced a series of measures that the Canada Revenue Agency will take to fight aggressive tax avoidance and tax evasion. Budget 2016 includes $444 million to pay for those measures.

This funding will allow the CRA to hire additional auditors, develop a robust data collection infrastructure, increase audit activities, and improve the quality of investigations. With this additional staff, the CRA will be able to increase the number of audits of high-risk taxpayers by 400%. Furthermore, the government will streamline its efforts by including lawyers on its investigative teams so that cases can be quickly brought before the courts.

New mechanisms will also be put in place. First, there will be a special program to put a stop to the activities of organizations that create and promote tax schemes for the rich.

● (2145)

Second, an independent advisory committee on offshore tax evasion and aggressive tax avoidance will be set up. This committee will provide strategic advice to the CRA on ways to fight tax evasion and tax avoidance. The CRA estimates that the new envelope of $440 million will help the government recover no less than $2.6 billion in revenue over five years.

We are also looking beyond our borders. This is what we are doing abroad. Canada is a very active participant in international efforts to fight tax evasion. We are an active member of the Global Forum on Transparency and Exchange of Information for Tax Purposes, which was set up to ensure that high standards for transparency and the exchange of information for tax purposes are in place throughout the world.

Canada has also established a vast network of bilateral tax agreements and bilateral exchange of tax information agreements, which provide for the exchange of information. On April 15, Canada launched consultations on legislative proposals to implement the standard for automatic exchange of financial account information, which was developed by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development and is backed by the leaders of the G20.

The common standard introduces a framework whereby a country's taxing authority can automatically and securely share information on financial accounts held by non-residents in those countries with tax authorities in the country of residence of the account holders. Budget 2016 confirmed the Government of Canada's intention to implement the common reporting standard starting on July 1, 2017, adding Canada to a list of over 90 countries that have committed to implementing it.

Canada has been actively engaged in another multilateral initiative aimed at addressing base erosion and profit shifting, commonly known as BEPS. BEPS refers to tax planning arrangements undertaken by multinational enterprises, which, though often legal, exploit the interaction between domestic and international tax rules to minimize taxes. The following measures, announced in budget 2016, are an important part of implementing our commitments regarding BEPS.

First of all, we will introduce new legislation to impose country-by-country reporting on large multinational corporations.

Second, we will apply the revised international guidelines on transfer pricing.

Third, we will be participating in international work to develop a multilateral instrument to streamline the implementation of treaty-related BEPS recommendations, including addressing treaty abuse.

Finally, we are going to undertake the spontaneous exchange of some tax rulings with other tax administrations.

The government will continue to collaborate with the international community to ensure a consistent and standardized response to the BEPS project. Canada supports the important objective of improving the transparency of corporations around the world. In order to do that, the government agreed to strict rules as part of the activities of the Financial Action Task Force and the Global Forum on Transparency and Exchange of Information for Tax Purposes.

Recent changes to the Proceeds of Crime (Money Laundering) and Terrorist Financing Regulations increase the requirements that Canada imposes on financial institutions with regard to the collection of information on beneficial corporation owners.

At a G20 finance ministers' meeting on April 15, Canada and the other members agreed that it was important to make information on beneficial owners more accessible to the appropriate authorities and increase the sharing of such information between those authorities in order to put an end to tax evasion, the funding of terrorist activities, and money laundering.

In closing, we know that Canadians expect their government to ensure that services paid for by their tax dollars are delivered effectively. They also expect their government to reduce government waste and inefficiencies to the extent possible.

● (2150)

[*English*]

The Chair: Questions and comments?

[*Translation*]

The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance still has the floor.

Mr. François-Philippe Champagne: Mr. Chair, I would like to ask the Minister of Finance to tell us more about the fairness of Canada's tax regime.

The Minister of Finance and I crossed the country, from coast to coast to coast. I went from Moncton to Yellowknife. The minister travelled from Nova Scotia to Vancouver to listen to Canadians.

Our tour across Canada was unprecedented. We listened to Canadians from coast to coast tell us what measures the budget should include. At these meetings all across the country, people told us that tax fairness was a key point that the government should address. Since our government made tax fairness for the middle class and Canadian families a priority in the federal budget, I would like the Minister of Finance to take a few moments to tell the House what measures he intends to take to ensure that Canada's tax regime is fair.

Hon. Bill Morneau: Mr. Chair, as indicated in the observations made earlier, the Government of Canada is determined to ensure that we have a fairer tax system for all Canadians. We have adopted concrete measures to achieve that.

The first step was to lower taxes for the middle class. The Government of Canada knows that a strong economy relies on a strong middle class. When middle-class Canadians and those working hard to join the middle class have money to save, invest, and help grow the economy, then everyone benefits. The Government of Canada has taken measures to lower the tax rate on individual incomes from 22% to 20.5%. Single individuals who will benefit from this measure will see an average tax reduction of $330 every year, while couples will see an average tax reduction of $540 every year.

To help pay for this middle-class tax cut, the government increased taxes for the wealthiest Canadians by creating a new higher income tax rate of 33% for individual taxable incomes in excess of $200,000 annually. It is a question of basic fairness.

We are very proud of the changes we made to the tax system and I am sure that this will improve our economic situation and the situation for Canada's middle class.

[*English*]

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Toronto—Danforth, Lib.): Mr. Chair, many of the students in my riding have concerns about the future and how they are going to pay for their education, how they are going to get ahead. I was asked that question many times when I met with their parents and their families. I am wondering if the parliamentary secretary might be able to explain how this budget will help young Canadians to get ahead in their education, so that they can get the skills and necessary steps they need to go forward and get employment.

● (2155)

Mr. François-Philippe Champagne: Mr. Chair, I would like to thank my colleague for this very great question. Budget 2016 is a budget that works for all Canadians. It works for our seniors. It works for our students. It works for middle-class Canadians and for Canadian families. However, let me be more specific about students.

There are three measures in our budget that are going to be very beneficial for students in Canada. The first one is student grants, which have been doubled under the budget. This is an historic measure that will help students across the nation.

The other one is about the summer jobs program. I am very proud to be part of a government that believes in giving youth the first chance to get a job. The summer jobs program has been doubled. In my own community, this is already making a huge difference. We have received a number of applications. The feedback from the community justifies the investment we are making in youth and giving them their first job. Members in the House will understand that unless students get that first job, it is very difficult to get ahead in life.

The third thing is that the Minister of Finance has been very thoughtful around providing that students will not have to repay their loans until they reach a certain level of income. When students finish their studies, we want to make sure they have sufficient income before they have to repay their student loans. This was a very great measure in our last budget.

Mr. Phil McColeman (Brantford—Brant, CPC): Mr. Chair, in listening tonight to the explanations given by the parliamentary secretary that this budget works for all Canadians, the one category that he missed, that it does not work for, is small business owners.

I appreciated the finance minister coming to committee this afternoon and explaining why the promise to small business for the tax reduction to the 9% level that they campaigned on was broken.

As the finance minister knows, businesses need certainty. They need certainty to invest. He talked earlier tonight about the prospects of small business being an economic driver in innovation, in hiring. However, through this budget and the process of going forward with the measures, small businesses are left hanging, expecting their tax rate to go down and looking for that opportunity for investment. As well, the tax holiday on hiring first-year employees was also taken away.

I would like to point that out from the outset. The parliamentary secretary also talked about trips across the country, listening to people, and taking in information. There is one organization that represents small businesses in large numbers right across this country, and that is the Canadian Federation of Independent Business.

I would like to ask the finance minister if he met with and consulted with the president of the CFIB, Mr. Dan Kelly, through his consultation process.

Hon. Bill Morneau: Mr. Chair, I would like to start by pointing out that small business owners, in fact business owners across this country, are citizens first. They are Canadians.

What we did in our budget was to help Canadians. We know that helping Canadians through reduced tax rates, by putting them in a better situation through changing benefits for their children, can make a real and measurable difference in their lives.

I want to come back to a question that was asked of me a little earlier, which was on what happens to a family with an income of $60,000. A family with an income of $60,000 with two kids, one under six, would have an increase in our plan for the Canada child benefit of $3,300, plus a tax reduction of $225, for a $3,525 improvement. That is real change.

That is the sort of change that will allow those families to be excellent customers for small businesses, buying products and services, and raising the revenues of those businesses, which is, after all, first and foremost what businesses want. They want improved situations and an improved economy, so they can make their business better in the long run.

● (2200)

Mr. Phil McColeman: Mr. Chair, similar to answers given previously today, I did not get an answer to the question, which was pretty specific. A yes or no would do. I will pose it in a little different way.

In the outreach to connect with small businesses, the one organization in this country that represents the majority of small businesses is the Canadian Federation of Independent Business.

Did the minister, or did he not, meet with its president to discuss how it felt about the budget process going forward?

Hon. Bill Morneau: Mr. Chair, I am happy to take the question, but I think the best way to answer is that we had the most open, consultative pre-budget consultations in the history of this country.

We had 250,000 Canadians who interacted with us in one way, shape, or another, in order to give us their impressions on what we should be doing in our budget.

That was a very important process to us, one that we took very seriously. We spoke with Canadians from all walks of life. We spoke to people who were running organizations that were small businesses, large businesses, and every business in between. We spoke to innovators. We spoke to people who work for non-profit organizations. We spoke to associations of businesses, and associations that think about public policy.

We have engaged more broadly than any government in the history of Canada, and we know that has helped us to come up with a budget that is going to make a real difference over the long term in this country.

Mr. Phil McColeman: Mr. Chair, I think the answer is obvious. He did not meet with Mr. Dan Kelly, and he can refute that in further answers to questions if that is the case. It is the single largest business organization in the country, representing businesses of all different sizes in that small business category. By the way, these are the companies that create over 80% of the jobs in the country. He did not care to consult with those people.

I will ask this question. Does the minister agree with the Prime Minister's statement that a large share of small businesses are actually just a way for wealthy Canadians to avoid paying taxes?

Hon. Bill Morneau: Mr. Chair, a member of my team did meet with someone from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. The reason that is important is because we met with many different organizations as we put forth our budget. We wanted to ensure that we consulted with the broadest range of Canadians to ensure we heard their views. We believe there are many important business organizations in the country. We met with chambers of commerce across the country, chambers that represent a vast number of Canadian businesses. We met with many other associations that represent businesses and Canadians from all walks of life. That is important to us. That will continue to be important to us as we work to be open and transparent in our work for Canadians.

Mr. Phil McColeman: Mr. Chair, there is another area where the finance minister has failed to be transparent, and it is when it comes to the state of the country's finances that he inherited from the past government.

We have heard the finance minister repeat many times in the House and across Canada that he inherited an unanticipated deficit for fiscal 2015-16, left by the previous government. It is difficult to evaluate the minister's spending plans and decisions when he has been so misleading about his fiscal numbers. However, the evidence shows that the Liberals were left with a surplus and it was their taxing and spending decisions that set it off track. I will ask some specific questions.

Make no mistake, the Liberals took a fiscal framework that was on the road to surplus and veered off of it to a deficit ditch.

First, let us not forget that there was a surplus of $1.9 billion in 2014-15. In April last year, our budget forecast a surplus of $1.4 billion for 2015-16, which the minister said is not true. However, let us look at the facts.

According to his own independent department officials who publish the monthly "Fiscal Monitor" on the state of Canada's budgetary balance, at the end of October when we left office, the books were $600 million in surplus for the year. By the end of February, they were $7.5 billion in surplus for the year. Keep in mind that the Liberals had been in power for four months at that point.

Last Friday, the Liberals announced that the books deteriorated by $9.4 billion in March, turning what was a surplus of $2 billion into a deficit all in one month.

Such a turnaround in federal finances in such a short period of time has not happened since 2005. I am told they call it March madness, but the minister likes to tell us we should not pay attention to the "Fiscal Monitor", it is just a month-to-month update. So let us look at the big picture, the full year.

If the minister is right that the economy, and not his spending, is responsible for plunging us into deficit, we should see a decline in tax revenues compared to what we projected in budget 2015. However, that is just not true. The minister's budget shows he expects annual revenues to be higher than they were projected last April. So did the PBO's latest independent projections.

Economist Stephen Gordon put it well when he said on Twitter last Friday, "If you're looking for an explanation of why Joe Oliver's projected surplus didn't happen, the answer looks to be in spending, not revenues."

Let us make an important point here. It is the Liberals' spending, spending that was outlined in their election platform: middle-class tax cuts, Syrian refugees, reinstating sick leave, new transfers to provinces, new spending in foreign aid, and I can go on. This points to a more serious concern than just whether the budget balances. He is trying to slip as much Liberal platform spending as possible into the 2015-16 fiscal year so he can hide from Canadians the true extent of his massive spending spree. For purely political motives, he has spent away the 2015-16 surplus left by the previous government. That is fine; he is the elected government. However, he needs to own up to it. He needs to take responsibility, not to blame others. I hope he will be able to answer some questions here about how he instructed his department officials to mislead Canadians about the federal government's finances.

The finance minister told the Toronto Region Board of Trade in December 2015 the following, "I know you won't be surprised when I tell you that when an economy is not performing as expected, the government will face a shortfall in revenues...". Fortunately, the hard facts tell the opposite story. Does he stand by his misleading claims that lower revenues were the primary driver of this Liberal deficit?

● (2205)

Hon. Bill Morneau: Mr. Chair, I would like to start by talking about the "Fiscal Monitor". It is prepared each month using the same accounting principles used to prepare the government's annual audited financial statements and the public accounts. The Office of the Auditor General has provided unqualified opinions on the government's financial statements in each of the past 17 years. The mere fact that we are talking about the "Fiscal Monitor" in a question from the other side means that party acknowledges the veracity of the reports that come through the "Fiscal Monitor".

When we look at it, we realize that the "Fiscal Monitor" is telling us what we expected it would tell us. We knew in the fall when we came into office that we were facing an era that was going to be challenging. We had come off a decade of low growth. I will remind members that every decade previous to the last decade had higher growth for eight decades. We found ourselves in a low-growth era. However, it turned out that the efforts of the previous government were even less effective than we thought they were because we found ourselves at the time we came into office with a much more challenging economic horizon. We saw that growth rates were much more challenged. We could look forward and see that those would present real changes in the economy over time. We saw that obviously the price of oil was causing real challenges for our economy.

That is what we were left with, realizing that situation. We knew then what we know now. We knew that the forecasts the previous government had made in terms of what would happen in the year 2015-16 were just inaccurate. It overestimated revenue and it underestimated what was going to happen in the economy and, as a result of what happened, expenses went up. Yes, expenses go up when the economy is difficult. Expenses go up because the government spends more money on services for Canadians during difficult times.

However, it was a combination of revenues going down more than expected and expenses going up more than expected that led us to a position in March where we did have a very significant deterioration in our finances. This is not unusual, because if we go back to the years before 2015-16, we see a similar pattern. In March 2009-10, we see a negative $6.4 billion. In 2010-11, we see a negative $6.2 billion. These are all numbers in March. In 2011-12, we see a negative $8.9 billion. In 2012-13, we see a negative $8 billion. My point is quite clear. This is a continuing pattern. Had the previous government done just a bit of due diligence, it would have seen that this was a pattern that would happen this year. Had it had the foresight to understand the significant economic challenges that we were facing, it might have understood what we were saying. That way the Conservatives might have actually been able to tell Canadians the truth; that they were on track to leave us with a deficit.

We now know from the March "Fiscal Monitor" that is exactly what happened. The previous government left us with a deficit. I am happy to spend time with the hon. member outside of the House to walk through the numbers with him line by line to show him exactly how that occurred. Because I know he has a business background, I know he will understand.

That is the situation we find ourselves in. We will now make a difference for Canadians by investing in the future. We will do what the government before us did not have the willingness to do, and that is make a difference for future generations by making the right decisions today.

● (2210)

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I want to talk about strengthening Canada's place in the world, but before I get there, I want to raise one question with the minister. Spinning off the last series of questions, I would like to ask the minister to think about this for the next 15 minutes. Could he tell us how much the previous government added to the national debt of the country as a result of the eight or nine deficits they had while they were in government? I would like that answer a little later.

I am pleased to have this opportunity to address the committee of the whole and to highlight one of the central initiatives in the 2016 budget, "Strengthening Canada's Place in the World".

The time has come to rebuild our international influence and make a serious impact in global affairs. We intend, as a government, to adopt a proactive approach and a positive tone that reflects the core values of Canadians, namely that ours is a country that is generous in spirit, compassionate toward others and proud of the place we can call home.

In our 2016 budget, we accomplished this objective by identifying three principles areas for action: international assistance, immigration, and defence.

Let me begin with international assistance.

Canada has a long history of providing international assistance to the poorest and most vulnerable. From our proud tradition of peacekeeping to our financial support through the International Assistance Envelope, or IAE, our actions reflect the fact that Canadians feel connected to the broader world and that they believe in peace and stability for all people.

To ensure we continue to provide assistance where it is most needed, we intend to conduct a review of our international assistance policy framework. Over the coming months, we will work with stakeholders to evaluate what we do now and how we can improve.

We are also increasing Canada's international assistance envelope to over $5 billion on a cash basis by 2018-19. This includes new funding to the IAE to address emerging international priorities, funding provided for Canada's approach in Iraq, Syria, Jordan and Lebanon, and climate finance.

For those people affected by conflicts and living in fragile states, budget 2016 also provides $586.5 million over three years to renew key peace and security programs. This includes up to $450 million for the global peace and security fund; $106.5 million for the international police peacekeeping and peace operations programs; and $30 million for the counterterrorism capacity building program Sahel envelope.

By investing in measures that will improve the lives of global citizens and contribute to international peace and security, Canada will once again become a true leader in the world, one that makes a real and valuable contribution to world peace and prosperity.

It is interesting that when one does travel, and I happened to be in Germany in December and Taiwan in January, it is really nice to hear people say that it is nice to have Canada back, and Canada is back with this government. That is good to see.

Our second area of focus is immigration. We are proud that we achieved this objective at the end of February of this year. For these refugees, our work has now shifted to helping them integrate successfully into Canadian society.

On a personal note, in my home community of Prince Edward Island, many of these newcomers are at least getting a glimpse of spring and the terrific beauty on our particular island as the crops go in the ground. Although we are not big in numbers on Prince Edward Island, on a per capita basis, we have done as well or better than every other province in bringing refugees into the province. There is something very symbolic about that.

● (2215)

Bringing in the refugees has been a real testament to the resolve and inclination of the many Canadian organizations and communities that are part of this undertaking, people who opened their hearts and homes to both government and privately sponsored refugees. They have continued to welcome these newcomers as they start a new chapter alongside us in Canada. However, it is not simply circumstance or a sense of obligation that compels us to act. Immigration actually contributes substantially to Canada's long-term growth and prosperity, and it has to be a part of our economy moving forward if we are going to get that growth we need in our economy. By welcoming people to Canada to create better lives for themselves and their families, all Canadians benefit.

We recently announced our intention to admit 300,000 new permanent residents this year. This is the most in over a hundred years, when people were fleeing the hardships and conflicts that led to the First World War.

We are also taking steps to ensure more families can be together to build a new life for themselves in Canada and contribute to our country's prosperity. To that end, budget 2016 provides $25 million this year to reduce application processing times and make family reunification a priority of Canada's immigration system.

Our final area of focus is defence. While Canada is being strengthened by people from around the world seeking a new life here, outside threats do remain a reality. We have a responsibility to promote security and stability both at home and abroad. The international security environment is more complex and challenging, exposing our personnel abroad to increased threat and risk. We will support those who defend Canada and contribute to international peace and security by renewing the major equipment of the Canadian Armed Forces and improving facilities where they live, work, and train. That includes new investments of about $200 million over the next two years to undertake infrastructure projects at Canadian Forces bases and other defence properties across Canada.

This funding would support projects that promote operational readiness and improve the quality of life for Canadian soldiers. The funding includes $77 million for projects to support readiness for Canadian Armed Forces military operations, including investments to repair and construct live-fire ranges, air fields, hangars, and naval jetties across Canada. There is $67 million for projects to support the reserve forces; $50 million for projects to support military personnel and their families; and $6 million for projects to support northern operations.

The government is committed to building a modern, more agile, better equipped military to conduct missions at home and abroad. The Minister of National Defence has in fact launched public consultations as part of an open and transparent dialogue with Canadians and key stakeholders to inform the development of a new defence policy for Canada. During 2016, the government will seek the input of Canadians, experts, allies, partners, and Parliament on the strategic environment for the Canadian Armed Forces, its role, as well as its size, structure, and capabilities.

Let me conclude. The blueprint laid down in budget 2016 is transformative, and I know that Canadians are ready for it. Our first six months in office have clearly demonstrated our ability to take the action Canadians expect of us to restore Canada as a leader in the world.

I have three questions for the minister. Of course, I asked him one earlier. I wanted to know how much that other crew left our country in added debt as a result.

● (2220)

My question in terms of the international aspect is this.

All of Canada knows that there have been about 25,000 refugees who have arrived in this country. What additional work is the government doing to help the Syrian refugees who have arrived, and how does this support our plan for long-term growth and prosperity in this country? In other words, how is that influx, that great effort to bring 25,000 refugees into this country, going to help maintain our growth and prosperity and in fact add to it over the longer term?

Hon. Bill Morneau: Mr. Chair, I am delighted to talk about this. It is such an important initiative for our government.

Now that phase one of this plan to bring in Syrian refugees is complete, and now that 25,000 Syrian refugees have arrived in Canada, we are turning our attention to the next phase of the plan. This involves helping the refugees to integrate into Canadian society.

Syrian refugees have gone to communities where there are settlement supports in place, with consideration given to whether they have family members in Canada, as well as the availability of schools and housing so that their families can properly integrate into Canadian society. Privately sponsored refugees have gone to the community where their sponsor lives. We think this is an important part of our next phase in ensuring that this community becomes integrated into Canada and a part of what we know is the Canadian dream.

Hon. Wayne Easter: Mr. Chair, my second question, in addition to the $160 billion that the other crew added to the debt over the last nine years, is about the government's commitment to resettling Syrian refugees to Canada, which will continue in 2016 with both government-supported and privately sponsored Syrian refugees. They will continue to arrive on commercial flights in the months ahead. I am wondering, as this develops over the additional months, what the government is doing budget-wise to assist these new refugees coming in.

Hon. Bill Morneau: Mr. Chair, that is a very important question, and I am pleased to answer it.

The government's commitment to resettling Syrian refugees to Canada will continue in 2016 as both government-supported and privately sponsored Syrian refugees will continue to arrive on commercial flights in the months ahead. Our budget 2016 provides $245 million over five years, starting this year in 2016-17, for the identification, overseeing of processing, transportation, and resettlement of the additional 10,000 government-sponsored refugees.

There are clearly myriad considerations and many tasks to undertake in partnership with organizations and communities, which have proven to be exemplary partners in using their own resources to help Syrian refugees to integrate. We continue to be very grateful to provincial and municipal governments, private sponsors, service-provider organizations, corporate Canada, and for the broad support and generosity of Canadians in support of this very important work.

● (2225)

Hon. Wayne Easter: Mr. Chair, one of the areas that we hear the most complaints about is family reunification. It is an important role, and it is important to integrate families into Canadian society and the economy. However, at least up until now, it has taken too long for family sponsorship decisions to be taken, leaving families separated for way too long a time.

I wonder if the minister and his counterparts in cabinet have looked at that issue and if they have found any approach in budget 2016 that might be able to address family reunification, which is a serious matter going forward.

Hon. Bill Morneau: Mr. Chair, that is an important question. We recognize that it is critical for us to deal with it. The challenge around family reunification is why in budget 2016 we committed to supporting faster and more predictable processing times for family sponsorship, making it easier for newcomers to adjust to their new lives in Canada and to start to contribute to the country's long-term prosperity.

Higher permanent resident admissions will ensure that immigrants from across the globe can bring their skills and talents to Canada to contribute to our growth. We will continue to focus on this issue in the years to come.

Mr. Ron Liepert (Calgary Signal Hill, CPC): Mr. Chair, it is my pleasure to participate in committee of the whole this evening and further examine the budget that was delivered a short time ago.

I am a little disappointed that we have not really had answers to many of the questions that have been posed here tonight, so we will just carry on and see if we can do a little better.

The finance minister is the person in cabinet with the ultimate responsibility for our national economy. The strength of our economy can be measured in many ways but one is how many jobs are created. Unfortunately, job creation has not been a priority for either the government or the finance minister. That tone was set with a throne speech that was all about expanding government programs but made no mention of private sector jobs.

The finance minister followed the Prime Minister's lead by crafting a budget that leaves entrepreneurs, workers, and private sector businesses on the sidelines. Instead of focusing on businesses that create jobs, wealth, and opportunity in our society, he delivered a budget that expands spending on government programs by a massive 7.6% overall this year.

I would like to quote Hendrik Brakel, who is the senior director of economic, financial, and tax policy at the Canadian Chamber of Commerce. He did some research on this budget compared to the last one that the Conservative government presented to the House. In the last Conservative budget, the word "business" appeared 622 times. That is compared to just 87 times in this first Liberal budget. Similarly, in the 2015 budget the word "hiring" appeared 15 times and in the finance minister's budget "hiring" is only mentioned three times and it is mentioned only in the context of hiring more government employees to work at the Canada Revenue Agency. Even as he massively expands government spending by tens of billions of dollars, his budget sets aside just $173 million for business growth and innovation. That amounts to about 1.5% of this new budget spending.

The parliamentary budget officer has shown that the job numbers that were presented in this budget were inflated by some 40%. In addition to that, the finance minister refuses to release any information so that we can understand how he came up with his numbers.

I have some questions for the Minister of Finance about growth and job creation. The first one is the obvious one. Could he explain a little more about how he came up with the numbers for jobs in this particular budget?

● (2230)

Hon. Bill Morneau: Madam Chair, I want to thank the hon. member for his question and acknowledge that jobs are a critically important part of what we are trying to achieve for Canadians.

We start with the realization that what Canadians care about most is helping their families. Middle-class Canadians need jobs to be successful. Therefore, when we set out to put together a budget, we recognized that growth is what we need as an imperative to create jobs.

We set about putting growth measures in the budget, growth measures that we can see. In this fiscal year, there are going to be 43,000 more jobs, an increase in economic activity that is going to create real improvements for Canadian families through more and better jobs. Importantly, next year, we estimate that there will be about 100,000 new jobs.

I know the member opposite is keen on exact methodologies and exact multipliers, but I can tell him, most importantly, that our analysis by the Ministry of Finance, the analysis by the Bank of Canada, and the analysis by the parliamentary budget office all come to the same conclusion. They come to the conclusion that the kinds of investments we are making, the kinds of investments that help Canadians today in infrastructure and innovation, are going to create jobs. They are going to create a lot of jobs and that is going to help Canadian families to be better off. That is where we started.

I want to say a little something about the private sector. We recognize that the government really is the enabler in allowing the private sector to work. We understand that what we need to do now in our infrastructure planning is to invite the private sector in to be part of those plans. We intend to partner with municipalities, provinces, and institutional investors to see how we can amplify our investments. We will bring the private sector in so we can have a bigger and more measurable long-term impact on the economy and, by the way, more jobs. That is critically important.

I will say that in doing things like this, deeds matter more than words, because if words were all that mattered, the best budget ever would be the over 800-page budget that was delivered by the previous government. Instead, we put forth a budget that had implementation measures that really are about what we are trying to achieve for Canadians: growth, more jobs, and a better future for Canada.

Mr. Ron Liepert: Madam Chair, words do matter because at least the budget that was delivered in 2015 was balanced. We have gone over those numbers to the point where the only person who does not believe that there was a balanced budget in 2015-16 is the Minister of Finance.

I do not think I got a very concrete answer. It still sounded to me like the Minister of Finance is pulling a lot of job numbers out of the air.

When we speak about the private sector, I would like to re-emphasize what my colleague said about it. There was a promise to reduce the small business tax and the Liberals broke that promise. That is how jobs are created in the private sector.

Let me move on to borrowing. It is clear that over the past dozen or so years, Canada outpaced its G7 counterparts in growth. Since the early 2000s, the Minister of Finance continues to insist that there was slow growth. However, I want to quote from his briefing binder, which was prepared by his own department when he took office. It states that Canada's real income per capita growth was the strongest of all G7 countries in the 2000s compared to the weakest growth in the 1990s, which, as we all remember, was a previous Liberal government.

I want to ask the finance minister whether he agrees with this assessment by his own department.

● (2235)

Hon. Bill Morneau: Madam Chair, I would like to start by addressing something in the question from the hon. member regarding the position that this government was left in by the previous government.

I note that in the House, on a month-by-month basis, members opposite bring up the "Fiscal Monitor", and they do that for good reason. The "Fiscal Monitor" is the best way to understand the situation that we find ourselves in economically. We know the position we are in economically is a reflection of the measures and lack of measures put in by the previous government. Through its measures and lack of measures, we ended up with an economy that was not doing well, which led us to be in a deficit position for the fiscal year 2015-16.

I know that it is difficult for members opposite to acknowledge that the "Fiscal Monitor" is the correct barometer, but given their past behaviour, I should think that they would understand that the thing they have been talking about each month has now proved that we are, indeed, in a deficit in 2015-16, a deficit left to us by the previous government. There really is no other way to talk about it.

In terms of growth, our main focus is actually on Canadians of today and Canadians of tomorrow. We recognize that what we need to do is figure out how to grow the economy more rapidly. The last decade was the lowest-growth decade in Canada in the last eight decades. That is our starting point. We are going to do better for Canadians from here on in.

Mr. Ron Liepert: Madam Chair, the minister did not answer the question whether he agreed with his department, which obviously does not agree with the new government.

My friend who is the chair of the finance committee made comments about Canada is back. The evidence that the minister received in his briefing from his department clearly points that Canada had not gone anywhere. Canada always has been back. For the minister to stand here and say that somehow we have had slow growth over the past number of years is incorrect based on his own briefing documents. We will leave that.

I would like to go back to the job creation side of the question. This also gets back to small business. There has been a lot of talk about an increase in CPP premiums. I would like to have the minister tell this committee what his thoughts are relative to those premium increases and what calculations have been done and what impact that might have on small business as we move forward.

Hon. Bill Morneau: Madam Chair, I am pleased to answer the question on the Canada pension plan. It is a subject that we believe is critically important. We recognize that Canadians have not been saving enough over the last number of years, that while there are many Canadians who are on track to a successful retirement, an increasing number of Canadians are not.

That is the reason that we are focused on how we can enhance the Canada pension plan. That is a co-operative effort with provinces and something we are working toward as we speak, trying to find a solution that will enable us to improve the Canada pension plan for the next generation. Should we be successful in that regard and I am certainly looking forward to being successful, we do hope that Canadians will save more money together with their employers so that they can find themselves in a better situation.

In my estimation, that will help the small employers and large employers to retain their employees for longer time periods because they will know that they have greater security in the future, which will allow them to focus on the present, do a better job for their employers, enhance productivity, and in the long run, actually improve our country's economic health.

Mr. Ron Liepert: Madam Chair, I want to talk a bit about the debt that the budget is going to leave future generations of Canadians. We all know there was a promise in the election campaign by the now Prime Minister that we would run a $10-billion deficit and it would be used to build infrastructure. We now have a situation where the government is putting us $30 billion in debt as a result of the budget and that the $10 billion in infrastructure that was promised by the Prime Minister is now spread over two years.

I would like the finance minister to explain how the numbers do not add up. How can we go into debt to the point of $30 billion when only $10 billion of that is infrastructure money that is going to be spread over the next two years?

● (2240)

Hon. Bill Morneau: Madam Chair, I would like to start by talking about debt that was left us by the previous government, the tens and tens of billion dollars worth of debt that was left us. We find ourselves in the situation where Canada is significantly more indebted today than it was when the previous government took power. I will remind the member that the Conservatives started off with a surplus left to them by the previous Liberal government. They quickly eroded that surplus and turned it into a deficit. At the same time, they also brought us into the lowest growth era that we have seen in decades.

Therefore, here is what we have from them. We have a significant increase in debt with nothing to show for it other than the lowest growth rate in eight decades. That is an unfortunate reality and that is what we face right now in terms of what we are trying to do. That position has led us to say that we need to make significant investments in the future, which is exactly what we have embarked on doing. There will be more details coming later this year.

Mr. Ron Liepert: Madam Chair, he still did not answer the question about infrastructure spending. I also want to remind the minister that the surplus that was left when the Conservative government took office was because the previous Liberal government cut transfer payments to the provinces to the bone.

I want to ask the minister if he has the same kind of plans to cut the health transfer payments below the current plan levels.

Hon. Bill Morneau: Madam Chair, we are pleased to announce that this year, in this budget plan, we will be having the largest amounts of transfers to provinces in health in the history of our country, over $36 billion. That is an important measure.

That, of course, includes the amount that we are transferring to the territories, as well. That is an important measure.

We do recognize that we will need to work together with the provinces to enhance our economic growth, but a foundation for that is to ensure that they are in a good position in their health care budgets.

Mr. Ron Liepert: Madam Chair, I would like to remind the minister that the reason the transfer payments are the highest ever is because the previous Conservative government raised them to the highest level.

The members can clap for that particular minister's comments, but what they are really doing is endorsing what the previous Conservative government has done over the last 10 years.

I would like to ask the minister—

The Deputy Chair: In order to hear a response to that, there is 15 seconds left.

Mr. Ron Liepert: Madam Chair, I would like to ask the minister if he has any forecast for implementing all the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

Hon. Bill Morneau: Madam Chair, I would like to reiterate what I said in the last response, which is this budget year, budget year 2016-17, will have the largest ever transfers to provinces for health.

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Toronto—Danforth, Lib.): Madam Chair, it is my pleasure to address the committee of the whole regarding the initiatives of the department of finance. I intend to speak for about 10 minutes and leave five minutes or so for questions.

[*Translation*]

I am going to tell you about two pressing concerns for the residents of Toronto—Danforth. The first is income inequality, and the second is the different effects that poverty has on women and men and how the government is working to address those major concerns.

[*English*]

When I was back in my riding during our various constituency weeks this spring, I had the opportunity to knock on doors and visit community centres in all of the neighbourhoods that make up Toronto—Danforth.

Our government tabled budget 2016 back on March 22. Since that time, I have been having conversations about the work that we are doing here. I have been speaking to people about how we are legislating in Ottawa to help Canadians lead prosperous, healthy lives.

[*Translation*]

As part of my constituency work, I visited some buildings, social housing projects, and apartments rented to people with low incomes. I met families that can barely make ends meet because of the high cost of living in Toronto. Many of them have just arrived in Canada and are learning a new language and culture, different from those they grew up with in their home country. Many of them have children, but some of them live alone. These Canadians are having a hard time. They are living in poverty and do not have many of the things that we take for granted because they cannot afford them.

Large and important community groups and organizations are working in my riding to help the less fortunate improve their situation. For example, the St. John the Compassionate Mission provides food and programs to many people in difficulty. The bakery next door employs people who would otherwise be marginalized and unable to work.

● (2245)

[*English*]

There is also the Eastview Neighbourhood Community Centre, which offers family drop-in programming, after-school activities for children, and extensive newcomer orientation services.

WoodGreen Community Services also has a large presence in our community. They do important work helping people find affordable housing, get jobs, or improve their employability through various training programs. They even run a special program for single, female-led families who are having a hard time finding a place to live and a job. This program puts women through college, while housing them and helping them care for their children.

[*Translation*]

I would also like to mention the innovative and award-winning Classroom Connections, which is headquartered in my riding. This organization develops educational programming for schools and youth across the country. It has designed resources for indigenous youth to help reach out to them and provide them with skills training.

[*English*]

Another organization that works toward helping alleviate some of the gender inequalities that are inherent in poverty is Newcomer Women's Services Toronto. Based in Toronto—Danforth, this important organization has been providing help to newcomer women for more than 30 years. It is there to provide employment, skills development, and settlement services for women. This empowering place is an important initiative that helps address the challenges women in particular face.

[*Translation*]

Similarly, the Massey Centre helps pregnant and parenting adolescents. This centre, which is located in Toronto—Danforth, helps vulnerable young mothers who are looking for the emotional, social, and economic help they need to raise their babies. The centre recognizes that young mothers face serious challenges, and it focuses on making women autonomous and independent by offering high school courses and helping them learn other skills.

The Canada child benefit will have a direct impact on these young mothers.

[*English*]

Our government's Canada child benefit is one tool we would use to fight poverty and income inequality. This simple tax-free benefit would be directly targeted toward low- and middle-income families. Many of the families getting this benefit would see an average increase in child benefits of almost $2,300 in the 2016-2017 benefit year. The hope and aspiration is that the Canada child benefit would help lift some 300,000 children out of poverty this year alone.

[*Translation*]

Nine out of 10 families will receive more money with the Canada child benefit than they are currently receiving.

Since this money does not come in the form of a tax credit, for which they must first spend money in order to benefit, every family that receives a benefit will be able to take advantage of it.

The Canada child benefit is an example of this government's commitment to families in need. I believe it represents one of the most important strategic innovations made in years.

[*English*]

It is, in short, a game changer.

Seniors and older Canadians suffer from income inequality in disproportionately large numbers. When older Canadians leave the workforce, they often find themselves living in poverty. I know this from the time I have spent meeting these seniors across my riding. I have been to teas, luncheons, and other events at seniors homes, churches, and community centres. At these important events, I have met older Canadians who tell me about their lives and the challenges they face.

[*Translation*]

Going door to door, I met many seniors living alone who have a hard time paying for their apartment or home. It is a challenge to find jobs for seniors. Well Seasoned Productions is an initiative in my riding. This entertainment company produces plays in which the actors and industry professionals are aged 50 and over. The group gives jobs to older artists and presents Canadian stories celebrating the contribution of Canadian seniors.

● (2250)

[*English*]

Our government's approach to helping seniors, although perhaps not as dramatic as that undertaken by Well Seasoned Productions, is important. Recognizing that seniors sometimes are forced to live alone and that many of those single seniors are women, our government has committed to spending $3.4 billion over five years to lift low-income single seniors out of poverty. This would be accomplished through a significant increase to the guaranteed income supplement top-up benefits.

[*Translation*]

As of July of this year, the guaranteed income supplement can increase by up to $947 a year. This increase will help the seniors who are already just receiving old age security and the guaranteed income supplement. Based on the discussions I have had in my riding, these seniors are the ones most likely to live in poverty. This investment will help protect them from economic hardship.

[*English*]

To conclude, I want to highlight how these initiatives would have an important gendered impact. As I have already said, the most impoverished single seniors tend to be women. They would get a direct benefit from these important changes.

Furthermore, although we know that the shape and size of families with children varies widely, there are nevertheless many female-led single-parent families in my riding and across Canada. The Canada child benefit is one very direct way that we could help these families and these women avoid economic marginalization.

[*Translation*]

I am very grateful for the opportunity to speak here today, and I am very pleased to be able to ask the Minister of Finance some questions.

I would now like to ask my first question.

[*English*]

Could the minister walk this committee through the plans to provide more funding for affordable housing and the retrofits to existing affordable housing units?

This is a big issue in my riding, because we have many people who are in need of affordable housing. Toronto housing costs are quite expensive, as members know. This is an issue that has been forcing many people in my riding to find solutions, and they are looking to us for guidance as to how to find these solutions. What are we doing to provide affordable housing?

Hon. Bill Morneau: Madam Chair, I would like to start by thanking the hon. member for her comments and for her question.

In budget 2016, we identified the issue around affordable housing as a critically important one for Canada and for Canadians across the country. We identified the fact that we wanted to make a significant investment in social infrastructure. We recognized that the infrastructure, in particular around housing, is critical.

Therefore, we laid out $3.4 billion in an infrastructure plan for affordable housing across the country. We know that will improve the situation for Canadians who are struggling to get into housing. We are going to start with retrofitting and renovating existing housing units and move forward with the building of new units, which can really make a difference for those people who are underhoused in our communities.

● (2255)

Ms. Julie Dabrusin: Madam Chair, my next question is about infrastructure, because that is something that comes up time and time again when I have discussions with people in my riding. There is a feeling that infrastructure has been crumbling in our city. I keep hearing that people want to see further investment to help build our country again.

I would like to know from the Minister of Finance what the effect would be of the government's infrastructure investments on Canadian families and our environment. Perhaps he could provide us with some guidance as to what he sees as the impact of our infrastructure investments.

Hon. Bill Morneau: Madam Chair, the investment in infrastructure is a critically important part of our plan. We recognize it is important today to get people to work, but most important to ensure we have the kind of country that provides the opportunity for people to be successful tomorrow. It is important for people to get to and from their places of work on time, as well as to get back home to see their families; for people to have the kind of affordable housing they need; for people to actually have clean water, because we need to have waste water systems that work.

These are the reasons we put a significant focus on infrastructure spending in mass transit, social issues, and waste water systems, which can make a real difference for families and Canadians in the future.

Ms. Julie Dabrusin: Madam Chair, that is very important for people in my riding. I really appreciate that answer, because infrastructure has become one of the key issues I hear about day in and day out.

However, people are also looking at Canada on a more global scale. Perhaps the Minister of Finance could assist in telling us what we are doing to bring Canada back. What are we doing to bring Canada back economically in terms of innovation? What are we doing to build a future and show that Canada is a very strong country?

Hon. Bill Morneau: Madam Chair, we believe it is critically important that Canada play a very strong role in the global economy as well as a very strong role as a member of the global community. We know that can start with many actions, but we decided to make the very first one bringing in a significant number of Syrian refugees, recognizing the enormous challenge refugees place on other countries in the world and knowing Canada needed to be a part of that. Therefore we brought in 25,000 Syrian refugees.

As part of the global community, we also recognize that Canada is a very desirable country, a place where people want to come; so we have made a commitment to invite 300,000 immigrants into our country this year, putting us at the forefront of efforts to allow people into our country in the global community.

We are also working together with G7 and G20 countries on both taxation issues and economic issues to make sure we can have a leadership place around the world in ensuring that we have a global financial infrastructure that works, that allows us to ensure we can play a leadership role in that regard as well.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): Madam Chair, again I would like to remind you that the minister should be confined to three minutes of questions, answers, and remarks, as per the Standing Orders of this House.

The appointment of this finance minister marks the end of fiscal prudence and a new era of reckless spending and borrowing. When he went to the voters in the election, his party did not promise open-ended spending. Voters did not give him a blank cheque and a mandate to spend as much as he wants, for as long as he wants, on whatever he wants.

The finance minister and his party promised that their spending would be constrained and governed by a clear set of fiscal anchors. They made those promises on the campaign trail. They wrote them into their platform. They were reiterated in the finance minister's mandate letter when he was appointed.

Since he seems to have forgotten his mandate from the voters and the Prime Minister, allow me to remind him of what he was instructed in his mandate letter. It states:

> In particular, I will expect you to work with your colleagues and through established legislative, regulatory, and Cabinet processes, including our first Budget, to deliver on your top priorities.

What were those top priorities that he was supposed to deliver on and include in his first budget? The number one priority in his mandate letter was as follows:

> Ensure that our fiscal plan is sustainable by meeting our fiscal anchors of balancing the budget in 2019/20 and continuing to reduce the federal debt-to-GDP ratio throughout our mandate.

Apparently, those campaign promises and that mandate letter were not worth the paper they were written on, because the finance minister went straight to work on a plan that will do the exact opposite. He is operating each of these fiscal anchors, and he has completely abandoned any semblance of a sustainable fiscal plan. He started spending right away, booking billions of dollars into the 2015-16 fiscal year. He went to work writing a budget that will raise the debt-to-GDP ratio this year, not lower it. He immediately gave up on his responsibility to balance the budget. He is now planning for multi-billion dollar, open-ended borrowing every year for the next five years, with no end in sight.

The government is repealing Canada's Federal Balanced Budget Act, which would have required it to give a clear rationale for its borrowing and present a plan to bring a balanced budget. It is replacing it with nothing. Even the IMF raised concerns about this in its report on Canada last month. It knows it is dangerous when a country has no fiscal anchor.

The government is wasting Canada's fiscal advantage and saddling the taxpayers of this country and their children with over $100 billion in new debt. This is at a time when we are not in a recession and when the economy is growing. This is a time when provincial debt is skyrocketing and global financial markets remain volatile. Such an approach is completely irresponsible. He is weakening Canada's ability to deal with a major economic crisis or shock, and he continues to justify his spending on a series of arguments that are completely out of line with the facts. Even worse, he does not even seem to care.

I have some questions for the finance minister about his reckless approach to managing the finances of our country.

The minister and his government like to blame the economy for the fact that they are borrowing four times more than they planned over the next four years. How does the minister explain the fact that the PBO's recent budget analysis found that spending increases, not revenue decreases, are responsible for more than two-thirds of the projected deficits over the next two years?

● (2300)

Hon. Bill Morneau: Madam Chair, I would like to start by acknowledging that the member opposite is new to the House, like I am, so he may not have witnessed what reckless spending truly is. Reckless spending is spending on gazebos in trying to improve the economy. What we saw from the previous government was tens of billions of dollars in spending with the lowest growth that we have seen in eight decades. Our approach is different.

Since the member opposite wanted to have some quotes about what goes on internationally, I should start by mentioning the *Financial Times*.

I believe the way that it works is that I have as much time to respond as the questioner had for the question.

● (2305)

The Deputy Chair: The member did indicate that he was going to be posing a question, so it is from the time that he mentions he is going to pose a question. It is not from the time that he began his speech. It all depends on how it went. I did get some clarification from the clerks, and it is from the time that he said he was going to pose the question, which is what he ended up doing.

Hon. Bill Morneau: Madam Chair, so after I make a speech, at the end I will answer his question?

The Deputy Chair: You cannot have the same duration as the speech, but you can answer the question briefly, because the time is clicking by. It took the member about a minute to ask the question, so that is the amount of time you will have.

Hon. Bill Morneau: Madam Chair, the member opposite mentioned the IMF. It is worth stopping for a minute to say that the IMF, more than any other institution, strongly supports our approach to fiscal measures to make a difference in our growth.

I was with Christine Lagarde at the IMF meetings. I was at the G20 and G7 meetings with her. On each and every occasion at those meetings, she mentioned the measures that Canada was taking as the kind of measures we should be taking with respect to a low-growth environment.

We have been clear that we do want fiscal sustainability. We are focused on lowering our net debt-to-GDP ratio over the course of our mandate. We will do that while improving the growth rate in our economy for Canadians.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: Madam Chair, surprisingly, we are finding another side of the story, and that side of the story does not really work with what we have in our hands. We are told that we should not worry about this borrowing because the minister's friends at the IMF think he is doing a great job. The minister does not think we need balanced budget laws either.

I was surprised when the IMF said last month, in its review of the Canadian economic situation, that it is important to know that any stimulus package should be accompanied by a credible, medium-term consolidated plan. The current balanced budget rules should be replaced by a new fiscal rule that is transparent, easy to communicate, and sufficiently flexible to avoid global cyclicality. Apparently relying on indicators of debt to GDP, the government's current preference is not good enough.

Will the minister listen to his friends at the IMF and introduce a credible framework to discipline his spending?

Hon. Bill Morneau: Madam Chair, I would ask that we actually pay attention to the time.

It is important when reading a report to read the entire report. The idea that we can read part of something and understand the conclusions is entirely erroneous.

In reading the IMF report, the member would come to the conclusion that any reasonable person would come to, and that is that we are taking the fiscal measures that are recommended by the IMF and the OECD in ensuring we can do something that will make a measurable difference on our growth.

We are moving forward on that plan with prudence, with a fiscal anchor that can make a real difference by ensuring that our net debt to GDP will go down over time. This is the right thing for Canada. It is the right thing for Canadians. It is going to deal with the low growth bequeathed to us by the previous government.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: Madam Chair, I thank the minister for mentioning that. As he is claiming, we are only reading some part of the story and not the whole story. We get used to that actually, coming in the House all the time. I would appreciate if the minister could tell us when he feels he should give us some details so we can understand fiscal responsibilities and fiscal numbers properly, so we can at least have a great conversation.

Apparently the IMF is concerned about other actions taken by the government. It has been calling on governments with aging populations to raise the retirement age. That is a fact. It is happening in Europe, and I am sure the minister knows that. How does the minister square this recommendation with his recent move to lower the eligibility age of old age security? In his book, he told Canadians how good such things would be, which the PBO said would add seven years to the time it takes to pay off Canada's federal debt. I would appreciate the minister's input on this, and some good answers, please.

● (2310)

Hon. Bill Morneau: Madam Chair, I am pleased to confirm that all the answers I am giving I think are good. In particular around retirement issues, I have spent many years on this issue, and our goals are to ensure that we have retirement dignity for Canadians. We know that Canadians are all different. They have different situations. We know that for many Canadians, being able to retire at the age of 65 is something that we need. We know for Canadians who work in physical labour jobs, it is very difficult for them to work longer than that age. It is for this reason that we were very concerned when the previous government arbitrarily raised the old age security age from 65 to 67 for all Canadians, taking away an important benefit, especially for lower-income Canadians.

We are trying to deal with that issue by putting in place, not only measures around old age security that can help them, but also measures around guaranteed income supplements. It can help the most impoverished seniors. As well, and importantly, an enhancement to the Canada pension plan would deal with the under-saving of this generation and the next generation by improving that plan to help Canadians retire in dignity.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: Madam Chair, I believe that reducing the age to 65 was nothing but buying votes. That is it exactly, because it does not really square with what the minister originally believed in his philosophy about this approach.

Is the finance minister planning major new spending that is not accounted for in this budget or the five-year cost estimates that were recently provided to the PBO?

Hon. Bill Morneau: Madam Chair, we believe we have presented a budget for Canadians that is open, clear, and transparent. We have told Canadians exactly what our plan is.

Our plan is to improve the lives of middle-class Canadians, and those struggling to get into the middle class, through measures that can make a real difference today. Reductions in taxes and an increase in the Canada child benefit are things that will help Canadian families.

We have also laid out things that can help tomorrow, and we have been quite clear about those investments. We are going to invest in infrastructure and innovation. I can confirm that we are in the beginnings of our mandate. We will have additional measures. We will have additional ideas on how we can grow the economy to make things better for Canadians who are striving to succeed in a challenging time. That is exactly why we were elected, and that is exactly what we are going to do.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: Madam Chair, unfortunately, they can only hide so much behind their campaign promises. They promised $10 billion, and they are scoring $29.4 billion for this coming year. It will be over $100 billion for the next four years, without any plans for how they will pay the money back. I would really like to have a conversation on this with the minister at some time.

Speaking of Canada child benefits, they are only giving Canadian families $1 billion extra. Divided by a population of 36 million, it equals $27.77 per capita. They are calling that pulling Canadian families out of poverty. That must stop.

The question is, do any of the minister's fiscal forecasts account for an increase to the Canadian health transfer above current planned levels?

Hon. Bill Morneau: Madam Chair, I have no idea how the member opposite arrived at the math, but I want to be very clear. We have done some things with the Canada child benefit that are historic. We have put three different benefits together and means-tested them so that we can actually give a measurably larger amount to Canadian families. Nine out of 10 Canadian families with children will have an average of $2,300 more per year. That is the way the math works. It is big, it is measurable, and it is going to improve the lives of Canadian families and their children.

● (2315)

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Pickering—Uxbridge, Lib.): Madam Chair, budget 2016 is about restoring hope for the middle class. It is about revitalizing the economy and providing support for Canadian families.

Even before taking office, Canadians told us to do two things: invest in people and families, and grow the economy for the long term. Canadians want to leave a better future for their children. People work hard and expect their government and their economy to work hard for them in return.

At the core of our plan is the notion that when there is an economy that works for the middle class, there is a country that works for everyone. That is why we have to look at all of the investments we make today in the context of how they will help to build Canada's future.

We all know that public investments in areas like infrastructure are crucial to driving economic growth and strengthening the middle class. It is no coincidence that some of Canada's most significant public works have come at a time of economic transformation. Building on a grand scale is something Canadians do well. One only has to look at the highway that was built that united Victoria and St. John's in 1971 or the railway that linked the country nearly one century earlier.

Canadians have said that the time is right to invest in infrastructure that will define Canada in the 21st century. In fact, the timing has never been more critical. Interest rates for the new investments are at historic lows. Our current infrastructure is aging and Canada needs a boost in economic growth. Investing in infrastructure creates good, well-paying jobs that help the middle class grow and prosper.

However, it does far more than that. Properly chosen and implemented, these projects can collectively improve Canada's fortunes. By working with our partners to develop world-class transit systems, improve and expand trade corridors, and reduce the carbon footprint of the national energy system, these investments deliver cleaner growth, improve trade, and ensure the middle class can seize new economic opportunities.

In budget 2016, the government will implement a historic plan to invest more than $120 billion in infrastructure over 10 years to better meet the needs of Canadians. First, over the next two years, we will implement a plan to immediately invest in the infrastructure projects Canadians need most: modern and reliable public transit, water and waste water systems, affordable housing, and upgrades to protect existing infrastructure. While the projects themselves will be diverse, what remains constant is the underlying objective of economic growth for the middle class and those working hard to join it.

Next, we will take a longer view that will also help support our ambitious vision of a modern, cleaner economy and a more inclusive society that is better positioned to capitalize on global trade. Nation-building projects like the Trans-Canada Highway require a much longer horizon and a much grander vision. That includes projects that reduce urban transportation congestion, improve and expand trade corridors, and reduce the carbon footprint of the national energy system.

Success will depend on collaboration with provincial, territorial, municipal, and indigenous partners alongside new approaches that help us achieve this goal responsibly. We will pursue evidence-based decision-making and listen to good advice, and we will aim to boost the number of municipal infrastructure projects that are being built and get them started earlier.

The government believes that municipalities are on the front lines, the best place to make decisions about how to meet the needs of the community. They will be our partners. Their involvement will not just ensure our collective economic success, but will also help to translate a broad vision into tangible change at the community level. We recognize that municipalities are already playing a significant role in federal efforts to upgrade and build infrastructure, but we want to work even closer with them to build our communities.

Every day millions of Canadians rely upon affordable, efficient public transportation to get to their jobs, schools, community centres, and at the end of the day, home. As Canada's cities continue to grow, we have to ensure transit networks adapt to meet the new demands and do so in a way that is a sustainable, clean, and helps to reduce congestion and harmful emissions.

Canadian cities are among the most livable in the world. It is time for public transit infrastructure to live up to this reputation. To improve and expand public transit systems across Canada, budget 2016 proposes to provide up to $3.4 billion over three years for a new public transit infrastructure fund to start making that goal a reality.

● (2320)

Getting people moving is an important goal, but it comes with an important condition. We must ensure investments help to catalyze Canada's transition to a low-carbon economy. Work is already under way on a pan-Canadian framework on clean growth and climate change.

Infrastructure investments are a part of this broader effort and can play a meaningful role in helping to position the economy for future success. In particular, green infrastructure can help build healthier more sustainable communities. To that end, $5 billion over five years will be provided to the provinces, territories, municipalities, and first nation communities for green infrastructure. Projects funded by the green infrastructure envelope will include new funding for municipalities whose front-line expertise will allow them to undertake infrastructure projects that both combat climate change and build up greater climate resiliency.

We will provide $125 million over the next two years to the Federation of Canadian Municipalities to enhance the green municipal fund, including for projects that reduce greenhouse gas emissions. We need to make sure that Canadian communities are ready to adapt to climate change. Simply put, we need to consider all of the investments we make today in the context of how they will help to build Canada's future.

As I said in my introduction, Canadians have said that the time is right to invest in infrastructure that will define Canada in the 21st century and I could not agree more. After all, every dollar spent on infrastructure investments such as housing, transit, and green projects will create jobs, strengthen our communities, strengthen our trade corridors, and ultimately raise Canadians' fortunes.

Just like the Trans-Canada Highway did for Canada a generation earlier, our long-term infrastructure plan will unite Canadians once again, helping to redefine our physical spaces while positioning us for success in the economy of tomorrow.

I would like to ask the hon. minister a question in regard to infrastructure. As he may be aware, prior to this I spent 10 years in municipal politics and as deputy mayor of my municipality, so infrastructure and our budgets are quite important. In fact, I was on the finance committee for our region's budget. For us in Ontario and in my municipality in particular, housing is a municipal responsibility, a regional municipal responsibility, and the waiting list as well as the condition of our housing in Durham region are growing deeper in terms of longer waiting lists and the deficit of infrastructure investment in these houses.

If we do not have investment, the number of spaces we have now will actually decrease. With that in mind, what is the government going to do to support social infrastructure like housing?

Hon. Bill Morneau: Madam Chair, I would like to acknowledge how important this issue is across the country, but how important it is specifically in communities like Durham.

We believe that the government has an important role to play when middle-class Canadians, and particularly those working hard to join the middle class, struggle to find ways to improve their livelihoods. This is especially true when it comes to social infrastructure. Investments in this area can measurably improve the quality of life for Canadians both by giving them a home so that they have the possibility of going out and finding a job, but also by providing safe facilities for vulnerable people and homes for those really struggling to find one.

We know that it is really about building stronger communities, so in budget 2016, we provided funding totalling $3.4 billion over five years for affordable housing, early learning and child care, cultural and recreational infrastructure, and community health care facilities on reserves. Specifically we allocated $1.5 billion to expand affordable housing across the country, a significant portion of which will be made available to provincial, territorial, and municipal partners. In addition, $739 million will be invested in first nations, Inuit, and northern housing, making a real difference in housing across our country for so many Canadians struggling to find and maintain themselves in adequate housing facilities.

● (2325)

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Madam Chair, I want to follow up on that question along the same lines in terms of social infrastructure.

We know that with housing, for example, access to housing is incredibly important for a person to maintain a job, to have pride in their community, and to have the opportunity to give back, maybe volunteer. Not having access to some of these key social safety nets to deliver on this is really critical in how the entire system works and how people can fully become members in a community.

Does the hon. minister have more information in terms of the investments in our social infrastructure, and how it will specifically help the most vulnerable in our society?

Hon. Bill Morneau: Madam Chair, we intend to undertake nationwide consultations in the coming year to develop a national housing strategy, so that future federal investments have the greatest possible impact and so that the social housing sector can find new ways to become self-reliant in our country.

To help address local affordable housing needs, we have promised to double federal funding under the investment in affordable housing initiative, by investing $504.4 million over two years. These federal investments are going to be cost-matched by provinces and territories, allowing us to really increase the impact on this investment. The funding will be used to construct new affordable housing units, to renovate and repair existing ones, and for rent supplements and other measures. We expect 100,000 households will benefit from the doubling of funding for this initiative.

In addition, and to encourage the construction of affordable rental housing, we are also expecting to provide $208 million over five years to the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation to establish an affordable rental housing innovation fund, making a real difference in that sector as well.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Madam Chair, in terms of investments in climate change for municipalities, this is something that, as a former municipal councillor, we are starting to really delve into. In fact, we had new financing rules in terms of asset management. A road now became an asset, and we had to have it insured and ensure that we had the adequate capital should anything happen to that in the future.

Climate change was playing a major role in our concerns and long-term planning. Investments in waste water, particularly in my community along the lakeshore of Lake Ontario, is incredibly important. Municipalities are starting to model what a 100-year storm, which is happening more and more frequently, would cost if municipal infrastructure had to be replaced because of the changing climate.

When the minister consulted on our budget across the country, what was he hearing from municipalities in terms of the need for climate change infrastructure investments?

Hon. Bill Morneau: Madam Chair, we endeavoured, as we have mentioned in the House, to have very extensive pre-budget consultations. Those included speaking with representatives from smaller cities, as well as representatives from Canada's largest cities. We feel like we had a very good cross-section of information from the municipal sector in putting together our plans.

As the member notes, one of the critical issues that those municipal governments are facing is an issue around climate change and an issue around dealing with the very real impacts of climate change on their cities. One of the most important things we heard was waste water systems were not able to keep up with these sorts of environmental changes that are going on. In our budget, we put forth some significant measures to deal with that. We put forth $3.4 billion to deal with climate change issues, a lot of which is going to be helping municipalities deal with the very real impacts of climate change.

● (2330)

The Deputy Chair: Based on the questions that were asked earlier, I just want to remind the members here that the previous speaker, in starting the debate, had indicated that when a member is recognized, he or she should indicate to the chair how the 15-minute period will be used. That determines how long the response is from the minister. On that note, the hon. member for Courtenay—Alberni.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Chair, I would first like to ask for unanimous consent to split my time with the member for Churchill—Keewatinook Aski.

The Deputy Chair: Does the hon. member have unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Gord Johns: Madam Chair, I would like to thank my colleagues for their agreement. I would like to indicate to the chair that I will be using eight minutes to ask questions of the minister and the remainder will be with my colleague.

The main estimates show a cut of $10 million in funding for economic and fiscal policy framework. When did the department advise the minister that the cost to small business of the decision to cancel legislated tax reductions for the coming years would be $2.2 billion?

Hon. Bill Morneau: Madam Chair, I acknowledge the question from the hon. member and tell him that we would be happy to come back to him specifically with the answer to that specific question.

Mr. Gord Johns: Madam Chair, did the department conduct analysis of the cost to employees, both in terms of lost jobs and reduced hours and wage increases?

Mr. François-Philippe Champagne: Madam Chair, like the minister said before, we are happy to take that question under advisement and get back to the member at a later stage with a more fulsome answer to that.

Mr. Gord Johns: Madam Chair, the PBO said that more than 1,200 jobs would be lost on top of reduced hours and pay.

Budget 2016 said that future cuts would be deferred. Until what date would that be?

Hon. Bill Morneau: Madam Chair, I am pleased to say that in our budget we have taken numerous measures that we believe will help our economy, which will significantly help small businesses by increasing their opportunities.

Mr. Gord Johns: Madam Chair, does the minister know what the annual cost to Canadian enterprises for credit card merchant fees is?

Mr. François-Philippe Champagne: Madam Chair, as the hon. member knows, it is a very important question. We will take this question under advisement and come back with further details at a later stage to the member.

Mr. Gord Johns: Madam Chair, the Retail Council of Canada has estimated over $5 billion a year.

I ask, does the minister believe that it is fair that small businesses have to pay credit card processing fees as high as 4%?

Hon. Bill Morneau: Madam Chair, I am pleased to say that we are monitoring the voluntary undertaking that we have with the credit card companies to see the outcomes of that on credit card fees to merchants.

Mr. Gord Johns: Madam Chair, does the department have any intention to introduce mandatory regulations to cap merchant fees. If so, when?

Hon. Bill Morneau: Madam Chair, I would like to repeat that we are monitoring the voluntary agreement with credit card companies to see the outcome of that agreement, which will allow us to have more information to respond to this question.

Mr. Gord Johns: Madam Chair, does the minister know how many Canadian small business owners planning to retire have succession plans in place?

Hon. Bill Morneau: Madam Chair, most important, what we know is that by improving the economy we improve the opportunities for small businesses to be more successful, allowing them to have better succession opportunities for their business and more financial reward.

● (2335)

Mr. Gord Johns: Madam Chair, it is our understanding that just over half of small businesses have succession plans while 76% plan their retirement in the next 10 years.

Does the minister believe it is fair that it is more costly to transfer a business to a child or family member than to a stranger?

Hon. Bill Morneau: Madam Chair, there is nothing that prevents a parent from selling shares of their family corporation directly to their child and claiming a lifetime capital gains exemption on the resulting capital gain. That is the tax law of this country.

Mr. Gord Johns: Madam Chair, could the minister let us know what the current level of household debt is in Canada?

Hon. Bill Morneau: Madam Chair, I am pleased to report that we pay close attention to the economic situation of Canadians as it is something we need to monitor to ensure we have a healthy economy. It is something I am paying close attention to together with my officials.

Mr. Gord Johns: Madam Chair, the PBO report says it is 171%. This is the highest level recorded since 1990. Could the minister explain why someone earning the average income of $40,000 or the median income of $31,000 in Canada would not qualify for the so-called middle-class tax cut?

Hon. Bill Morneau: Madam Chair, as mentioned previously in the House, we hope Canadians will look at the entirety of our measures. If they do, they will understand quite clearly that not only nine million Canadians will have a tax reduction, but nine out of ten Canadian families with children will have a much better situation because of the Canada child benefit, making them much better off to face the challenges of raising children in an economically stressful time.

Mr. Gord Johns: Madam Chair, I am going to let the remaining time go to my colleague, the member for Churchill—Keewatinook Aski.

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Madam Chair, I will begin by focusing a question on the issue of employment.

[*Translation*]

The minimum wage has become a symbol of the minimum threshold for dignity. The states of New York and California both plan to adopt this minimum wage in the next few years.

In the interest of equity and fairness, will the minister raise the federal minimum wage to $15 an hour?

Mr. François-Philippe Champagne: Madam Chair, my hon. colleague asks an excellent question.

That measure could be one of a series of measures we will consider for future budgets.

[*English*]

Ms. Niki Ashton: Madam Chair, we certainly hope so. This is a main priority for the NDP, fighting for the $15 federal minimum wage.

Moving to the issue of unemployment, I would like to ask the minister how many Canadians are unemployed and how many are working in involuntary part-time positions.

Hon. Bill Morneau: Madam Chair, we continue to pay very close attention to employment and unemployment across the country. In fact, it was one of the most important considerations as we considered the employment insurance system in our recent budget. We endeavour to continue to improve the economy so we can create jobs, reducing unemployment and helping Canadians.

Ms. Niki Ashton: Madam Chair, the answer is that almost 1.4 million Canadians are unemployed, and more than 900,000 work involuntarily part-time.

Moving to the issue of employment insurance, could the minister tell us how many Canadians are currently able to access EI benefits?

Hon. Bill Morneau: Madam Chair, one of the continuing issues that we look at is the relatively low number of Canadians who are able to access our employment insurance system. It is an issue that we are quite aware of, an issue that we pay attention to, and one of the things we will continue to look at in the future.

Ms. Niki Ashton: Madam Chair, the answer to that would be only 546,000 Canadians are able to access EI benefits, a figure that is entirely inadequate given that the EI fund belongs workers and those who need it when they fall on hard times. I wonder if the minister believes that less than four in ten unemployed Canadians being able to access EI is an acceptable figure.

Hon. Bill Morneau: Madam Chair, we believe that working to improve the situation means taking stock of where we find ourselves and making measures to make a real difference. The employment insurance measures we have made in budget 2016 will make a real and measurable difference, allowing those unemployed who are in the system to get into the system more rapidly, and allowing them to get access to training more rapidly. Additionally, growing the economy will help all Canadians to have better jobs and a better future.

● (2340)

Ms. Niki Ashton: Madam Chair, we find the fact that only four in ten Canadians can access EI to be wholly unacceptable. I wonder if the minister could tell us what is the expected annual surplus in the EI account for this year.

Hon. Bill Morneau: Madam Chair, as the hon. member may know, the actuary for the EI program provides reports annually, and we pay close attention to those reports to ensure that the EI system is adequately funded, and we will continue to do so.

Ms. Niki Ashton: Madam Chair, the answer to that would be $1.2 billion. While we are aware, we are also expecting concrete answers from the minister, which unfortunately we are not quite getting here tonight.

I wonder why the government has not used the EI account surplus to extend benefits to unemployed Canadians.

Hon. Bill Morneau: Madam Chair, I would like to say to the hon. member that if there are very specific questions she would like specific answers to, we would be pleased to respond to those at any time in or outside the House, and do that formally.

We endeavour to continue to focus on the employment insurance system to make sure it works appropriately for Canadians. We have made significant measures in that regard and will continue to monitor it to make sure it is effective.

Ms. Niki Ashton: Madam Chair, again on the issue of employment, particularly precarious employment, I wonder if the minister could tell us how many Canadians are stuck in unpaid internships across the country.

Hon. Bill Morneau: Madam Chair, the most important way to deal with the challenge of employment in this country is to focus on growth. That is what we have done as a government. We have focused on how we can improve growth. We have also taken some real measures that are improving people's situations today. Together these measures are going to make a real difference for Canada.

Ms. Niki Ashton: Madam Chair, the answer is that there are up to 300,000 unpaid internships across Canada. We know that many of these are performed by young people. It is young people who cannot access gainful employment, which is an issue that we hope the current government will take seriously.

Moving on to the issue of inequality, does the minister know how much wealth the richest 100 Canadians now hold?

Mr. François-Philippe Champagne: Madam Chair, the most important thing is that this budget is actually working for middle-class Canadians. As a result of our tax cut, nine million Canadians are better off since January of this year. With the Canada child benefit, we would lift hundreds of thousands of children out of poverty, and nine families out of 10 would be better off, with an average $2,300 in additional income for the family.

This is a budget for Canadian families. This is a budget for the middle class.

Ms. Niki Ashton: Madam Chair, what we would say to that is that we expect the government to be able to provide some figures in terms of growing inequality in this country. We know that, according to Oxfam, the wealthiest 100 Canadians now hold as much as the bottom 10 million Canadians. That number is wholly unacceptable.

I wonder if the minister could tell us if any of the bottom 10 million income earners in Canada benefit from the Liberal tax plan.

Hon. Bill Morneau: Madam Chair, I am absolutely delighted to tell the hon. member that our Canada child benefit was specifically intended to help those families raising children, and nine out 10 families with children would be better off. It would make a real and measurable income difference for those families, especially at the lowest end of the income scale, as they try to raise children at a time that is very challenging for them.

We are proud of this measure. It would make a real difference on poverty, raising 300,000 children out of poverty.

Ms. Niki Ashton: Madam Chair, the minister said earlier that transferring shares in small business or farms to a dependent qualifies as a capital gain and would be eligible. In fact, it is taxed as a dividend. Could the minister explain how he came to this conclusion?

Hon. Bill Morneau: Madam Chair, I would like to repeat that there is nothing that prevents parents from selling shares of their family corporation directly to their child and claiming the lifetime capital gains exemption on the resulting capital gain. That is the current tax code of this country.

● (2345)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Niki Ashton: Madam Chair, does the minister still plan to create a consumer price index specifically for seniors?

Hon. Bill Morneau: Madam Chair, in our budget 2016, we introduced a number of measures to improve the lives of seniors in Canada. In the future, we will consider additional measures to help people in need.

[*English*]

Ms. Niki Ashton: Madam Chair, speaking to the issue of the middle-class tax cut, could the minister explain why someone earning the average or the median income in Canada would not qualify for the so-called middle-class tax cut?

Mr. François-Philippe Champagne: Madam Chair, nine million Canadians will benefit from the middle-class tax cut. This is a significant measure that has been in place since January of this year. I can say that if we take that and the measures we have for families through the Canada child benefit, these are the types of measures that will help the middle class and Canadian families.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Steven MacKinnon (Gatineau, Lib.): Madam Chair, I will begin with a speech and end with questions.

This evening we are debating a wide range of topics having to do with budget 2016-17. I would like to use my time to talk about something that may not have been discussed enough this evening and that is protecting the environment for generations to come while ensuring Canada's economic growth.

In my riding, Gatineau, people will benefit from our investments in infrastructure, jobs, the climate, ensuring respect for the public service, and the Canada child benefit. These measures will constitute the real change that the people of Gatineau were looking for in the last election.

We know that Canadians connect with nature to feel grounded in their identity, and to get a sense of belonging to something that transcends them, a country, the world. I see that in the riding of Gatineau: the people are proud of the green spaces that surround them in the city of Gatineau and obviously in Gatineau Park.

That is why we are investing up to $83.3 million over five years in order to grant all visitors free entry to our national parks, national marine conservation areas, and national historic sites in 2017. There is no better way to celebrate the 150th anniversary of Confederation. We will also be offering free entry for all children under 18, starting in 2018. We want to promote this connection by renewing Canadians' interest in our national parks and by making it easier to access them.

This initiative will also include the creation of a new park. To that end, budget 2016 will provide $42.4 million over five years to continue the work of developing new national parks and new national marine conservation areas, including the Lancaster Sound national marine conservation area in Nunavut, and the Thaidene Nene national park in the Northwest Territories.

At the same time, we will continue to find ways to ensure that Canadians have access to these parks and can learn more about our common cultural heritage if they wish to do so. In order to help Canadians experience part of our heritage, we will allocate an additional $16.6 million over five years to expand the learn to camp program, create new programs about Canada's history, and foster opportunities for storytelling and ecotourism for indigenous people.

I would also like to mention the investment in the Canadian Museum of History, which is located on the other side of the river, across from our cherished Parliament. Approximately $40 million will be invested in an exhibit and a new hall to open on July 1, 2017. It will be a wonderful exhibit that will catch the interest of all Canadians. All these measures will help future generations of Canadians learn about and respect nature and history.

Our government is also investing in a green economy. We know that protecting the environment and growing the economy are not incompatible objectives: they go hand in hand.

● (2350)

[*English*]

The development of clean technologies is good for the economy and middle-class Canadians equally. They create opportunities for businesses to grow and, by extension, jobs for talented and creative Canadians. By supporting a clean growth economy, Canada will be positioned to take advantage of opportunities to diversify our economy, open up access to new markets, reduce emissions, and of course generate jobs for Canadians. Canadian businesses are well situated to seize this opportunity, showcase their ingenuity, and emerge as leaders in clean technology.

[*Translation*]

Those are just the economic reasons for adopting this new strategy. A greener lifestyle will bring about improvements in health and quality of life that will pay off in the future. For all of these reasons, the government kept its promises by investing in a clean economy, which is a first step in reorienting our economy for the 21st century.

Our children and grandchildren deserve a healthy environment and a prosperous economy. That is no small feat. A sustainable environment requires significant investments in order to address climate change and air pollution, protect ecologically sensitive areas, and restore public confidence in our ability to properly manage our land.

In total, budget 2016 provides $3.4 billion over five years to achieve those goals. Budget 2016 provides $50 million over four years for Sustainable Development Technology Canada's SD Tech Fund. This funding will support the development and demonstration of technologies to deal with the problems associated with climate change, air quality, and water and soil cleanliness.

We are also giving Natural Resources Canada $82.5 million over two years to support research, development and demonstration of clean energy technologies with the goal of bringing these innovative tools closer to commercialization so they can enter the market.

Alternative fuel vehicles are becoming more common. Over the past few weeks, I have seen electric cars from all manufacturers. Earlier this month, Gatineau hosted Branchez-vous, part of a Quebec-wide initiative that is a testament to our enthusiasm for electric cars in Quebec and Canada.

[*English*]

To support the transition to low-carbon transportation fuels, we will provide $62.5 million over two years to Natural Resources Canada to support the deployment of infrastructure for electric charging stations and natural gas and, yes, hydrogen refuelling stations.

In many regions of the country, we have fostered unique clean-technology ecosystems, which are now well positioned to tap into new market opportunities. We would provide funding through the six regional development agencies, fully doubling their annual support for clean-technology activities to $100 million in this current fiscal year.

● (2355)

[*Translation*]

To help Canada achieve its potential and become a clean energy leader, we will also provide over $1 billion over four years, starting in 2016-18, to support future investment in clean technology across the forestry, fishing, mining, energy and agriculture sectors. These major investments will be made as part of the government's innovation agenda, to be defined in the coming year.

Climate change is a major challenge that demands innovation on the part of business and wise choices on the part of Canadians. We know that both are up to the challenge. Long before a technology hits the market, it exists as an idea in the minds of researchers, innovators, and scientists. Their specialized skills will guide Canada in its transition toward a low-carbon economy.

[*English*]

The Canada excellence research chairs program draws world-leading researchers to Canada by providing host institutions with funding in support of key research areas. Canada needs the brightest minds to map the transition before us. That is why we intend to create two new chairs in fields specifically related to clean and sustainable technology. In total, we would provide $20 million over eight years starting in 2018-19 to seek out and identify these new world-leading researchers.

However, successful clean technologies require more than just a good idea. They require the collective efforts of many talented individuals who, together, advance these projects so they can take root and find success.

[*Translation*]

The federal government has a clear goal, but that goal alone will not bring about the necessary change. In the future, investments will align with the new pan-Canadian framework on clean growth and climate change, which is currently being developed in partnership with the provinces and territories. We will also work hand in hand with indigenous peoples.

In conclusion, pricing carbon will drive Canada's transition to a stronger low-carbon economy—

The Deputy Chair: Question, please.

Mr. Steven MacKinnon: I will get to my question, Madam Chair. I just mentioned some significant investments. For more than a decade, Canadians have been calling for a green budget and for a government that will invest on all fronts in the shift we must make to address climate change.

I have heard the minister mention the pan-Canadian framework on clean growth and climate a number of times. He finally delivered the budget that Canadian environmentalists and Canadians who are concerned about climate change have been calling for. He delivered a budget that tackles the problem on all fronts by investing in many areas, which I covered in my speech.

Could the minister give us more information on the government's progress so far?

[*English*]

Hon. Bill Morneau: Madam Chair, our goals are clear. We will reduce greenhouse gas emissions in this country, and we will combat climate change.

I am proud to say that, on March 3, the Prime Minister and leaders from provinces and territories agreed to work together on a new pan-Canadian framework on clean growth and climate change. The road map we are developing will help Canada meet our international commitments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Central to this framework will be pricing of carbon. This is not merely because of the wide consensus on the need for this measure but because doing so is key if we are going to transition to a stronger, more resilient economy that is in step with the rest of the world as we face up to real climate change.

The funding announced in budget 2016, amounting to $2.9 billion over five years, would help us to take concerted steps toward achieving our climate change and air pollution goals.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Steven MacKinnon: Madam Chair, I think everyone on this side of the House is eager to move forward on ratifying our climate-related commitments under the Paris agreement and in this historic debate. However, we know that achieving our specific targets in the area of climate change and reducing greenhouse gases will require changes and collaboration among the federal government, the provinces, indigenous peoples, the territories, the municipalities, and so on.

Can the minister tell us how this budget will contribute to achieving those targets and talk about the incentives that could be on the table for our various partners, such as the provinces?

In the long term, what does he plan to do in future budgets to complete the shift to a green economy, a collaborative economy that strives to meet our greenhouse gas reduction targets?

● (2400)

Hon. Bill Morneau: Madam Chair, I thank the member for his questions.

It is very important to have more details about our fund and how we are going to improve our situation when it comes to climate change.

[*English*]

Our decision to add funds to a low-carbon economy fund would enable us to support the development of a pan-Canadian framework. We clearly are intending on helping to ensure that Canada will meet its international obligations. We are going to take action to reduce emissions from Canada's largest sources, transportation and energy. We are going to advance science and programming activities to better understand and adapt to our changing climate. Of course, our goal is to enable evidence-based decisions to address air pollution.

We want to be clear that these commitments are firm. We intend to retake our position and our place as world leaders in environmental stewardship. We know this means that the federal government needs to lead, working together with the provinces and territories in the same direction for the long-term health of our environment, and that means, as well, for our economy.

Mr. Phil McColeman (Brantford—Brant, CPC): Madam Chair, I want to go back to the questioning that I was leading into previously about revenues that have been projected and recorded and amounts that have been spent.

If we take the revenues reported in the 12 issues of the *Fiscal Monitor* for 2015 and 2016, to the year end, they add up to $289.6 billion. Could the minister confirm that this is only $700 million short of what was projected in budget 2015?

Hon. Bill Morneau: Mr. Chair, I want to say, again, in the House, because it is important, that the "Fiscal Monitor" is the work of the Department of Finance. It is the best work we have to show our fiscal situation. It is what we use in order to determine the financial situation we are in. It is the kind of work that showed over the last years of the previous government that it was perpetually in deficit. It is the kind of work that is showing us, in the 2015-16 year—

Mr. Phil McColeman: On a point of order, Mr. Chair, I think that was a far greater period of time than my question.

The Chair: The times are approximate. I have the minister at about 40 seconds, and yourself at about 36 seconds. I do try to ensure that they are proportionate times, but I also do not want to eat into members' times. I will keep a close eye on that. The hon. minister.

Hon. Bill Morneau: Mr. Chair, I will be very quick. The *Fiscal Monitor* in 2015 shows clearly in the month of March that in fact the government before us left us in a deficit. That is our starting point.

Mr. Phil McColeman: Mr. Chair, I would like to refer the finance minister to page 7 of that February update, outlining at least $2 billion in Liberal-initiated spending, spent primarily on their platform commitments.

I want to ask a very few quick yes or no questions about the items listed on that page. Was the $400 million middle-class tax cut in budget 2015?

Hon. Bill Morneau: Mr. Chair, I do not believe we hold any responsibility for budget 2015.

Mr. Phil McColeman: Mr. Chair, it is the 2015-16 budget.

Was, as it shows on page 7, $400 million accrued to the expenses for the middle-class tax cut?

Hon. Bill Morneau: Mr. Chair, if I understand the question, I believe it was whether that amount was accrued in the fiscal year 2015-16. If that is the question, the answer is yes.

● (2405)

Mr. Phil McColeman: Mr. Chair, was the $400 million for Syrian refugees accrued in the budget 2015-16?

Hon. Bill Morneau: Mr. Chair, again, one cannot accrue something in a budget. I think the question was whether that was in the fiscal period 2015-16, and the answer to that question would, indeed, be yes.

Mr. Phil McColeman: Mr. Chair, was the $900 million for reversing our government's planned public sector sick leave changes then set out in budget 2015-16?

Hon. Bill Morneau: Mr. Chair, those numbers were only budgeted but never accrued.

Mr. Phil McColeman: Mr. Chair, they were in the budget. As the minister said, they could not be accrued. I will take that as that they were there.

Was the $300 million for Alberta stabilization in budget 2015-16?

Hon. Bill Morneau: Mr. Chair, again, as our responsibility was not to prepare 2015-16, I cannot say exactly what was in that budget.

Mr. Phil McColeman: Mr. Chair, if we add those numbers up, that is $2 billion in Liberal-initiated spending primarily on their platform commitments as I mentioned. I wanted to finish those comments off.

I would like to make some more comments about another part of the discussion tonight and it has to do with forecasting. After those comments I would like to move on to my questions and I will indicate to you, Mr. Chair, when I get to those questions.

Under successive Liberal and Conservative governments, private sector economists have been consulted on their forecasts for the economy and the average of those forecasts is used as budget baselines. Here is the advice the minister received from his own officials in the briefing binder he received in November, "The Department regularly surveys about 15 private sector forecasters for their views on main economic variables.... The average of these private sector forecasts then forms the basis for the economic assumptions used for fiscal planning in the budget and the Fall Update. This practice has been used since 1994 and introduces an element of independence into the fiscal forecast. It has been strongly supported by external organizations such as the International Monetary Fund. We recommend you maintain this practice."

Apparently the finance minister did not agree and instead he decided to politicize this important process for his own political benefit.

In his budget the minister used a base oil price of just $25 per barrel for 2016 and real GDP growth of just 1%. This has the effect of lowering expected tax revenues by $6 billion. Previous governments generally have used a figure between $1 billion and $3 billion. He calls it prudence, but at the finance committee one PBO official likened it to assuming oil prices would only go negative. Its report said that such a large arbitrary deviation from private sector forecasts would remove independence from the process. By the way, those average sector forecasts were $40 a barrel in 2016 and they expected our growth rate to be just around 1.4%.

Instead, it appears the finance minister has given himself a $6 billion slush fund to play with. This is very concerning. In every one of the next five years the government can spend $6 billion more than was outlined in the budget and still meet its deficit targets. This is not a conspiracy theory. A recent BMO report shows that the Ontario Liberals have been using this strategy for years to hide spending. The process of forecasting is fundamental to our budget process and it is important for Canadians to understand how the Liberals are politicizing it and undermining the credibility of the finance department.

I will now move on to my questions.

Why did the department make such an unusually large downward adjustment to the private sector forecast? Was this a decision by the minister himself, or who recommended it?

Hon. Bill Morneau: Mr. Chair, I would like to come back to the previous line of questions. When we look at the government actions taken since we came into power and we look at the situation we were left in, we find the deficit without the government actions, and I want to be absolutely clear. When we consider the expenditures that we have made along with the savings we have made, the deficit without the government actions, therefore the deficit left us by the previous government, is $2.5 billion. It is there in black and white. I would like the member to review that.

● (2410)

Mr. Phil McColeman: Mr. Chair, might I get an answer to my question that was posed instead of a previous question when the minister was not so certain of his numbers?

Hon. Bill Morneau: Mr. Chair, I would like to ask the hon. member whether I can have adequate time to answer his question.

Mr. Phil McColeman: Mr. Chair, I believe the time is the time. The question was asked and I will re-read it and that is the amount of time the minister will have to respond.

Why did the department make such an unusually large downward adjustment to the private sector forecasts? Was this a decision by the minister himself, or who recommended it?

Hon. Bill Morneau: Mr. Chair, I am pleased to confirm that we did work together to come up with a prudence factor in the budget. We looked at the previous private sector economists' forecasts. We realized that they had repeatedly been marked down in the subsequent rounds and that markdown was on average $40 billion. Therefore, as a prudence factor, we took $40 billion which translates into a $6 billion prudence factor. This is the sort of thing that Canadians expect us to do in order to ensure we start off with an appropriate format for our budgeting and from there, as we have said repeatedly, we are making investments to improve our situation for the future.

Mr. Phil McColeman: Mr. Chair, on page 48 of the budget, I note the $6-billion contingency is not separated from the core budget balance, as it has been in past budgets. Who advised the minister to draft the budget this way?

Hon. Bill Morneau: Mr. Chair, I am pleased to say that as has been done in the past, we worked together to put together a budget that makes sense for the times that we are in. We believe taking a prudence factor made sense. It continues to make sense. We are obviously seeing a continuation of volatility. We are obviously seeing challenges in the global environment and we continue to be aware that we want to be ready for challenges even in our own economy, which indeed we have seen.

We believe this is the right way to start. It is putting us in the position where now we can move forward on investments for Canadians.

Mr. Phil McColeman: Mr. Chair, my next question is very important and the minister will have more time because it is lengthier. It cuts to the core understanding of the minister's spending projections. He has already shown a propensity to hide the true extent of his spending plans from Canadians. That is why he included so much Liberal platform spending in last year's fiscal year. We know that he has downgraded economic forecasts that have left him with the $6 billion in wiggle room in this next budget.

If GDP growth is stronger than his budget projections, which it probably will be, and if the oil price is higher than $25 per barrel, which it also will probably be, will the finance minister spend that money or will it be put to lowering the deficit?

Hon. Bill Morneau: Mr. Chair, I would like to start by saying that the fact that we are talking about our prudence factor is indeed evidence that we are open and transparent about that exact prudence factor. We took an average of 15 private sector economists' forecasts. We did not take a $25 oil figure. That was embedded in those private sector economists' forecasts. Of course, many factors can lead to those forecasts being correct or incorrect. We believe that taking a prudence factor was a good way to start.

Should the economy do better than we expect, we will be pleased. Canadians will be pleased and that will put us in a better economic situation and that will enable us to ensure that we have a better situation for the next generations by making investments to continue growth. That is in fact our plan. Our plan is investing. Our plan is being prudent, making sure that Canadians can see what we are doing and then going ahead and doing it. That is going to improve the situation for Canadians in the future.

Mr. Phil McColeman: Mr. Chair, we have a job to do, to hold the government to account for its promises to Canadians and for the facts and figures that are presented to Parliament. The minister has told every member of the House and all Canadians that this $6-billion slush fund is his prudent contingency plan. That is how he has presented it to Parliament. A contingency plan means he has left himself room to not go over budget if the economy suddenly deteriorates. It does not mean that he can then spend that money on new things that were not included in his budget plan if the economy does not deteriorate.

Will the finance minister commit to returning any savings in his projections from an oil price higher than $25 per barrel, or GDP growth stronger than 1%, to the taxpayers of this country? Will he commit to sticking to his budget plan and not spending his contingency?

● (2415)

The Chair: This will be the last response.

The hon. finance minister.

Hon. Bill Morneau: Mr. Chair, I am pleased to answer the question. We absolutely are going to be prudent with the money that is entrusted to us from Canadians. We know that it is critically important that we take the government revenues and we spend them wisely, and that we invest with prudence in the future of this country.

We know that making promises before we have an actual situation is not the way to go about this. What we want to do is set out a budget plan that makes sense. We want to invest so that we can hopefully exceed that, so that we can then turn around and actually make more investments in the next budget and subsequent budgets so that we can ensure that our economy continues to grow.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Vaughan—Woodbridge, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I would usually say good afternoon, but I think I am going to say good morning now.

I am pleased to speak to the committee of the whole tonight as we discuss the main estimates for finance. I would like to focus my comments today on one particular area that is of great interest to me and that our government is dedicated to enhancing: the field of innovation.

Before I begin my formal remarks, when I think of innovation I ask myself what it means for Canadians. I look at my riding, and in the city of Vaughan is a company that has been in existence for many years whose owners are good family friends. The Mircom Group of Companies is a leader in independent design and a manufacturer and distributor of intelligent building solutions. This company competes against the likes of General Electric, Tyco, and Johnson Controls, employing literally hundreds of Canadians. Over half its products are exported outside of Canada to more than 95 countries. This employer has employees who are scientists, R and D, and capital investment. This company is a Canadian success story. It is an innovator. That is what our government is attempting to put into this framework. It is attempting to encourage companies like this to come into existence, to grow, to remain in Canada, and to succeed. That is what makes me happy about what our government is doing in terms of its platform on innovation. We are going in the right direction.

I will now go to my formal remarks. What do we mean when we use that word, innovation? Certainly, it means different things to different people. Our government is daring to dream of doing something smarter, faster, and better to improve the status quo, to improve the quality of life in whatever ways possible. Fundamentally, we are trying to find solutions to the big problems. That means social innovation. It means embracing the premise that a clean environment and a strong economy can go hand in hand. It means understanding that some of our most important infrastructure is now digital infrastructure in the context of a knowledge economy. It means moving beyond individual interests to see the collective opportunities.

Technology has transformed the way Canadians access information, pay for goods and services, interact with each other, and build communities. At the same time, technology has now reached a new level. It is more than just communications. Technology has become a transformative tool in addressing global challenges like climate change. Where industrial progress once came at a cost to the environment, nowadays technology has emerged as our greatest tool in clean growth and healthy, prosperous societies. Our government has defined a new vision in 2016: to build Canada as a centre of global innovation, renowned for its science and technology, creative and entrepreneurial citizens, and globally competitive companies offering high-quality products and services. We are well positioned for this. We have world-leading research institutions, creative and innovative entrepreneurs such as the Mircom Group of Companies, businesses, and commercial organizations that can transform breakthroughs in the laboratory into products that enhance the lives of millions.

Canada's innovative society already creates jobs for the middle class, enhances homegrown talent, and helps companies expand beyond our borders. However, we can and we will do much more. What is now an emerging economic opportunity will become the foundation of a modern 21st century Canada. We will transform our economy from one that depends on a few resources to one whose resources are as infinite as our diversity, creativity, and talent.

Through 2016 and 2017, we will define a bold new plan, the innovation agenda. This will be a plan for change. It will define clear outcomes and pinpoint milestones toward achieving them. It will be a cross-government effort, drawing on Canadian and international experts in clean technology, health sciences, advanced manufacturing, digital technology, resource development, and much more.

It is important for us to be leaders in this field. We all hear that word, ecosystem. The ecosystem is important. In the old days there may have been an auto plant where everything would co-exist there and in the surrounding area. However, now, with an ecosystem, we may have many small companies operating in clusters, and we need to be at the forefront of that.

To help us realize this vision, budget 2016 proposes several interim measures to promote research and accelerate business growth. It would focus new federal support for science on world-class discovery research, maintain funding for the commercialization of promising scientific discoveries, begin to orient federal business support toward those firms with ambitions to grow, and build a better evidence base to identify gaps, evaluate performance, and inform future decisions.

● (2420)

The rules are changing around us. In the old bricks-and-mortar economy, a bigger factory meant not just more output in wealth but more jobs. That is not the case in the new digital economy. We need to enable and support this change. We also need to ensure that we do so mindfully and in a way that does not stifle innovation. The innovation leaders are the future and must be equipped with the skills they will need to succeed. Post-secondary and other research institutions are front-line agents in fostering science and research excellence. They help to train the Canadian workforce of tomorrow. They also help to create the knowledge base necessary for the private sector and policy-makers who are looking to build a thriving and clean economy. To ensure that these facilities continue to support our researchers and innovators, budget 2016 will invest up to $2 billion over three years in a new post-secondary institutions strategic investment fund.

If investing in the spaces that enhance our innovative potential is the first step, the second step is most certainly investing in Canadian researchers themselves, particularly those on the cusp of new discoveries. In Canada, this funding typically flows from federal granting councils, which include the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council, and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council. These councils already receive $2.8 billion annually to support research and training of highly qualified people at universities and colleges across the country. This year and going forward, I am proud to state that our government will provide an additional $95 million to support discovery research, the highest amount of new annual funding in over a decade. To ensure that federal support for research, including through the granting councils, is strategic and effective, we will undertake a comprehensive review of federal support for fundamental science. We want to be sure that we are providing the right support to the right leaders, and that fields of research reflect shared Canadian priorities.

Our government will also continue to support Canada's strength in genomics, the study of the entire genetic code that is fuelling innovations across a number of sectors. We will provide $237.2 million over the next four years to support the pan-Canadian activities of genomics. Well before genomics, Canadians carved out a special expertise in stem cell research. It started over 50 years ago when two of Canada's own doctors proved their very existence. Since that time, stem cell research has evolved into one of the world's greatest promises, with significant implications for medical treatments, commercial products, and public policy. We will provide up to $12 million over two years in support of the stem cell network, so it can continue to provide bridges that connect researchers and professionals through training and outreach activities.

To conclude, in the 21st century global economy, Canada needs to be innovative. We need to be leaders. Our businesses need to be fostered and encouraged. We need to embrace the world of science, technology, engineering, and math. We need to diversify our economy to enable growth and prosperity throughout the country. We need to turn the page on the last 10 years. In addition to these goals, I believe that Canada has a strong foundation to build upon. We have one of the best-educated populations in the world. We have one of the highest university investments in R and D in the world. We have one of the world's best investment climates. We are a leading edge of global trade. Let us be proud of Canada.

I would like to thank the Minister of Finance for his continued leadership on the economy in this period of global volatility. However, I would like to ask this to the minister. How will the Government of Canada help Canadian businesses innovate and grow?

● (2425)

Hon. Bill Morneau: Mr. Chair, we absolutely intend on helping Canadian businesses to innovate and grow. We intend on doing that by investing in basic science, in research, and by investing in networks and clusters to enable us to develop a flywheel of research and investment that can make a long-term difference in this country. That is what we are embarking upon. Together with my advisory council, we are working on ways that we can actually do that. We will have more to say to Canadians in the coming months.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Mr. Chair, I would like to follow up and ask the Minister of Finance what specific measures from the budget 2016 he can tell us about that relate to innovation.

Hon. Bill Morneau: Mr. Chair, there are many specific measures that we can talk about. Clearly, they would include the $87.2 million for Natural Resources Canada projects across the country, in support of research in forestry, mining and minerals, earth sciences and mapping, innovation, and energy technology.

There is $8.7 million for the Canadian Space Agency projects, including the rehabilitation of the chamber used at the Shirleys Bay, Ontario facility to simulate space conditions for the testing of large spacecraft and instruments.

There are things like the $18.5 million for the National Research Council Canada projects, including $3.7 million for a leading-edge wake-making system at the St. John's towing tank used to evaluate the performance of marine technologies and vehicles.

These are just some of the many initiatives that we put in budget 2016 to help to grow innovation in this country.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Mr. Chair, our focus on innovation is meant to ensure that our longer-term growth profile of the Canadian economy is boosted, and ensure that we have a strong standard of living for my children and our next generation. Therefore, I would ask the Minister of Finance, for those individuals who are going to post-secondary institutions, what opportunities are there at post-secondary institutions and in the north that will help the government build upon its innovation agenda?

Hon. Bill Morneau: Mr. Chair, businesses, post-secondary institutions, governments, and other innovation stakeholders need to work together more strategically to create greater value for Canada. These connections are critical to transforming today's ideas into the products and services of tomorrow.

We will invest up to $800 million over four years to support innovation networks and clusters as part of our upcoming innovation agenda. While further work on our innovation agenda is taking place, budget 2016 provides the industrial research assistance program with a further $50 million in 2016-17 to increase the number of companies served by the program's highly qualified industrial technology advisers nationwide.

Finally, northern communities are a rich resource in the areas of geoscience, renewable energy, fisheries, tourism, and cultural sectors. To help promote strong, diverse, and sustainable economies for northerners, budget 2016 provides $40 million over two years to renew the strategic investments in northern economic development programs to the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency.

We are proud of these measures to improve academic institutions and in the north in their innovation efforts.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Mr. Chair, I have one follow-up question in terms of the innovation agenda.

Could the Minister of Finance comment on our investment in rural broadband and how it is so important in being able to move, not only as we speak about infrastructure, people, and goods and services, but also move information from rural areas in Canada?

● (2430)

Hon. Bill Morneau: Mr. Chair, we had the opportunity to travel across Canada in pre-budget consultations. My parliamentary secretary went coast to coast, as did I, to listen to Canadians. We heard from Canadians in rural environments that one of the critical things they needed in order to be part of the modern economy, to provide opportunities so that their children do not necessarily need to go to big cities to get jobs was strong broadband; the opportunity to connect to the Internet in a way that could enable them to be part of the global community.

Therefore, we put in our budget $500 million over the next five years to enhance our broadband capacities across the country. We know that this will help people in rural communities to connect, whether with medical providers, business opportunities, or just generally allowing them to be part of the global community. This means that they have opportunities where they have grown up, to actually find a way to build a business, and to lead their lives in a way that is consistent with the way other Canadians lead their lives.

We believe this is a very important measure. It is part of our strategy to engage rural Canada while we also focus on how we can help in the urban centres.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Chair, I would like to seek unanimous consent to split my time with the member for Milton.

The Chair: Does the hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan have the unanimous consent of the committee to split his time?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: There is seven and a half minutes each, or approximately that. You can split the 15 minutes.

The hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Chair, is it the view of the minister that child care is a form of infrastructure?

Hon. Bill Morneau: Mr. Chair, I am pleased to say that providing services for child care, investing in facilities for child care, is most certainly part of infrastructure in our estimation.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Chair, is there anything that the government does that is not infrastructure?

Hon. Bill Morneau: Mr. Chair, I am pleased to say that our tax cut for the middle class, reducing the taxes of nine million Canadians, is most certainly not infrastructure.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Chair, that is an absolutely ridiculous response and I would appreciate it if members did not cut into my time with applause.

Is there anything that the government does in terms of the services it provides that the minister does not define as infrastructure?

Hon. Bill Morneau: Mr. Chair, yes.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Chair, I appreciate that substantive answer.

There are some other things I want to address. I have here Question No. 94, an Order Paper question that deals with the expenses associated with ministerial travel. The minister went to New York, brought three political staffers with him, and each of them charged about $4,000 for a round-trip flight to New York. There were two public servants on the same flight and each of them charged about $1,000 for a round-trip flight. I do not know how one gets a round-trip flight to New York for about $4,000.

I wonder if the minister can explain why it costs so much more to move political staffers than it does to move public servants.

Hon. Bill Morneau: Mr. Chair, like ministers of finance before me, I believe it is important that we travel not only across Canada to tell Canadians about our budget but abroad so that we can talk to people who might actually invest in our country, so that they can understand why we are doing things that are making a difference in this country.

Therefore, like previous ministers of finance, we have travelled abroad. We have brought the Canadian message. What I can say that is hugely positive is that unlike previous ministers of finance, we have been extremely positively received by the international community. It recognizes that what we are doing is making a real difference for growth in this country.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Chair, the record will show that the minister chose not to answer my question. I was hoping he would be as open about expenses as he is when he is talking about his personal life.

I want to ask the minister this. Does he believe that Canada should ever balance its budget?

Hon. Bill Morneau: Mr. Chair, we have made a decision that our priority is to invest in growth in this country. We know that getting to balanced budgets over the long term can only be achieved if we are able to grow our economy to make a real difference for the future of Canada. That is, in fact, our priority. We are moving forward with those investments. We know it is the right thing for growth in our country.

● (2435)

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Chair, could the minister answer at least one question tonight?

Does the minister believe that the Government of Canada should ever balance the budget at any point in the future, yes or no?

Hon. Bill Morneau: Mr. Chair, I want to be clear. Our priority is to make investments in growth in this country. We know that after a decade of low growth, the right path is to make investments. It is a path that has been confirmed to us by outside intervenors, by economists outside of the country, economists inside of the country. We know it is the right path. We know it will make a difference for this generation and for generations to come.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Chair, I will give the minister one more chance. To be clear, I will repeat the question. I think it was very clear.

Does he believe that the Government of Canada should ever, at some point in the future, balance the budget, yes or no?

Hon. Bill Morneau: Again, Mr. Chair, I will say that our priority is investments. We intend on balancing the budget. That may take a while as we are going to make investments in order to make sure that we do what we promised Canadians we would do, and that is to focus on how we can grow the economy, how we can make their lives better both today and tomorrow, because we know that they are seeking a better situation for their children than they have today.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Chair, if the government intends to balance the budget at some point in the future, could the minister give us a ballpark of when he intends for that to happen?

Hon. Bill Morneau: Mr. Chair, I am pleased to say that we presented to Canadians our budget 2016. In that budget, we told Canadians in an open and transparent way what we intend to do in order to manage the economy. We showed them that we are trying to improve their lives today and what we are going to do in order to improve their lives tomorrow by making investments in infrastructure and innovation that are going to put us in a better situation in the future.

We know that is the right thing to do and we are looking forward to implementing our plan on behalf of Canadians.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Chair, I think we will get through these seven minutes without hearing any answers, but I will continue in the hope we will get some.

The minister has claimed that Canada had low growth over the last 10 years. Could he name a G7 country that had higher growth than Canada over the last seven years?

Hon. Bill Morneau: Mr. Chair, I can name a country that had better growth in the previous 10 years before that last 10 years, and that is Canada. Canada in the years before the Conservatives came into power had better growth.

When the Conservatives came into power, growth was slower. We are trying to deal with that. We are trying to actually make investments so we can improve the growth rate in the future. That is what we are doing for Canadians.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Chair, I think the record will again show that the minister chose not to answer the question.

I wonder, though, if he wants to refer to a previous time period. I will just ask him this. Is he aware of the 2008-09 global recession, yes or no? Does he think stimulative economic policy was appropriate during the global recession, yes or no?

Hon. Bill Morneau: Mr. Chair, I am quite aware of the multiple recessions we experienced during the time of the previous government. That is on the record.

I am also quite aware of the debt that was left us from the previous government. I am also quite aware of the low growth that was left to us by the previous government. Clearly the Conservative spending did not lead us to a higher growth situation.

That is exactly why we have embarked on a different plan, a plan to invest in growth for the future of Canada, a plan that will make a real difference for Canadians.

The Chair: We are at the seven-and-a-half-minute mark. You can split either way, but we will go to the hon. member for Milton.

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Milton, CPC): Mr. Chair, I wonder if the minister can help me with respect to some documentation in his budget. The outlook for budgetary revenues, page 235 of this year's budget, shows some GST revenues growing from $33.1 billion to $40 billion between the years 2015-16, 2020-21. That is a 21% increase in GST revenue.

Could the minister tell us what he is basing that on?

Hon. Bill Morneau: Mr. Chair, the way GST revenues work is that they are a function of consumption, they are a function of how much goods and services Canadians purchase.

In our budget, we looked at what we believed to be the consumption patterns of Canadians. We then made a mathematical equation against those consumption patterns, using the factor that we use for GST. The multiplication of the consumption patterns against the actual amount of GST results in a number, and that number was the number we used in our budget in order to provide what we saw as the forecast for GST revenues in the time period under question.

● (2440)

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, could the minister agree with me that going into debt to boost economic growth is usually done in times of recession?

Hon. Bill Morneau: Mr. Chair, we have taken a look at the situation we find ourselves in, which is low growth, and the demographic challenges we face. We recognize that they are really structural reform issue possibilities, there are monetary possibilities or fiscal measures. We have chosen fiscal measures which we know are the right approach for us at this time to grow our economy.

Hon. Lisa Raitt: I am sorry, Mr. Chair, I asked the minister whether one normally goes into debt in order to boost economic growth in times of recession. The answer is yes. The answer here as well is that we are not in a recession.

I do have another question. Could the minister let me know whether he has been warned by finance officials that a downside to adding public investment in our country is that it actually crowds out private investment?

Hon. Bill Morneau: Mr. Chair, the time to make investments in the economy is when there is usable capacity in the economy, and that is exactly where we find ourselves right now.

That means we will not be crowding out private spending at this juncture in time. We will be adding to the capacity of our economy, adding to the GNP of our country, and that is exactly why we are doing it because there is the room available for us to do that.

We know that is the appropriate thing to do with this environment, and it has clearly been approved by people around the world and within our country.

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, what the minister is referring to is the term "economic slack", and the economic slack in our country is because of the commodity shock, which we are actually experiencing. In fact, that is exactly what the OECD says.

I would like to know from the minister if it is appropriate to build a transit line in Toronto with public funds as a stimulus measure when the issues are really happening in Alberta.

Hon. Bill Morneau: Mr. Chair, we have made a commitment to Canadians, whether they live in Victoria, northern Canada, Prince Edward Island, or Toronto, to grow the economy. That means making investments, and we are going to move forward on those investments. They are going to include investments in Calgary, in Fort McMurray, and across the country so that we can grow our economy, making a real and measurable difference for Canadians today and tomorrow.

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, does the minister realize that there is a difference between spending and investing in order to boost growth?

Hon. Bill Morneau: Mr. Chair, I realize that what is most important is that we make investments in order to grow the economy. That is why we have embarked on that plan. That is why we outlined for Canadians an historic $120-billion infrastructure investment. That is why we are moving forward quickly on investments in research in universities and in federal infrastructure, because we know those sorts of investments are going to help get our economy going now and create a more productive environment for the future.

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, I ask these questions of the minister for this reason. We are experiencing an economic growth issue in the country right now. It has been correlated directly to what we are experiencing in terms of the commodity shock. My concern is that the government has done nothing to try to ebb whatever is happening there in terms of doing investments directly to the places that need help the most, that have the economic slack, that have the ability to increase production, because quite frankly there is a great want for something to happen out there. This spend does not necessarily benefit them if it is done all the way across the country. A targeted investment is something that Canadians understand, and it is a good reason to go into debt, just as we did in the 2008-09 recession.

The difficulty I have with the plans that the government has put together is that quite frankly there is no plan. If there is a plan in order to stem what is happening in the economic shock, then why did the Liberals layer on regulations to make it more difficult to have businesses invest in those areas? Why do they give us such great uncertainty about whether or not private projects are going to go forward? Why do they talk about increasing taxes? Those things do not help growth.

What we have here today, and what we are looking at both in the main estimates and in the budget, is the realization that the government is just about spending Canadians' hard-earned tax dollars. That is all it is.

While he glowingly quotes the puff pieces he is reading from different places around the world, I can attest that there is only one finance minister in our great country who has ever received an international award for being the best finance minister. That is the late Jim Flaherty.

There is a quote I would like the minister to remember as he walks away from this place tonight. I thank him for his time and I thank him for some of his answers. Some of them were talking points, but that is okay; we all do that on occasion.

I would like him to remember this as well. The greatest concern right now is that there seems to be one plan and one plan only that involves spending a great deal of Canadian taxpayer money, and it is all put on the dice. The roll of the dice, as he eloquently pointed out at one point in time, is hoping that Canada's economy will grow. However, *Maclean's* wrote about this recently as well. Despite all these great articles being written around the world our own magazine says:

> When all is said and done, [the Minister of Finance's] plan to put Canada deeper into debt to boost growth may not result in any additional growth, just a whole lot more debt.

That is exactly what Her Majesty's loyal opposition is concerned about. Therefore, at the very least, to conclude and finish with the question, does the minister have a plan B?

● (2445)

The Chair: We are actually out of time. We are going to go to resuming debate and the hon. member for St. John's South—Mount Pearl.

Mr. Seamus O'Regan (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I am thankful for the time that I have to speak to this committee about the specific concerns of my district of St. John's South—Mount Pearl.

It has been a great pleasure to listen to those across the way talking about fiscal prudence. It brings up questions of the time-space continuum, and perhaps forgetting about the past and being $150 billion in debt. Enough of that.

We want to talk about the future, and perhaps we can talk about our young people. I was fortunate enough, at the young age of 21, to get my first job. I was the executive assistant to the minister of justice in the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, Mr. Edward Roberts. I was young as an executive assistant, otherwise known as an EA. Therefore, I was known around the legislature as Doogie Howser, EA.

I took that as a compliment because Doogie Howser was a hero back in the late 1980s, early 1990s. It was a venerable show and launched the career of one, Neil Patrick Harris. It featured the stern but wise father, Dr. David Howser, and his pals, including his window-entering best buddy Vinnie.

He always found the time at the end of every episode to enter some secret tidbits of wisdom into that computer journal of his, saving it on his three-and-a-half-inch floppy disk.

I have to ask the minister, when thinking of the future, when thinking of those who will be affected by this budget in the years before us, what tidbits of wisdom does he have within this budget for a generation that awaits those answers?

Hon. Bill Morneau: Mr. Chair, I would like to thank the hon. member for his insight, his humour, and his question.

I would like to start by addressing the challenge we are facing. I heard from the hon. member opposite what I believe to be a significant misunderstanding of the challenges we are facing right now in the economy.

The member opposite identified the shock in oil prices as being the economic challenge that we are facing. In fact, I believe that is one very significant challenge that we are facing, but we are facing a much more significant challenge over the long term in this country.

We are facing a challenge that we have been looking at for a while. We are facing low and volatile global growth. We are facing a demographic challenge that means that over the long term, we will have significantly fewer workers per retiree in this country.

In those sorts of circumstances, the right policy response is to make investments to improve the protective capacity of our country. We are making short-term investments that are going to help us with the shock. We are making investments in people through improving our employment insurance system.

However, importantly, we are facing up to the real challenges that we know must be faced to help Canadians over the long term. As we face those demographic challenges, it would be irresponsible if we did not take action today to ensure that we can have a more productive economy tomorrow. That is exactly what we have embarked on in budget 2016.

The discussion today is about that. It is about how we are going to make a difference in the future for those people we are responsible for, and those young people today who are going to be facing a more uncertain future. That is what we are doing.

We are proud of what we are doing. We are pleased to be able to present it to this House tonight.

● (2450)

The Chair: It being 12:50 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 81(4), all votes are deemed reported. The committee will rise and I will now leave the chair.

The Deputy Speaker: This House stands adjourned until later this day at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 12:53 a.m.)

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