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(HANSARD)

Wednesday, September 28, 2016

Speaker: The Honourable Geoff Regan

CONTENTS

(Table of Contents appears at back of this issue.)

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, September 28, 2016

The House met at 2 p.m.

Prayer

● (1405)

[*English*]

The Speaker: It being Wednesday, we will now have the singing of the national anthem led by led by the hon. member for Nanaimo—Ladysmith.

[*Members sang the national anthem*]

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*Translation*]

ENERGY EAST PROJECT

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Government of Quebec gave the federal government's greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets the thumbs down on the grounds that they lack ambition and that more must be done if we want to achieve the Paris targets.

Unlike Quebec and every other country on the planet, the federal government is using 2005 as the base year instead of 1990. There is something calculated about blithely disregarding 15 years.

During that 15-year period, Quebec invested billions to keep our greenhouse gas emissions from rising. In contrast, emissions associated with western Canada's oil industry grew by 124%. In Saskatchewan alone, they grew by 76%. We are working hard to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions, but the rest of Canada could not care less.

If the government wants to be taken seriously, it should start by shutting down energy east.

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[*English*]

BRITISH HOME CHILDREN

Mrs. Alaina Lockhart (Fundy Royal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I stand here today to remember the sacrifices and contributions made by British home children in the building of our great nation. It is estimated that 10% of Canadians are descendants of these home children. A large number of those descendants live in New Brunswick and in my riding of Fundy Royal.

Between 1868 and the 1930s, over 100,000 British boys and girls were sent to Canada for a brighter future. Some were orphans and many were poor. Once in Canada, many home children were sent to live on farms. Some found loving families, but others unfortunately suffered neglect, abuse, and intense loneliness.

There are monuments erected in several provinces in commemoration of these sacrifices, including one in New Brunswick at King's Landing Historical Settlement.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me to opportunity to share this piece of our history with the House and to remember the sacrifices made by British home children.

* * *

AGRICULTURE

Mr. T.J. Harvey (Tobique—Mactaquac, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my riding of Tobique—Mactaquac is home to a spirited rural agricultural region that contributes year over year to a strong agricultural and agrifood industry through innovation, trade, and food processing and in turn contributes to a robust economy for Canada and Canadians.

With the Canadian harvest upon us, today I would like to thank the farmers who feed us and the industry that supports them.

[*Translation*]

I am proud of our government's commitment to all agricultural workers. I recently had the honour of participating in the Canadian Federation of Agriculture members' organizational meeting to make an announcement on behalf of the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food about a $400,000 federal investment to help the federation explore the potential of credit insurance for farmers.

[*English*]

At this time of year, we tend to celebrate the harvest season, a bit of our hometown history, and our great memories of events such as “Potato Break” in my home riding.

I thank our agricultural leaders and wish them a happy harvest.

HIGHWAY OF HEROES DURHAM LAV MONUMENT

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to rise today as the member of Parliament for Durham mere days after our community unveiled the Highway of Heroes Durham LAV Monument, remembering the service and sacrifice of Canadians in Afghanistan.

The passionate volunteers in this project made it possible: Tom Quigley, Stacey Haley, Logan Caswell, Mayor Foster, and the entire Clarington team.

[*Translation*]

The Afghanistan war was the longest in Canadian Forces history; 40,000 Canadians served their country there, and 158 gave their lives.

[*English*]

As the wounds of this conflict still heal, it is critical for Canada to recognize and commemorate the service and sacrifice of our citizens. That is why I am so proud that in Bowmanville, Ontario, next to the Highway of Heroes, there is now our region giving Canada a way to show that we will remember them.

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SOUTH OKANAGAN—WEST KOOTENAY

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there are 41 communities in my riding, and rather than going on the barbeque circuit this summer, I thought that a cycling circuit, riding the riding, would be a healthier alternative.

Therefore, for seven days in late August, I cycled 435 kilometres through South Okanagan—West Kootenay. Each day I had conversations with constituents over breakfast, coffee, lunch, and dinner. It also gave me the opportunity to ride the rail trails of the riding, through the Slocan Valley, along the Kettle River and along the lakeshores in the Okanagan.

I would like to thank the people who joined me, including the volunteer groups that take care of these trails. I heard their thoughts on how to best fund and maintain these treasures, which are so important to the economies of the small communities in my riding.

On a sadder note, I would like to recognize the passing of Fred King of Kaleden, B.C. Fred served as the MP for Okanagan—Similkameen from 1979 to 1988. He served well, and he will be missed.

* * *

● (1410)

[*Translation*]

CANADIAN WOMEN AND GIRLS IN SPORT

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Toronto—Danforth, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage is about to begin a study on Canadian women and girls in sport.

[*English*]

Helping girls get involved in sports is important to my community and to me personally.

In my riding, we have community organizers like Karen Decker, who started a girl's division to the Withrow Park Ball Hockey League. Her efforts have increased participation of girls in the league from 5% to 30% in just five years. Because of her encouragement, I have been proud to coach three teams to championship wins.

Another elite level sports leader in my riding is Paralympian rower, Victoria Nolan, who won bronze in Rio just this year.

[*Translation*]

I look forward to getting started on our work in committee to learn more and to encourage women and girls to get involved in sports.

* * *

[*English*]

ARNOLD PALMER

Mr. Larry Maguire (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honour a great sportsman, the king of golf, Mr. Arnold Palmer. Mr. Palmer passed away last Sunday, September 25.

Golfers and fans around the world, including millions of Canadians, remember him fondly as members of "Arnie's Army".

Mr. Palmer's first victory on the Professional Golf Association Tour was in Toronto in 1955, winning the Canadian open. Twenty-five years later, his last PGA win was another Canadian open in Edmonton. These were just two of his 62 PGA and 92 total career victories, which included seven majors and six Canada cups.

He is a member of the World Golf Hall of Fame and the PGA of America Golf Hall of Fame.

His business acumen as president of Arnold Palmer Enterprises succeeded in the design and building of hundreds of golf courses worldwide, a golf clothing line, clubs, and even the "Arnold Palmer", a popular drink mixture of lemonade and iced tea, to name a few.

He was the original chair of the Golf Channel, providing great exposure of the game, and his philanthropic efforts were tremendous.

Our condolences to his family, friends and fans. May he rest with many eagles.

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HUGH O'NEIL

Mr. Neil Ellis (Bay of Quinte, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege to stand before the House today to honour a man who profoundly touched the lives of so many. The late Hugh O'Neil, fondly known as "Mr. Quinte", dedicated his life to the service of others.

Hugh had an unwavering passion for his community. Aside from being a loving husband to his wife Donna and a devoted father, Hugh was a tireless volunteer, an educator, a member of provincial Parliament, and a cabinet minister.

Since his sudden passing last September, the deep admiration and respect for Hugh O'Neil continues to be felt in my riding. As a tribute to his dedication to the community, I am proud to announce that the Hugh O'Neil friendship garden will be created in Quinte West. The official sod-turning ceremony took place this last Monday.

Hugh O'Neil leaves a lasting legacy that will continue to inspire generations to come. May he rest in peace.

* * *

BOATING ACCIDENT IN SHEA HEIGHTS

Mr. Seamus O'Regan (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, earlier this month, the community of Shea Heights lost four of its fishermen. The Walsh family lost three generations: grandfather Eugene, son Keith, and grandson Keith Jr. Close friend Bill Humby was lost alongside them. At the funeral, they were remembered for their big hearts, their love of hockey, and their love for the sea.

The waters of Newfoundland are known to be rough, treacherous, and these men knew that well. They went over just outside St. John's Harbour, so close to home. However, proximity does not temper the swells of the North Atlantic.

We persevere on the sea to make our livelihood, but it takes without mercy and without reason.

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ARCHERY

Mrs. Salma Zahid (Scarborough Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Scarborough Centre's own Olympic archer Crispin Duenas. Competing in his third Olympics for Canada, Crispin did Scarborough and Canada proud by competing in the men's individual archery event in Rio.

When Crispin is not representing Canada at the Olympics, Pan Am games or world championships, he is a physics major at the University of Toronto, and a substitute teacher in math and science with the Toronto District School Board. He would really like to have lunch with the coach of the Maple Leafs, Mike Babcock, one day, if anyone could make that happen.

I ask the House to please join me in congratulating Scarborough's own Crispin Duenas and all of our great Canadian Olympians and Paralympians who made us proud in Rio.

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● (1415)

ONE YOUNG WORLD SUMMIT

Mr. Vance Badawey (Niagara Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, young leaders from 196 countries will join global icons for the 2016 One Young World Summit, starting today.

This annual event's visit, the first in Canada, features top young talent from the world of business, entrepreneurship, policy, social business, and media. Over the next four days they will engage on some of the biggest issues facing our world, including the environment, global business, human rights, indigenous reconciliation, education, peace and security, and mental health.

They will be joined in these discussions by global figures, including Kofi Annan, Professor Muhammad Yunus, Sir Bob Geldof, Emma Watson, and dozens of others. Together they will formulate and share innovative solutions for pressing issues facing the world.

I encourage all MPs to take the spirit and inspiration of One Young World Summit back to their ridings, as I am for Niagara Centre. Our youth council meeting is being held in October, empowering our future leaders.

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SHIMON PERES

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in 1951, a 28-year-old Israeli wearing screeching white socks arrived in Canada with the impossible goal of buying $2 million in artillery equipment and finding the money to pay for it. A few days later, when he departed, he had done both, and he had a brand new pair of socks.

Everything Shimon Peres and his country have done ever since has been impossible: making the desert bloom, turning salt water sweet, building a world-leading economy from scratch, and defending the homeland against countless attacks from all around.

For almost 70 years, Peres' story has been Israel's, as finance minister, foreign minister, president, and founder. When former minister Baird and I met with then president Peres a few years ago, he was still faithful to his vision: a nation as old as the Ten Commandments and as new as nanotechnology. He leaves a nation that is both, and so much more. May he rest in peace.

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SHIMON PERES

Mr. Anthony Housefather (Mount Royal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, rarely does a man embody a country, but Shimon Peres, who passed away last night, was indeed such a man. He was a part of every bit of Israeli history, big or small, since before the nation was founded. President, prime minister, Nobel Prize winner. He was a giant. He was one of the last of Israel's founding generation.

[*Translation*]

Israel and the rest of the world lost an exceptional human being yesterday, a great statesman who dedicated his life to promoting peace and dialogue. He was a source of inspiration to many people all over the globe, myself included. Through his enduring commitment to the principles of justice and human dignity, he always worked in the best interest of his people.

Canada extends its deepest condolences to Mr. Peres's family and loved ones, as well as the people of Israel.

[*English*]

Let us all join together to commemorate the passing of this exceptional man.

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WORLD CONTRACEPTION DAY

Ms. Irene Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, September 26, World Contraception Day, provides a timely opportunity to talk about the importance of and access to contraception for people around the world.

In Canada there are some who struggle to gain access to necessary reproductive health care. Those most marginalized include youth, immigrants, and those of low socio-economic status.

I believe that reproductive health care, and specifically safe and effective contraceptives, should be made available and accessible to all. I have put forward a motion, M-65, which calls on the government to work with the provinces to provide free access to prescribed birth control.

Contraception is a basic, lifesaving health care need for women, transgender people, and other persons. Access to contraception supports the right to make healthy reproductive choices.

I encourage all members of the House to support M-65 to ensure that women across Canada have access to the reproductive health services they need.

* * *

OIL AND GAS INDUSTRY

Mr. Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, after months of indecision, the Liberal government finally made a decision and approved the Pacific NorthWest LNG project.

While I am pleased that this important project is now one step closer to becoming a reality, approving a project is one thing, getting it built is another.

This project will create thousands of high-paying jobs and billions of dollars in tax revenue and will help reduce global pollution.

I want to thank the residents of my riding, who throughout this process continued to work hard to ensure that their voices of strong support for B.C. LNG were heard. These same residents and their families are counting on the jobs that will result from this project.

Approving this project is not enough. I call on the Prime Minister and his cabinet to become champions for this project and ensure that it is built so that Canadians can access the jobs it will create.

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● (1420)

SHIMON PERES

Mr. Michael Levitt (York Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the international community has lost a giant. Shimon Peres was a peace builder, a public servant who embodied the boundless energy, optimism, and desire of Israelis to seek peace in a region fraught with immense challenges.

In his 66 years in public life, President Peres dedicated himself to fostering peace between Israelis and Palestinians, as exemplified in his leadership role in forging the Oslo Accords. For his efforts, President Peres was awarded the Noble Peace Prize, but his contributions extended far beyond peace and diplomacy. He was a driving force for innovation, inspiring Israelis to dream and think big. Unquestionably, his influence contributed in no small part to the rise of the start-up nation.

Israelis have lost a founding father, but his legacy will continue to shine. *Yehay Zichrono Levrachah*. May his memory be a blessing and an inspiration.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[*English*]

NATURAL RESOURCES

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the headlines seemed good, but beyond the headlines was a lot of fine print, 190 conditions for the LNG project to move forward, including, wait for it, more consultations, after almost six years of consultations. Thousands of unemployed workers and their families are depending on this project to go ahead. Approving the project is one thing. Getting it built is what matters. There are no jobs until there are shovels in the ground.

Will the Prime Minister commit to providing personal leadership to drive this project forward?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the kind of leadership Canadians expect is the kind of leadership they had not had for 10 years, a government that understands that we need to grow the economy for the middle class and protect and sustain the environment at the same time. That is why we took our time. We have made sure to do things right to demonstrate the community support, the indigenous support, and the fact that world-class science is going on while we grow the economy and create jobs for the middle class. It is what Canadians expect. It is what this government is delivering.

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister, though, has created economic uncertainty that is driving away new job creators. In fact, yesterday, all he approved was more consultations. In fact, construction of Pacific NorthWest LNG may not even move ahead. Conditional approval is one step forward, but bogging it down with extra process is two steps back.

The Prime Minister must stand with unemployed workers who need jobs. Will he do the right thing, get shovels in the ground, and get these people to work?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, after 10 years of failed policies on growth that consisted mostly of tax breaks for the wealthiest Canadians, we are actually working to draw in global investment to demonstrate to Canadians and to the world that we understand that building a strong economy that works for the middle class goes hand in hand with creating a sustainable, protected environment. That is what Canadians expect. That is what we are pleased to be working on, but we know that there is lots more work to be done.

* * *

EMPLOYMENT

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it has been over six months since the Prime Minister started borrowing to spend their way to prosperity, but every week it seems like we get another piece of bad economic news. Private sector job creation is invisible. On Monday, the Minister of Finance admitted that his tax and spend policies are not working, but instead of learning a lesson and reversing course, the Prime Minister is using this as an excuse to spend even more money.

How can the Liberals be trusted with even more of our tax dollars when their first round of spending did not create any jobs?

● (1425)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in the last election, Canadians had a choice between a government that for 10 years was unable to create the kind of growth for Canadians that middle-class Canadians needed, because Conservatives kept insisting on lowering taxes for the wealthiest and giving benefits to millionaire families. What we did instead was actually invest in our communities with historic investments in infrastructure. We put more money in the pockets of the middle class by lowering taxes on the middle class and raising them on the wealthiest one per cent and put a historic Canada child benefit in the pockets of the nine out of 10 Canadians who need it most.

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister always takes time in his answers to point out how proud he is of raising taxes, that he is borrowing billions to fund new Liberal spending. So is it working? No. Private sector job growth is nonexistent. More and more people are looking for work. At some point, the Liberals have to accept that their plan is not working. Stop digging before the hole becomes so deep it takes generations to come out.

Will the Prime Minister do the right thing, stop spending, and focus on creating jobs?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the members opposite continue to not understand the lessons Canadians shared with them in the last election. Faced with a choice between a government that insisted on giving benefits and tax breaks to the wealthiest Canadians, or a party that proposed to raise taxes on the wealthiest one per cent so we could lower them for the middle class and give benefits to those families who actually need it, the nine out of 10 families who need extra help with the cost of raising their kids, Canadians made the right choice, and we are working hard to demonstrate that.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, job creation is currently invisible and economic growth is sluggish.

On Monday, the Minister of Finance admitted that his tax and spend policies are not working, but instead of reversing course, the Prime Minister is spending even more money.

How can the Liberals be trusted when all this spending did not create any jobs?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, after 10 years under the reign of a government with the worst record in economic growth since R. B. Bennett and the Great Depression, Canadians needed a government that was ready to invest in their communities and ready to put more money in the pockets of the middle class by asking more of the wealthy.

We raised taxes on the wealthiest 1% so that we could lower them on the middle class. We are giving a more generous Canada child benefit to nine out of ten families. That is what Canadians expect from their government.

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[*English*]

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, consultation means much more than informing indigenous communities that a project has already been approved. Six local first nations have opposed this LNG project. How was this decision announced? The Prime Minister sent three ministers to the Vancouver airport, 1,000 kilometres away from the people and territory that will be directly affected by their decision.

Does the Prime Minister really consider this to be respect for first nations?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have always understood that in order to create the kind of government that people want, we need to both grow the economy and protect the environment. That means folding in consultations with indigenous leaders, talking to communities, ensuring we get the world-class science done. That is exactly what we did on this project.

Unfortunately, the members opposite either think we are not going fast enough or we are going too fast. Canadians know we need to grow the economy, and protect the environment right now and do it right.

NATURAL RESOURCES

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am not too sure what folding in means, but those first nations know that they have never been meaningfully consulted, and they have never been accommodated.

[*Translation*]

The Liberals are using Stephen Harper's targets, Stephen Harper's plan, and Stephen Harper's timelines, and the Conservatives are the only ones who are happy about it. In short, they will never be able to honour our international commitments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

How can the Prime Minister approve new pipelines if we are already finding it impossible to reduce GHGs because we do not have a comprehensive and credible plan? That is utter nonsense.

● (1430)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the reality is that we must grow the economy while protecting the environment and reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

The problem is that, for a long time, previous governments, including Liberal governments, had plenty of targets, but no solid plan to reach them. That is why we are working with the provinces and our partners in industry to ensure that we reduce our greenhouse gas emissions. That is what Canadians expect from this government.

* * *

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, when his government was elected last year, the Prime Minister said that the good old Canada was back on the world stage.

The good old Canada was committed to protecting human rights in the international arena. That means that Canada must stop selling weapons to those who violate human rights.

Will the Prime Minister agree to create a parliamentary committee to examine foreign arms sales before approving them?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have been very clear. We believe that we need to demonstrate more transparency and rigour when it comes to the sale of arms on the international market.

That is one reason why we committed to sign the arms trade treaty. We are going to work with all members of the House to ensure that Canada endorses and upholds this treaty.

[*English*]

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, once again, the Prime Minister claims he believes in human rights, transparency, and accountability. He has an opportunity to prove it.

Canadians want more oversight when it comes to selling arms, weapons, and tanks to countries like Saudi Arabia, Sudan, and Libya.

Will he or will he not support creating a parliamentary committee to bring transparency to any foreign arms sales before they take place?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we agree with the member opposite that Canadians do want greater transparency and accountability in many different areas, but particularly in terms of arms sales. That is why we have committed to demonstrating a higher level of transparency and openness, and why we have agreed to sign on to the arms trade treaty.

We will be the last NATO country to sign on to that because the previous government did not want to. We know that it is the right thing to do and, quite frankly, it is what Canadians expect of their government.

* * *

[*Translation*]

HEALTH

Hon. Denis Lebel (Lac-Saint-Jean, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Minister of Health said she is looking forward to meeting with her counterparts, the provincial health ministers. I have some good news for her: I know that one of them, the Quebec minister of health, is very keen to speak to her in person. He is going to tell her that putting conditions on transfer payments to the provinces is simply not how the Canadian federation works.

I hope the Prime Minister plans to bring his minister into line and ask her to respect those responsible for delivering health care in Quebec, specifically the doctors, not the politicians, and ensure that provincial responsibilities are discharged by those who have the authority, in this case, the provincial health ministers.

Hon. Jane Philpott (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

I have already had many good conversations with my counterparts across the country, including the Quebec minister of health.

As the member is well aware, the Canada health transfer is going to increase by $1 billion next year, bringing it up to more than $37 billion. I will be meeting with all my provincial and territorial counterparts over the next few weeks. We will continue our discussions on ways to create a health care system—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Lac-Saint-Jean.

Hon. Denis Lebel (Lac-Saint-Jean, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let me give another good example. When I was the minister of intergovernmental affairs, my mandate was to ensure that provincial jurisdictions were respected.

I looked for the mandate letter for the minister of intergovernmental affairs. The Prime Minister is the minister. I would have guessed his mandate letter would include ensuring that provincial jurisdictions are respected. However, I did not see that in the mandate letter.

Will the Prime Minister let the provinces do the work that falls under their jurisdiction, namely infrastructure, social housing, education, and health? It will be a long list in a few months. Will he let them do their work?

[*English*]

Hon. Jane Philpott (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this government is engaged in ensuring that Canadians have good health and the health care they need. To do that, it requires working collaboratively with our colleagues across the country. It requires working with patients and health care providers.

I have had excellent discussions with my counterparts, the ministers of health across the country. I respect that they deliver excellent care and have jurisdiction over that. However, it requires all partners to be at the table to ensure that Canadians get the help they need.

* * *

● (1435)

GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURES

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are tired of waking up every day to a new Liberal expense scandal.

Yesterday, Brookfield Global Relocation Services shared that two prime ministerial aides, Butts and Telford, would have been briefed on their services and made fully aware. For the past week, these two individuals have been stating they did not know.

The bottom line is, who is telling the truth?

Hon. Scott Brison (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the relocation policy for ministers' offices is the same policy as that of the previous Conservative government.

We are also aware that under the previous Conservative government, there were ministerial staffers reimbursed, in some cases, for $90,000 worth of moving expenses.

The Prime Minister and his office have asked me, and Treasury Board, to review the policy. Treasury Board will review the policy, and report back to Canadians.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are expecting more from their government, not just the same old party antics and spending scandals that we saw in the 1990s and the early 2000s. There are many new faces in the government, but they have the same old Liberal sense of entitlement.

Where is the leadership? Who is finally going to put a stop to these Liberal entitlements?

Hon. Scott Brison (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again, the policy for relocation, as it applies to ministers' offices, is the same policy of the previous Conservative government. Treasury Board is evaluating that policy.

I would remind the hon. member, who was, I believe, a caucus member previously, that under the Conservatives, there were staff members who were reimbursed for moving expenses in excess of $90,000.

Treasury Board is reviewing this and we will fix it.

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, someone is not being truthful with Canadians. Yesterday, Brookfield's senior vice-president stated that each person it moves is briefed on the benefits and entitlements that can be claimed. Yet, the Prime Minister is digging in his heels, and claiming that his BFFs, Gerry and Katie, were never briefed. When we are talking about six-figure payouts, I find it hard to believe that the people were not briefed.

Would the Prime Minister come clean and tell Canadians who is telling the truth, Gerry and Katie, or Brookfield?

Hon. Scott Brison (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member will find that, in fact, Brookfield has clarified its comments and have confirmed that members of the Prime Minister's staff were consistent with the truth.

Beyond that, it is important that the opposition recognize that the moving expense policy, as applied to ministers' offices, is the same policy that applied to the previous Conservative government. Treasury Board is reviewing that policy.

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Brookfield's senior vice-president stated that relocation directives were explained in detail to all employees who were being moved. He also stated that they go over, extensively, the personalized cash payouts with each employee.

This abuse of taxpayer money falls squarely on the shoulders of the Prime Minister as he was the one who approved the payouts. If the company handling the move says the Prime Minister's BFFs were briefed, why is the PMO misleading Canadians?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleagues are obviously pleased to see me back.

My friend knows very well that Brookfield has apologized for that erroneous information. What my friend should also consider is the advice of Guy Giorno, somebody whose orders he followed so faithfully for so long.

We would draw to the House's attention, the former chief of staff to Prime Minister Harper who said:

> The federal relocation program—which applies to hundreds of moves annually, including moves by employees of government, military and RCMP—exists for a very good reason. The purpose is to ensure that those who relocate because of federal employment are made whole financially.

* * *

[*Translation*]

HEALTH

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals' decision to maintain the Conservatives' cuts to health was not especially well received. According to Quebec's health minister, these cuts are going to make it hard for Quebeckers and Canadians to access good quality health care. Many provinces are opposed to the government's proposed plan.

Will the Liberals scrap these cuts and keep their promise to negotiate in good faith with the provinces to ensure quality care?

● (1440)

[*English*]

Hon. Jane Philpott (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is very important that this House does not misunderstand the facts.

There will be no cuts to health care. Our government is committed to being a good partner in ensuring that Canadians have the health and health care they need. This year, the Canada health transfer was the largest ever, more than $36 billion. It will increase by more than $1 billion, additionally, next year.

In addition to the Canada health transfer, I will be meeting with my counterparts on October 18 to discuss additional ways that we can invest in the health of Canadians, and ensure they all get the care they need.

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals promised to negotiate a new health accord with the provinces, but they did not tell us their plan would look exactly the same as the one imposed by Stephen Harper.

Now B.C.'s Liberal health minister is accusing the government of having a very Conservative mindset. That is not something to be proud of, but thankfully, it is curable.

Will the Liberals abandon Stephen Harper's funding cuts, quit using Conservative talking points, and negotiate fairly with the provinces to protect Canada's public health care system?

Hon. Jane Philpott (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, to compare the approach of this government with the approach of the previous Conservative government on the matter of federal-provincial-territorial relations on health is a misrepresentation of the facts.

I am meeting with my counterparts. I already met with them in January. I have been given direction from the Prime Minister to negotiate a new health accord with the provinces and territories. That was not done by the previous government.

We will do that. We will work in collaboration with the provinces and territories. We will invest in health, and ensure that Canadians get the help they need.

* * *

[*Translation*]

GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURES

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister's friends were given so much money that they seem to have lost track of it all.

After getting caught red-handed, the Prime Minister's best friend and his chief of staff admitted that some expenses were unreasonable. They claimed they were not aware of all the costs, but now the moving company is saying that it briefed them on all costs.

Will the Prime Minister's friends tell the truth for once and stop taking Canadians for fools?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I see that my colleague opposite is on a fishing expedition. Allow me to respond.

He knows full well that Brookfield apologized for providing erroneous information. He may not have heard the response we gave his predecessor. He may have had to change the question. We know how faithfully our friends across the way followed the orders of Mr. Harper's chief of staff, Guy Giorno.

We are inspired by his encouraging words about this program, but we are going to improve it and that is why the Prime Minister instructed the President of the Treasury Board to review the program.

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with the Liberals, you get more than you bargained for.

When Canadians send their money to Ottawa, they expect it to be managed carefully. They do not want the brush-off. The Prime Minister's friends feigned ignorance, but now that we know they were well aware of all the expenses they claimed, Canadians have every reason to wonder if there is anything else the Prime Minister is hiding.

Canadians deserve their government's respect, so will it come right out and tell us what other unreasonable expenses it is hiding from Canadians in the hope of not getting caught?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will take this opportunity to share with my colleague something that his former boss, Guy Giorno, said about the relocation program:

> The federal relocation program—which applies to hundreds of moves annually, including moves by employees of government, military and RCMP—exists for a very good reason. The purpose is to ensure that those who relocate because of federal employment are made whole financially.

Nevertheless, we think that the program the former government approved needs to be reviewed, and that is what my colleague is doing.

[*English*]

Mr. Larry Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when the Minister of Immigration first responded to my Order Paper question, instantly the response was that none of his staff got any money for moving expenses. However, when he was caught with his hand in the U-Haul—I mean in the cookie jar—all of a sudden he remembered that he had okayed the expenses to move one of his staff all the way from Thailand. Can the minister explain his lapse of memory and judgment?

● (1445)

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we did make a commitment to Canadians to be open and transparent. Quite the opposite of what the member just said, it was nine long months ago that we recorded this expense through proactive disclosure. I discovered only yesterday that we had entered the expense under the wrong column. I immediately corrected that point in the House, and I immediately supplied a new answer to the question. We disclosed that expenditure nine months ago. Nothing at all was ever hidden from Canadians.

Mr. Larry Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Mr. Speaker, all of a sudden we have another minister of cover-up.

Like my own memory sometimes, I believe the minister's memory seems to be past its best before date. I mean that, of course, in a very comforting way.

However, to be serious here, does the minister really think it is appropriate to move one of his staff from Thailand to Ottawa and then expect the taxpayer to pay for it?

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will not claim a perfect memory either, but I would certainly say it is entirely appropriate that when one hires a staff person or a consultant and the person is in Thailand, yes the government pays for the transport of that individual to Ottawa and for the relevant hotel expenses. That is precisely what we did and precisely what we disclosed to the public nine months ago. To say that we were hiding anything is entirely ridiculous.

* * *

[*Translation*]

CANADA REVENUE AGENCY

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, although the minister announced that there would be consultations on changes to the rules governing the political activities of charitable organizations, we have learned that the agency is continuing the witch hunt launched by the Conservatives against these organizations, and that 12 organizations are still under investigation. What a contradiction.

How can the minister justify the fact that the agency is still investigating these organizations when she has admitted that the rules are not clear and that they must be clarified? In view of a consultation on changing the rules, will the minister put a stop to all unfair investigations of charitable organizations, yes or no?

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government understands that charitable organizations play a key role in our society, and I am committed to being responsive to the needs of this sector. Therefore, I am proud to have announced the official launch of our consultations to clarify charitable organizations' involvement in political activities.

Our government knows that it must work with this sector. That is what we promised, and that is what we will do.

[*English*]

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government cannot seem to get its story straight when it comes to its decision to fight a residential school survivor in court. Yesterday the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs assured the House that if government lawyers were involved, it was only to help ensure they get justice. Justice department lawyers are in the Ontario Superior Court fighting against compensation to a victim of a "perverse" misapplication of justice. The Prime Minister promised to put an end to this.

Will the justice minister please explain to the indigenous affairs minister why her officials are trying to stop this survivor from getting justice in court?

Ms. Yvonne Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government is committed to ensuring justice for all victims of this dark chapter of our history. We are concerned about any possibility that some deserving victims may have been denied compensation. We uphold the Indian residential school settlement process, and members know that. We also protect the integrity of the independent assessment process and we will continue to do so on behalf of all indigenous people.

* * *

[*Translation*]

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today is the International Day for the Universal Access to Information, whose objective is to make people aware of their right to access information held by government institutions and to promote freedom of information as the basis for democracy and good governance.

[*English*]

Could the President of the Treasury Board please explain to the House the government's commitment to openness and transparency?

● (1450)

Hon. Scott Brison (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to recognize Right to Know Day.

Our government is committed to openness and transparency. I have issued a directive that enshrines the principle that government information should be open by default.

[*Translation*]

We will soon introduce a bill that will enhance the Access to Information Act, as we promised. We will then conduct a comprehensive review of the act in order to update it so it better serves Canadians.

[*English*]

JUSTICE

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Niagara Falls, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I was pleased yesterday afternoon that all members of the House of Commons agreed with the Conservative Party that Atlantic Canada should be represented on the Supreme Court, but then a spokesperson for the justice minister stated that it would not be guaranteed. Why would the Liberals flip-flop on this important issue?

I checked last night and there was no election. So why are the Liberals changing their mind on this?

Hon. Jody Wilson-Raybould (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again I am pleased to stand up to speak about the new process that the Prime Minister has introduced for appointing the next Supreme Court justice. We are committed to respecting the custom of regional representation, functional bilingualism, diversity, and ensuring that we have the highest calibre of jurist to be the next Supreme Court of Canada justice. I am appreciative of the independent, nonpartisan advisory board that is assisting us in this process. I look forward to assisting the Prime Minister in making this most important appointment.

* * *

[*Translation*]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, time is marching on and the uncertainty continues. The Liberal government is showing a distinct lack of leadership when it comes to the extradition treaty and negotiations with China. It is rather funny how the Liberals become so much less open and transparent on critical, sensitive files.

The Prime Minister is saying one thing and the Minister of Foreign Affairs is saying another.

Can the two talk to each other and tell us the truth, please?

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first, I would like to congratulate my colleague on being appointed deputy critic for foreign affairs.

I would also like to tell the members of the opposition that, for the past two weeks, they have been asking questions about something that does not exist. The Prime Minister never said anything about negotiations. The Canada-China joint communiqué issued on September 12, 2016, which is public and easily accessible, reads: "start discussions". There is a huge difference between discussions and negotiations. If my colleague needs clarification on that, my department can give him a briefing.

[*English*]

Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC): Well, Mr. Speaker, that is not good enough. Canadians are still trying to understand the very obvious contradiction between the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Prime Minister over the extradition treaty with China.

The Prime Minister says discussions have begun, his website says that talks have begun, and the Chinese premier says so as well. The only person who did not know seems to have been the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Is he simply out of the loop, is he splitting grammatical hairs, or is he quite properly challenging the Prime Minister on an unwise initiative?

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate my colleague for having been chosen as the spokesperson of his party for foreign affairs. I also want to congratulate him that he has seen the light, because now he speaks about discussions. We have noticed that in his questions. He dropped the word "negotiation" that he was using for the last two weeks, and so I congratulate my colleague for that. It is quite an improvement, because today, at this very moment, we are having a discussion together, but we negotiate nothing.

Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on another matter, an international investigation into the downing of Malaysian passenger jet MH17 confirms that the missile that hit the plane was brought into Ukraine from Russia and fired from Russian-backed rebel territory. Evidence reveals that the launcher then returned to Russia.

Given that two Canadians were among the 298 who died in the attack, will the minister now clearly condemn Russia for its unrepentant military aggression that has taken thousands of lives and displaced almost one million people in eastern Ukraine?

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I fully agree with what my colleague said. In fact, there was an official declaration done by the Government of Canada, and we are willing to start reading it in the House.

Today, as we consider the interim findings of the independent joint investigation team into the downing of Malaysian Airlines flight MH17, we are reminded of the unspeakable suffering caused by this tragic attack. The interim findings made clear that the Russian-made Buk missile was fired from rebel-controlled territory in eastern Ukraine. In a nutshell, the declaration clearly condemns it.

* * *

● (1455)

[*Translation*]

RAIL TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the minister keeps telling us that rail safety is the number one priority. However, based on what he has done on this file, I cannot imagine how little would be done on files that are not a priority.

Communities are concerned because dangerous goods are being transported without any consultation or environmental assessment. Communities such as Lac-Mégantic want their voices to be heard in order to prevent any more tragedies.

Will the minister agree to strengthen the regulations and environmental assessments in order to improve rail safety in Canada?

[*English*]

Ms. Kate Young (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as my colleague said, the minister has stated multiple times that rail safety is his top priority. Likewise, we value the hard work and dedication of first responders in Canada. That is why the minister issued protective direction no. 36, delivering on our commitment to share more data with communities and first responders.

These new measures enhance transparency on rail safety and dangerous goods. In fact, we understand that the fire chief of the City of Windsor is now recommending that the city sign the non-disclosure agreement by railway companies to get more dangerous goods information—

The Speaker: The member for Edmonton Strathcona.

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, so much for making rail safety the number one issue.

Both Conservative and Liberal governments have stated that moving oil and other dangerous goods by rail poses significant risk to our environment and communities, yet we have seen little action on community demands, other than one-off measures such as this.

Yesterday, I introduced Bill C-304 to make environmental assessments mandatory and to strengthen regulation of dangerous rail. The Minister of Environment has the power now to order an assessment of potentially dangerous rail. What is she waiting for?

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize my hon. colleague as the new critic for environment and climate change.

Our government is committed to proper environmental assessments that are based on science and evidence. As we saw yesterday, we applied our interim principles. I was very pleased to show that we can get resources to market in a sustainable and responsible way by following these principles.

These principles were actually used to engage indigenous peoples, who will now be part of environmental assessments of the Pacific NorthWest LNG project. Many of them have benefit agreements—

The Speaker: The member for Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies.

* * *

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies, CPC): Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, the Liberals' approval of the Pacific NorthWest LNG project is not all that it seems. The reality is that many residents of my riding woke up this morning in the same circumstances as they were yesterday, unemployed.

Unemployment rates in northeastern B.C. are still the highest in the province. As I said before, approving this project is one thing, building it is completely another. Why did the Liberals put potential poison pills in the approval with unnecessary conditions?

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the Prime Minister has said, the only way resources can get to market in the 21st century is if they are done in a responsible and sustainable way.

I am very pleased about our decision yesterday, which was based on our interim principles. It was based on science and evidence. It was based on meaningful consultation and accommodation with indigenous peoples. It was based on hearing from Canadians about concerns.

Those 190 conditions are consistent with that, because we need to make sure that any resources developed are done in a sustainable way. However, the way this will get to market is actually if the market price goes—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies.

Mr. Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as you know, residents in my riding have worked so hard to ensure their voices of strong support for B.C. LNG were heard. Yesterday's approval of the Pacific NorthWest LNG project was one step forward, but unfortunately the conditions attached were two steps backward.

Why did the Liberals ensure thousands of Canadian energy workers would remain out of work by adding potentially impossible conditions to their approval of Pacific NorthWest LNG?

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have to say that I am puzzled by the question. I am not entirely sure if the member opposite believes this project should have been approved with no conditions.

Our government is a different government. We believe that the only way resources will get to market is if they are done in a sustainable and responsible way. That is what we have done. I am very proud that this project will create over 5,000 good, middle-class jobs, including union jobs. This is the way we move forward.

Let us be clear, we need to make sure that resources are developed in a sustainable way.

● (1500)

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the conditional approval of the Pacific NorthWest LNG project does not mean the Liberals really intend to actually have it built. The vast majority of the assessment was completed under Canada's already world-leading vigorous regulatory system, but the Liberals keep talking about multiple regulatory changes, which means that other energy projects and the livelihoods of hundreds of thousands of Canadians are left hanging in the balance.

We hope the Prime Minister will proudly champion LNG, but what about all the other energy projects critical to Canada's economy?

Hon. Jim Carr (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, each of these projects will be judged on its own merits. They are not all the same.

Looking at the decision we made yesterday, a very important decision, it will lead to 5,000 new jobs being created in the energy sector across Canada. For some reason, we are not getting much credit from those opposite. Implicit also is that there will be pipelines that will move to tidewater, the first time that will happen in more than 10 years.

* * *

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Mr. Mike Bossio (Hastings—Lennox and Addington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, expanding access into the Chinese market is incredibly important to boost the bottom line for Canadian farmers and agricultural industries. These industries contribute over $100 billion and two million jobs to our economy.

Could the Minister of Agriculture update the House on our government's recent accomplishments for Canadian farmers and farm families?

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Hastings—Lennox and Addington for his question and support.

Last week was a great week for Canadian agriculture. Our government gained access for the Canadian canola farmers to the Chinese market until at least 2020, worth over $2 billion a year for Canadian farmers. We also gained access for bone-in meat under 30 months. That puts another $10 million in the pockets of farmers and ranchers in our country.

These successes will create growth and opportunity, and I intend to build on that growth and opportunity when I lead a trade mission to China.

* * *

[*Translation*]

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Commissioner of Official Languages denounced the fact that French language proficiency tests for prospective immigrants to Canada can cost twice as much as their English equivalents. However, the Constitution clearly states that official languages have equality of status and equal rights and privileges as to their use in all institutions within the Government of Canada.

What does the government plan to do right now to ensure that the law is respected and that francophone immigration applicants do not have to pay more for exactly the same service?

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, accessibility and equality among our two official languages are extremely important to us. We received yesterday's report and will give it very serious consideration. We have already taken action in favour of francophones outside Quebec through our francophone significant benefit program, and I can assure the House that we will be doing more, such as taking this report into consideration.

* * *

[*English*]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Wayne Stetski (Kootenay—Columbia, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Wood Buffalo National Park in northern Alberta has been a world heritage site for more than three decades. In response to a petition by Mikisew Cree First Nation, the United Nations began an investigation into the government's failure to protect the park from impacts of oil, gas, and hydro projects, including Site C in British Columbia. This could land the park on the UN's list of world heritage sites in danger.

Will the minister and her colleagues work together to better protect and preserve Wood Buffalo?

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we welcome the joint UNESCO World Heritage Centre and International Union for Conservation of Nature mission to Wood Buffalo National Park, which is taking place from September 25 to October 4. Reactive monitoring missions are carried out around the world as an act of due diligence to assess potential threats to the outstanding universal value of world heritage sites. These missions are a valuable tool in the ongoing protection of these international important treasures.

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● (1505)

REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Mrs. Bernadette Jordan (South Shore—St. Margarets, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, earlier this summer, the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, the four Atlantic premiers, and the four cabinet ministers from Atlantic Canada launched the Atlantic growth strategy. Can the minister please explain how this strategy is different from the work that has previously been done to address the problems of economic growth in Atlantic Canada?

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for her question and for her advocacy on behalf of the residents of South Shore—St. Margarets. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the 32 outstanding MPs from Atlantic Canada who were instrumental in launching the Atlantic growth strategy.

Under this strategy, we have launched an immigration program that will increase levels by 50%. We have invested $154 million in Atlantic universities and colleges and we have also invested $225 million—

The Speaker: I hate to cut the minister off.

The hon. member for Lambton—Kent—Middlesex.

LABOUR

Mr. Bev Shipley (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Arva Flour Mill is in my riding. It is a small business run by a middle-income family. It is 197 years old. It is the only one like it operating in Canada and it has never had a workplace accident. It is basically a working museum. It cannot meet the federal labour code and it is about to be shut down.

The Minister of Labour knows the Arva Flour Mill can be exempted from the federal labour code. She has the authority to save it. Will the minister please do her job?

Hon. MaryAnn Mihychuk (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Arva Flour Mill is an example of a business that has been in operation 150 years. It is a hard-working family-owned small business that has done the right thing. However, companies must respect the Canada Labour Code and it is our duty to ensure the health and safety of workers across Canada.

We are very committed to ensuring small business has the right to compete and strive and do well. We are working with the community and the owner.

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INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Hon. Hunter Tootoo (Nunavut, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, the government has committed to addressing housing, infrastructure, health care, education, and connectivity in Métis and Inuit communities. The minister is aware of the great need for this investment in Nunavut. To date, first nations on reserve have been the recipients of this much-needed funding.

I would like to ask the minister how and when this funding will flow to other aboriginal groups, especially for Nunavut. Will this funding be done on a needs-based approach or continue with the woefully inadequate per capita system that continues to fail us?

Ms. Yvonne Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his question and also for his input into northern and Inuit priorities.

Our government is renewing our relationship as a crown-Inuit relationship. We have been consulting Inuit people across the north. We work closely with the Nunavut government. This year we announced a $178-million investment into Inuit housing, of which $78 million will go to Inuit in Nunavut.

Yes, we are looking at these investments on a priority basis. That is why we have invested very much into recreational—

The Speaker: That will conclude question period for today.

Routine Proceedings

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

● (1510)

[*Translation*]

GLOBAL AFFAIRS

Ms. Pam Goldsmith-Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to the provisions of Standing Order 32(2), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the 2014-15 progress report on Canada's action plan for the implementation of the United Nations Security Council resolutions on women, peace, and security.

* * *

[*English*]

CANADA BUSINESS CORPORATIONS ACT

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-25, an act to amend the Canada Business Corporations Act, the Canada Cooperatives Act, the Canada Not-for-profit Corporations Act, and the Competition Act.

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

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COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Hon. Kevin Sorenson (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 13th report of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts entitled "Report 6—Canada Pension Plan Disability Program" of the fall 2015 reports of the Auditor General of Canada.

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

HEALTH

Mr. Bill Casey (Cumberland—Colchester, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the third report of the Standing Committee on Health in relation to Bill C-224, an act to amend the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act (assistance — drug overdose).

The committee has studied the bill and has decided to report it back to the House without amendment.

* * *

CRIMEAN TATAR DEPORTATION ("SÜRGÜNLIK") MEMORIAL DAY ACT

Mr. Kerry Diotte (Edmonton Griesbach, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-306, an act to establish a Crimean Tatar Deportation ("Sürgünlik") Memorial Day and to recognize the mass deportation of the Crimean Tatars in 1944 as an act of genocide.

He said: Mr. Speaker, today I rise in the House to introduce my private member's bill, an act to establish a Crimean Tatar deportation ("Sürgünlik") memorial day and to recognize the mass deportation of the Crimean Tatars in 1944 as an act of genocide.

I believe this is a very important issue for my constituents in Edmonton Griesbach, for Canadians of Ukrainian heritage, and for all Canadians.

The bill condemns a very dark chapter in history and takes a principled stand in support of freedom, democracy, and the rule of law. I sincerely hope all parliamentarians will support my bill.

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

* * *

● (1515)

CONTROLLED DRUGS AND SUBSTANCES ACT

Hon. Kevin Sorenson (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-307, an act to amend the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act (tamper resistance and abuse deterrence).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I have the privilege to introduce my private member's bill that would help Canadians deal with the scourge of drug abuse that is confronting many communities in Canada.

I want to thank the seconder of the bill, the member for Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, who, as a registered nurse working in health care and from British Columbia, certainly understands the abuse occurring with respect to the fentanyl issues we face. Every day, media across Canada report deaths by fentanyl or other powerful opioids.

The cost to our society of drug abuse is unbelievably high. Drug abuse is killing and hurting too many Canadians, including the drug abusers, their families and their friends.

This bill proposes to allow for specifying controlled substances or classes of controlled substances that must have abuse-deterrent and/or tamper-resistant properties, and would expand the government's regulatory powers in that respect. It would allow Canada to take swift action to restrict the access and flow of specific controlled substances or classes of controlled substances that do not currently have ADFs or tamper-resistant properties.

It is a pleasure to have a private member's bill, and I know this one would help save lives.

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

* * *

PETITIONS

FREEDOM OF SPEECH

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this petition relates to the fate of Mary Wagner, who was a prisoner of conscience. These petitions come from almost 1,300 residents of the greater Toronto area, the large majority from the riding of Mississauga East—Cooksville.

The petitioners ask Parliament to amend the Criminal Code of Canada to prohibit the detention before trial or custodial sentencing of anyone accused solely of a non-violent offence consisting of the presence or the words of the accused occurring in the course of the free exercise of speech by the accused or the free exercise of conscience by the accused.

PHOENIX PAY SYSTEM

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today with a petition that is signed by roughly 100 members of my community who have been affected by the problems that the government has been experiencing with Phoenix pay system.

The petitioners express their frustration over the system and ask that the government remedy this as soon as possible. Believe it or not, there are still a number of people in my constituency who continue to be dogged by this problem. This petition goes to encouraging the government to remedy that as soon as possible.

ARVA FLOUR MILL

Mr. Bev Shipley (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we now have 7,000 or better petitions regarding the Arva Flour Mill. Every province in our great country has taken the side of small business and this family and giving it an opportunity to stay viable.

The petitioners ask that the Arva Flour Mill be exempt from the Canada Labour Code.

JUSTICE

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present 10 more petitions today, including signatures from B.C., Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Ontario, in support of passing Molly's law.

A Statistics Canada study shows that over 60,000 Canadian women were victims of domestic violence between 2004 and 2009. The Native Women's Association of Canada is fully endorsing Bill C-225, which would protect pregnant women and their preborn children, indicating that at least 18 of the missing and murdered aboriginal women and girls were pregnant.

Canadians know that a national strategy combatting violence against women will need this law included to be comprehensive in addressing violence against women.

PHYSICIAN-ASSISTED DYING

Mr. Ted Falk (Provencher, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to present a petition signed by residents of Manitoba, which contains a consistent request with respect to the Charter of Rights and Freedoms that guarantees the freedom of conscience and the freedom of religion.

The petitioners ask that Parliament establish conscience protection for physicians and health care institutions.

● (1520)

FALUN GONG

Mr. Dave MacKenzie (Oxford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present a petition from many people in my riding.

Among other things, the petitioners request the government pass a resolution to establish measures to stop the Chinese Communist regime of the crime of systematically murdering Falun Gong practitioners for their organs and to publicly call for an end to the persecution of Falun Gong in China.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition signed by Canadians from Saskatchewan and Alberta.

The petitioners are concerned about the accessibility and the impacts of violent and degrading sexually explicit material online and the impacts to public health, especially the well-being of women and girls.

As such, the petitioners call upon the House of Commons to adopt my motion, Motion No. 47.

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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 revised response to Question No. 258, originally tabled on September 19, could be made an order for return, this return would be tabled immediately.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[*Text*]

Question No. 258—**Mr. Larry Miller**:

> With regard to relocation costs for exempt staff moving to Ottawa since October 19, 2015: (*a*) what is the total cost paid by the government for relocation services and hotel stays related to moving these staff to Ottawa; and (*b*) for each individual reimbursement, what is the (i) total payout, (ii) cost for moving services, (iii) cost for hotel stays?

(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.

* * *

MOTIONS FOR PAPERS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I ask that all notices of motions for the production of papers be allowed to stand.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

NATIONAL SECURITY AND INTELLIGENCE COMMITTEE OF PARLIAMENTARIANS ACT

The House resumed from September 27 consideration of the motion that Bill C-22, An Act to establish the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians and to make consequential amendments to certain Acts, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Speaker: There are five and a half minutes remaining for questions and comments following the speech of the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons

The hon. member for Laurentides—Labelle.

[*Translation*]

Mr. David de Burgh Graham (Laurentides—Labelle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I really enjoyed reading my colleague's speech in yesterday's Hansard, because due to exceptional circumstances, I was not in the House to hear the end of the debate.

My colleague will vividly recall the controversy that erupted during the 41st Parliament surrounding Bill C-51. I wonder if he could share his thoughts on the impact of the bill in the current context.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is important to recognize that Bill C-22 is as a direct result of Bill C-51. A major fundamental flaw when Bill C-51 was brought in was the fact that there was no parliamentary committee to oversee our security systems.

That is very important because Canadians have expectations that their government will have a balance when it comes to issues such as freedoms, our rights, and security. We believe Bill C-22 will deliver what Canadians want to see. In fact, it would be a fulfillment of a commitment made by the Prime Minister and the government that we would bring in a parliamentary oversight committee. Bill C-22 is all about that.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last year in the House when the Liberals and Conservatives voted for Bill C-51, only the NDP caucus stood up for Canadians and voted against the impact that would have on the rights and freedoms of Canadians. At the same time, the New Democrats offered very solid suggestions, not taken up by the former Conservative government or by the current Liberal government, to enhance security while maintaining our rights and liberties.

We have a bill in front of us that contradicts how many of our allies proceed. All of our allies have oversight committees with an independent chair, a chair that is selected by the committee not by the government. As we have seen with our major allies as well, these oversight committees need to have full access to classified information. Of course another component that does not exist among our allies is the Prime Minister's Office's having the ability to censor any reports that are issued by the committee.

How does the Liberal government justify these three fundamental weaknesses when they are not in common with the practice of our major allies, and certainly not in common with the oversight committees that exist in other countries.

● (1525)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I would have to agree to disagree on some of the points the member has brought forward.

One of them is that he suggests it is wrong for the Prime Minister to make the appointment. The critic for the official opposition, the Conservative Party, is one of the individuals who recommended to the minister that we should have the prime minister appointing the chair of the committee.

Other issues are in regard to just how this committee will be able to perform. If we do a comparison between what we have proposed and the other Five Eyes countries, which Canada is a part of, we will find that this legislation is far more aggressive and has the potential to be some of the best legislation going forward with respect to the other countries because of its very scope. Remember, this deals with more than just one department. We are talking about 17 departments that provide some form of security services, which is quite significant. This legislation is all-encompassing in that respect.

With regard to the Prime Minister, maybe I will get a chance to answer another question to provide—

[*Translation*]

The Speaker: Order, please. We have time for a short question and brief answer.

The hon. member for Sherbrooke.

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have a hard time hearing my colleague refer to this committee as a parliamentary committee.

The chair is appointed by the Prime Minister, who will also have a veto over the reports that will be tabled in Parliament. I find it hard to reconcile that with the definition of a true parliamentary committee, where there is no interference from the Prime Minister's office. That might be possible for the government when it comes to the appointments, but certainly not when it comes to drafting the reports or their content.

How can the hon. member call this a parliamentary committee when the Prime Minister's office interferes directly in the work of the committee?

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, the committee is made up of parliamentarians. It is important to note that the committee will consist of nine members, with seven members of the House and two senators. Up to four members will be from the governing party.

The Prime Minister will be required to consult with opposition party leaders before naming opposition members, and with the Senate before naming the senators.

It is also important that we recognize that the Prime Minister is not authorized to alter the findings or recommendations of the reports tabled. The Prime Minister's role is solely to review the report to ensure that it does not contain classified information.

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today and join in the debate on Bill C-22, which would establish a national security and intelligence committee of parliamentarians.

I will be sharing my time today with the member for Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles.

National security has taken on even greater importance over the last number of years. Abroad, we have seen horrific jihadist attacks just months ago, in fact, month after month in countries like France, Belgium, and even the United States.

Right here in Canada, we saw a jihadi inspired attack in October 2014. Warrant Officer Patrice Vincent was killed in Quebec, and Corporal Nathan Cirillo was killed while he was on guard at the National War Memorial, just steps away from where we are standing today. Many of us who served in the last Parliament will recall being locked down, and not knowing what was going on, and we remember that day.

It is important that our national security agencies have the tools they need to do their job, and keep us safe from terrorists. That is why the previous Conservative passed the Anti-terrorism Act in 2015, more commonly known as Bill C-51. Bill C-51 is good legislation that struck an appropriate balance between protecting national security and protecting the privacy of others.

In fact, the director of CSIS recently told the committee in the other place that CSIS agents have used the powers created under that legislation at least two dozen times. That record speaks volumes.

Today, I am not here to talk about that bill, but I am here to talk about Bill C-22, and how to ensure that the rights and liberties of Canadians are appropriately protected through extensive review and oversight of our national security agencies.

While our men and women in these agencies do excellent work each and every day to keep us safe, it is always important to have a third party watchdog. Currently, national security agencies have a substantial review mechanism. CSIS is reviewed by the Security Intelligence Review Committee, which is composed of former parliamentarians and other prominent Canadians. The Communications Security Establishment is reviewed by the CSE Commissioner, and the RCMP is reviewed by the Civilian Review and Complaints Commission.

However, we note that the Liberals, in their platform, promised that they would "create an all-party committee to monitor and oversee the operations of every government department and agency with national security responsibilities." Unfortunately, or maybe fortunately, depending on how we look at it, that is not the bill that we have before us today.

First, the bill does not provide for any oversight of national security agencies, in fact, the word oversight is not even in the bill. It is nowhere in the description or in the body of the bill. What it provides is a review mechanism for after-the-fact assessment, but it does so with enormous caveats. In fact, there are seven large caveats contained in section 14 of the bill.

These caveats allow the cabinet to deny the committee, a committee of duly elected parliamentarians sworn to secrecy, the access to any confidence of the Queen's Privy Council, any military operation information, any information on the Investment Canada Act, and any information that may lead in future to criminal charges, among other things.

That pretty well covers off all of the information in the possession of the Canadian Armed Forces, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, and the Canadian Security Intelligence Service. That is pretty well all of the information that this so-called committee would need to do the so-called oversight that it is created to do.

Unfortunately, what we have under this legislation is a committee that does not actually have any access to any relevant information. What is more, it is not actually a parliamentary committee. Right here in black and white in subsection 4(3), the bill states that this would not be a committee of Parliament, rather it would be a committee made up of parliamentarians.

What we have right now is a committee made up of parliamentarians with no ability to collect information. We will also learn it has absolutely no teeth to do anything because it cannot report anything outside of the committee, and we have the Prime Minister and ministers able to cleanse the report before it is brought to Parliament.

We kind of have a glorified parliamentary friendship group here, and really nothing more, because the committee cannot review any information. It cannot do anything with the information that it finds because if the Prime Minister deems it is not appropriate for a number of reasons, the Prime Minister or the Prime Minister's Office can change it. Really, this is a pretty hollow shell and nothing more.

● (1530)

I want to speak a bit about the fact that in section 12 parliamentary privilege is eroded by making it clear that a whistleblower could be prosecuted for making any of the information public. Let us think about that for a minute.

The Liberals have said they want this committee to fix the situation where they felt it left the public uninformed and unrepresented on critical issues, but they have established, through this legislation, a system where it would be a crime for a whistleblower to disclose anything from the committee. So, how can there be any access to the information by regular Canadians?

The bill before us does not even come close to meeting the Liberal platform commitments. In fact, it is a bill that further serves to centralize power in the Prime Minister's Office.

Typically, like in the United States and Great Britain, committees of this nature would report directly to the legislative branch rather than to the executive. Yet, in this legislation, the Prime Minister gets to play middleman between the committee and Parliament.

Under this legislation, it says in subsection 21(1) the Prime Minister will receive all annual reports, special reports, and other findings of the committee, so the Prime Minister is going to get everything before Parliament does. He will then have the opportunity to edit and change any report to suit his liking, and subsection 21(5) says that the Prime Minister can refuse to release information at his discretion.

The Liberals have said that this is to protect serious national information and security information, but let us read the text of the bill:

> If,...the Prime Minister is of the opinion that information in an annual or special report is...injurious to...international relations...the Prime Minister may direct the Committee to submit...a revised version of the annual or special report.

I want to remind my hon. colleague, the parliamentary secretary, that the Prime Minister actually can direct the committee to submit a revised report. In this case, it would be if it contravened or hurt international relations.

What does that mean? That means that the Prime Minister and his office could delete or eliminate information that they thought might hurt international relations. From what we have seen recently, does that mean if this report said something that would show that the Chinese are doing something they should not be doing, that the Prime Minister would say not to say anything about the Chinese because we do not want to offend them? Maybe the Prime Minister would be concerned that his vanity project of getting a seat on the UN Security Council might be offended.

With the Prime Minister having the motivation, and the naïveté that he seems to be displaying, it is very concerning that this power would be in the Prime Minister's Office to vet this information, and eliminate information that he thinks would not be beneficial to international relations. This is not transparency in any way, shape, or form.

It is definitely not transparent that several months before this legislation was even tabled, we found out, through the media, that the member for Ottawa South was given the sweetheart deal as chair of this committee. That in and of itself is very disingenuous.

The government and the Liberals could have at least had respect for Parliament and for its own platform to have withheld that. I do not know why the Liberals felt they had to make that announcement, and do that so quickly unless it had to do with an inside deal that they were concocting.

How can someone become a chair of a committee that has not even been constituted by Parliament in legislation? With a partisan appointment like this, it is clear that the government is not taking the non-partisan goals of this committee seriously.

Let us look at the facts. The Minister of Public Safety and many of the Liberals who have spoken before me have touted that this proposed committee is modelled after the United Kingdom, but the Liberal partisan appointment of the chair is completely different from the U.K. model which allows its committee to elect its own chair.

Second, the committee reports to the Prime Minister, not to Parliament, and the Prime Minister has the ability to omit items and ask for revised reports.

There is more that I could say on this piece of legislation but at the end of the day we are seeing more and more that this is a hollow shell with no substance. This committee will be made up of parliamentarians with no power to do anything, with no power to get information, and with the Prime Minister vetting all of the information. It looks again like the Liberals want to look like they are fulfilling a campaign promise but they are actually not fulfilling it and they are being disrespectful and disingenuous by doing so.

Unless there are major changes to the bill, I cannot support it.

● (1535)

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith (Beaches—East York, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member mentioned information access concerns. The minister can refuse to give access relating to matters that are injurious to national security. She mentioned concerns that whistleblowers would not be able to present the information to the public. Does the member have ideas that would improve the process, these two processes in particular?

Hon. Candice Bergen: Madam Speaker, when I was parliamentary secretary for public safety, we felt that the mechanisms in place for overseeing CSIS, for example, were sufficient. We know, as parliamentarians, that even though we are supposed to keep things quiet, sometimes things leak out. This is probably not a good idea on behalf of the Liberal government, but again, it wanted to fulfill its promise and in doing so realized that it may have created a problem it does not want to have, and that is that very sensitive information is going to be in the hands of parliamentarians.

The Liberals created this problem, and now they are creating more problems. There really is no easy solution to this. They cannot create a committee of parliamentarians that is going to have oversight and real teeth and the ability to oversee something without members having information, but the government is concerned about letting this information out and what is going to happen with it. It was not a well-thought-out campaign promise, and it is not a well-thought-out strategy to address that campaign promise.

● (1540)

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Madam Speaker, the member for Portage—Lisgar has taken on new responsibilities as the opposition House leader, and I certainly appreciate working with her. We disagree on some things, there is no doubt. We disagreed on Bill C-51. The Conservatives brought it forward. Liberals all voted in favour of it, despite the impact on civil rights and liberties.

Now we have a piece of legislation. I think all members of the House are surprised to learn that there is an oversight committee that is under double censorship; it censored in terms of information from the oversight committee the Liberal government is proposing and censored in terms of what the Prime Minister's Office will actually permit the committee to put out.

At the same time, as the member for Portage—Lisgar pointed out, we are talking about a partisan chair of the committee, something that none of our major allies have done, for the simple reason that it is inappropriate.

I would like the member to comment on whether she agrees with the NDP analysis that the committee would be handcuffed by the Liberal government.

Hon. Candice Bergen: Madam Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague for his good wishes. It has been almost two weeks, and so far I have very much enjoyed working with my hon. colleague and look forward to continuing.

I would agree. It goes back to what I was saying to the previous question. The problem the government has is that it made a commitment to create this committee, but as it has gone on to create it, it has realized that it is probably not a good idea. I recognize that my hon. colleague in the NDP would support the idea of a committee to oversee CSIS, for example, but it is not workable.

Instead, the Liberals want to look like they have fulfilled their commitment, but then they have realized that they cannot, so they now would create a committee that would have no power to get information and the Prime Minister would have the ability to vet all information, because I am sure that the Prime Minister's advisers have said to him that we have to be watching over this to make sure that sensitive information cannot get out.

Instead of the Liberals saying that they made a mistake and that the committee is not going to work, they have come forward with legislation that is disingenuous. As we are seeing over and over with so much of the Liberal policy, it ends up creating more confusion and more chaos and more problems than fixing any problem that might exist.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Portage—Lisgar for her speech, which brings me to mine. I am very pleased to speak today to share my concerns over Bill C-22, an act to establish the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians and to make consequential amendments to certain acts.

The first thing I question, and I am not the only one to have raised this in the past two days, is the part of the title that says "committee of parliamentarians". When we read Bill C-22 we quickly understand the type of committee that will truly be created. Let us look at this together.

Clause 3 of the bill reads:

> **3** The Governor in Council may designate a member of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada to be the Minister for the purposes of this Act.

It is therefore a committee of parliamentarians formed by the Governor in Council, the government, and therefore by the Prime Minister himself.

Along the same lines, subclause 5(1) stipulates that:

> **5(1)** The members of the Committee are to be appointed by the Governor in Council, on the recommendation of the Prime Minister, to hold office during pleasure until the dissolution of Parliament following their appointment.

The Prime Minister's approval is even required for the appointment of senators to the committee, as we see in subclause 5(2), which reads:

> **5(2)** A member of the Senate may be appointed to the Committee only after the Prime Minister has consulted with one or more other members of the Senate.

The words "Prime Minister" come up quite frequently. Even when it comes time for committee members to resign from their duties, they must inform the Prime Minister, as required by subclause 5(5), which reads:

> **5(5)** A member may resign by notifying the Prime Minister in writing

Since we have a Prime Minister who has the utmost respect for this institution and its elected representatives, what do you think he did? The Prime Minister also retained the right to control who will be appointed as committee chair. That is what it says in subclause 6 (1), which reads:

> **6(1)** The Governor in Council is to designate the Chair of the Committee from among the members of the Committee, on the recommendation of the Prime Minister.

One quickly realizes from the way the bill is written that this is the Prime Minister's committee, not a committee of parliamentarians. He chooses who will sit on the committee and who will chair it. It is not a committee of parliamentarians. It is a committee for the Prime Minister so that he can show that the government is taking action on an issue that he has found it difficult to take a clear stand on.

The best response that the government was able to come up with was to create a fully sanitized committee over which the Prime Minister and his office will have complete control.

What is more, the so-called committee of parliamentarians will not report to Parliament as one would expect from its name. It will report, and I hope my colleagues are sitting down for this, to the Prime Minister himself. That is what it says in subclause 21(1), which reads:

> **21(1)** Each year the Committee must submit to the Prime Minister a report of the reviews it conducted during the preceding year.

Subclause 21(2) also confirms that the committee can present a special report to the minister concerned and the Prime Minister.

The work done by the committee of parliamentarians will not be tabled in the House to inform the other members of Parliament, because everything clearly has to go through the central office that controls everything about this committee. Whose office is that? The Prime Minister's.

It is quite disconcerting to read this, but it was written by experts on consultation, transparency, openness, and good governance.

I would like to again quote Bill C-22, specifically subclause 21(5) on the information that is excluded from the report:

> If, after consulting the Chair of the Committee, the Prime Minister is of the opinion that information in an annual or special report is information the disclosure of which would be injurious to national security, national defence or international relations or is information that is protected by litigation privilege or solicitor-client privilege or, in civil law,...or the professional secrecy of advocates and notaries, the Prime Minister may direct the Committee to submit to the Prime Minister a revised version of the annual or special report that does not contain that information.

Consequently, if the Prime Minister does not like the reports received from the committee, he can ask that changes be made to the various reports in order to table a report that suits the government.

Subclause 21(6) refers to the tabling of the report:

> **21(6)** Subject to subsection (4), the Prime Minister must cause to be laid before each House of Parliament, on any of the first 45 days on which that House is sitting after a report is submitted under subsection (1) or (2), a copy of the report or, if the Committee was directed to submit a revised version, a copy of the revised version.

Only this sanitized report, which may be far from truthful, will be tabled in Parliament to inform Canadians. Even Maurice Duplessis could not have come up with anything better to hide the fact that the Prime Minister, and not the committee, has the final say.

● (1545)

Now that I have provided ample evidence that the government's proposed committee is not truly a committee of parliamentarians but a committee of parliamentarians who will do the Prime Minister's bidding, I would like to talk about another problematic aspect of Bill C-22.

In addition to selecting the members of the committee responsible for overseeing the activities of a number of agencies that play a significant role in keeping Canada and Canadians safe, the Liberal government is not giving the committee much latitude to do its work. In theory, the committee has access to all kinds of sensitive and classified national security information, but the government retains the right to refuse to provide some types of information the committee might request, as stated in subclause 16(1), which reads as follows:

> **Refusal of information**
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> **16(1)** The appropriate Minister for a department may refuse to provide information to which the Committee would, but for this section, otherwise be entitled to have access and that is under the control of that department, but only if he or she is of the opinion that
>
> (**a**) the information constitutes special operational information, as defined in subsection 8(1) of the Security of Information Act; and
>
> (**b**) provision of the information would be injurious to national security.

Refusal of information is final and may not be appealed, as stated in subclause 31(1):

> **31(1)** The appropriate Minister's determination that a review referred to in paragraph 8(b) would be injurious to national security or the appropriate Minister's decision to refuse to provide information under subsection 16(1) is final.

Bill C-22 therefore provides no meaningful mechanism by which the committee can appeal the decision, which might be questionable and put the government in an awkward position without necessarily being a threat to national security. Bill C-22 provides nothing, as indicated in subclause 31(2), which states:

> **31(2)** If the Committee is dissatisfied with the determination or the decision, the Committee is not to bring the matter before the courts, but it may note its dissatisfaction in a report referred to in section 21.

The committee can note its dissatisfaction, but the government could choose to completely ignore the report, for the committee members will be inclined to say nothing, in order to continue sitting on the committee. On top of that, this protest report will never be tabled in the House.

From the way this was presented, the Liberals have a lot of work to do to get the unanimous support of the House. I strongly believe that something like this should have the unanimous support of all members of the House. We are talking about oversight of bodies that are responsible for ensuring the safety and security of Canadians. This is not about partisan politics. Unfortunately, from the way this bill was presented, it appears as though the top of the pyramid wants to make sure it can lead all of the work without any problems.

Let me be very clear: our intention is not to go public with any state secrets or any information that could compromise national security, far from it. We simply want to ensure that the committee is able to have the flexibility and independence needed to properly fulfill its mandate. If we are going to do something, we might as well do it right.

To sum up, what really matters to me is that a committee such as this be founded on trust. It must have the full confidence of all government members and all opposition members, across party lines. With this kind of committee on national security, we need to be working from a place of absolute trust. I will be the first to say it.

Let us listen to our colleagues in the governing party and let us all acknowledge these facts.

● (1550)

Mr. David de Burgh Graham (Laurentides—Labelle, Lib.): Madam Speaker, my colleague said that what matters is that everyone co-operates. He is right; that is very important.

He said it is not a parliamentary committee, but a committee formed in another manner, as he said. Would he not agree that it is important that the members who sit on this committee not have the privilege to disclose sensitive information in the House without any consequences? Does he not think it is important to take this privilege away from the committee members, with respect to top secret government matters?

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Madam Speaker, my esteemed colleague asked a very good question. That is what makes Bill C-22 so complex, and that is why we are in this debate to talk about what we want to see.

As I said at the end of my speech, Bill C-22 would set up an all-party committee of parliamentarians to examine highly strategic and important public safety and national security issues.

However, because of the way Bill C-22 was written, the Prime Minister has complete control, which means that opposition members of the parliamentary committee will not be able to speak as freely as usual or even discuss things with their party leader because they will be sworn to secrecy.

The Prime Minister has given himself total control, and the parliamentarians who sit on the committee will not even be able to talk about it. If this is to be a truly parliamentary committee, the Prime Minister has to give up some of that power and give the committee its independence. That is the real problem here.

Yes, secrecy around national security matters is very important, but the opposition members who sit on the committee need some measure of control. If not, what is the point of the committee?

[*English*]

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles for his remarks. I very much enjoy working with him on the defence committee.

I think the member said something really important, which I hope people on that side have written down. What we are trying to do is to create a committee that will have the confidence of the public so that the public will believe it is an independent committee, believe it is an effective committee, and believe that the government will have no ability to cover up any excesses or inefficiencies in national security. The member said the best way to do that was to have a bill that had the unanimous consent of all parties. That is really important and I hope the Liberals are listening to it.

The Conservatives have chosen to oppose the bill at second reading. We have chosen to give it conditional support, but I think there is a lot of common ground on this side.

I want to know if the member agrees with me that there are a few things, like having an independent chair, having unrestricted access to information, and having the committee report to the House of Commons and not the Prime Minister, that would make it easy to get all of us onside if some of those elements were present in the bill. Would the member agree with me on that?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Madam Speaker, I thank my esteemed colleague for making those points.

I also want to mention to the House that, on March 1, our public safety critic, the member for Durham, sent the Minister of Public Safety 18 recommendations relating to Bill C-22, all of which were designed to improve the bill and bring about consensus.

On April 15, having received no response, he sent another letter to the minister informing him that the official opposition, the Conservative Party, had worked hard to provide constructive suggestions designed to make the parliamentary committee work.

Once again, I am asking the government members to consider that and work with us.

● (1555)

[*English*]

Mr. David Sweet (Flamborough—Glanbrook, CPC): Madam Speaker, the lack of consultation, the power of the Prime Minister, the way the chair was chosen, and this committee's lack of investigative capability are all huge problems that fly in the face of the openness and transparency the Liberals campaigned on.

The security and intelligence committee in the U.K. that the Liberals say they fashioned this committee after has nine members, and they are appointed after consultation with the opposition, and then by all members of both Houses.

Does the member agree that this bears no similarity to that Westminster tradition in the U.K.?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Madam Speaker, I have nothing to add.

In closing, I just hope we can make this parliamentary committee work.

[*English*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Before resuming debate, I want to advise the House that the question and comment period is now down to 10 minutes for speeches, and five minutes for questions and answers.

The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship.

Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I rise today to speak in support of Bill C-22. The bill would create a committee of parliamentarians to oversee Canada's security agencies. For the first time in history, a multi-party group of members of Parliament and senators would hold Canada's security apparatus to account.

Bill C-22 represents a Liberal initiative that dates back to 2005 in fulfillment of a key part of our campaign commitment to Canadians to reverse the legacy of the old Bill C-51. I am proud to stand in support of it and the important idea that Canadian security must never come at the expense of our rights and freedoms.

I will start by turning back the clock to early 2015 and the previous government's introduction of Bill C-51.

In my riding of Parkdale—High Park last year, I heard about Bill C-51 over and over again at the doors. Residents in my community in Toronto are smart. They are engaged, and when they sense injustice, they speak out. They told me that they expect better from their government, that ensuring public safety is the preeminent responsibility of any government, but that it is not acceptable to pursue security at any cost. My constituents, and indeed all Canadians, want a government that respects Canadians' rights and one that will put in place mechanisms to protect those rights.

As a human rights and constitutional lawyer, I listened to those residents as a candidate in the past election. I communicated those very valid concerns to my party, and the party responded. In 2015, we committed on the campaign trail that if we were fortunate enough to earn the respect of Canadians and to form government, we would significantly amend that flawed bill and put in place the mechanisms that Canadians want to protect their rights while simultaneously keeping them safe. That is what Bill C-22 would start to do.

However, we cannot take all the credit. The idea of ensuring that parliamentary representatives oversee security agencies, like the RCMP, CSIS, and CSE, did not come to us as some sort of epiphany. It is exactly what our allies have been doing for many years. Every single member of the Five Eyes alliance but Canada has some oversight mechanism in place. Those are Australia, United Kingdom, New Zealand, and the United States.

The Auditor General identified the need for parliamentary oversight in a seminal report in 2003. Our party initiated this in 2005 when then public safety minister Anne McLellan introduced Bill C-81. That bill died on the Order Paper when the opposition parties voted down the minority government of then prime minister Paul Martin, triggering the election that brought us Prime Minister Stephen Harper.

A similar oversight committee was attempted no less than four more times in private members' bills, as introduced by Liberal Derek Lee on two occasions, in 2007 and 2009; by the member for Malpeque in 2013; and by the member of Parliament who sits right next to me, the member for Vancouver Quadra, Joyce Murray. On each of those occasions, the private members' bills were not passed in the House.

● (1600)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order, please.

The member is not to mention anyone by name. I want to remind the member he can refer to the member by their riding, but not by their name.

Mr. Arif Virani: Madam Speaker, thank you.

I guess it is now six times lucky. Our majority government has introduced Bill C-22 at long last, after 11 years of attempts and continuously being stymied by the opposition, to entrench parliamentary oversight of Canada's security and intelligence agencies.

However, we are not just replicating what we have seen among our Five Eyes allies. We are going one better. None other than Craig Forcese, the renowned law professor from the University of Ottawa and one of the foremost critics of the old Bill C-51, has said:

> ...this will be a stronger body than the UK and Australian equivalents. And a dramatic change for Canadian national security accountability.... This is a good bill.... I would give it a high pass....

Let me turn to the bill itself and see what people like Professor Forcese are enthused about.

[*Translation*]

This oversight committee of parliamentarians will have a broad, government-wide mandate to review any national security matter relating to all government security departments and agencies. Committee members will have top security clearance and can demand unprecedented access to classified material.

The committee is required to report back to Parliament annually, but can do so even more frequently through special reports, if it finds that a special report is required to protect the public interest.

The committee members are independent. They have the authority to self-initiate reviews of the legislative, regulatory, policy, financial, and administrative framework for national security in Canada. The committee members have tenure. They are appointed until the dissolution of the House.

[*English*]

This committee will not be dominated by government members, because government members will not make up the majority of the committee. Bill C-22 specifies that the committee will comprise nine persons, only four of whom may be government members of Parliament. The other five must come from the opposition parties. This is not a rubber stamp; it is actual accountability and oversight of government departments and agencies by a majority of opposition parliamentarians.

Allow me to provide an example. Throughout the extensive debate on the old Bill C-51, residents of my riding of Parkdale—High Park were very vocal about information sharing among government departments and agencies. Rightly, Canadians said that widespread information sharing may compromise privacy rights. Information sharing is precisely the type of thing this new oversight committee will scrutinize, because it will have a broad government-wide mandate over all national security departments and agencies. This can ensure that when information is shared for intelligence gathering, the rights of Canadians are not being violated or jeopardized. If a violation is identified, the committee can report that to all Canadians through Parliament.

Of course, there may be those who feel this legislation does not go far enough. The important response to those individuals is to note that Bill C-22 contains a mandatory review provision. Every five years, according to law, a committee must study this bill and report back to Parliament on how to strengthen it. In this way, the conversation of Canadians in my riding of Parkdale—High Park and around the country about how to balance security with the protection of rights and freedoms will not stagnate. It will remain dynamic.

This brings me to my third point. We want to hear from Canadians, not just in five years but now. Our government has commenced a Canada-wide consultation on our national security framework. These consultations will allow us to discuss the other campaign commitments we made to remedy the defects of the old Bill C-51, including entrenching a sunset clause, ensuring that no judge can issue a warrant that violates the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, guaranteeing the constitutional right to engage in advocacy and protest, and narrowing the overly broad definition of what constitutes "terrorist propaganda".

This national consultation will allow us to hear from Canadians what else they want to see from their government. We do not just want to implement our campaign commitments, but to improve upon them. Throughout this, one thing will always be top of mind, that in seeking to balance security and the protection of rights and freedoms, we will work with Canadian communities, not against them.

Here, I address the House as a Muslim member of the Liberal caucus. The practice of our new government is not to vilify groups or to sow division, but to engage communities and to listen to their concerns. We have done this through our comprehensive efforts to counter Islamophobia. We have done this through our 2016 budgetary commitment of over $35 million over five years to create an office of community outreach and counter-radicalization. We have done this through our efforts to welcome, not shun, the victims of Daesh, which has translated into our accepting nearly 31,000 Syrian refugees to date. We have done this through our efforts today to improve the rights of those who inadvertently find themselves on no-fly lists, by creating a passenger protect inquiries office, and implementing a Canada-U.S. redress working group.

I know that Canadians prefer this approach. It is an approach they voted for in October 2015. It is an approach that seeks to address security concerns on multiple fronts, and one that engenders the confidence of all Canadians, including the very minority groups, like mine, that were disproportionally bearing the brunt of the previous government's surveillance.

I will end with this. It is a fine balance. Ensuring safety while simultaneously protecting rights and freedoms is not easy, but I am confident that Bill C-22 will help do just that. I am proud to support this legislation that has been 11 years in the making. At this time, I urge the members opposite to get behind it, rather than standing in our way.

● (1605)

Ms. Dianne L. Watts (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Madam Speaker, from his preamble onward, the member talked about Bill C-51 and what a flawed bill it was.

Does the member realize that his Liberal government supported Bill C-51?

Mr. Arif Virani: Madam Speaker, of course I am completely aware of the Liberal Party's position on various bills that were introduced during the previous Parliament, including Bill C-51.

I will remind the member opposite that we tabled 10 amendments at committee stage during the proceedings on that bill, three of which were taken up and some of which actually expanded the definition of legitimate protest, which was a change for the good. We were actively working to strengthen the bill.

I will reiterate for the member and all members of her party that the point we made in regard to Bill C-51 is that security was a vitally important responsibility of government, but so too is balancing constitutionally protected rights and freedoms. What we committed to then and what we are doing now in delivering on the commitment is improving the aspects of that bill that were fatally flawed. Those aspects include oversight through a parliamentary committee that not only replicates what the members of the Five Eyes Alliance are doing, but actually improves upon it. Members should not take that from me, but from Prof. Forcese.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

There is a rather significant nuance to be made in the title of the bill. The title talks about a "committee of parliamentarians", which is quite different from a "parliamentary committee". It is a slight nuance in French that is perhaps more obvious in English.

[*English*]

It is a committee of parliamentarians instead of a parliamentary committee.

[*Translation*]

It is an extremely important nuance since this committee should have been called "the Prime Minister's committee". That title would have been more accurate and more to the point.

I would like to ask my colleague why they chose that name for the committee when in reality, the committee reports directly to the Prime Minister, who appoints the chair. What is more, all the reports the committee submits to the House will be verified and possibly changed by the Prime Minister himself.

[*English*]

Mr. Arif Virani: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the member opposite's question. I appreciate his skills on the MP soccer team. I do not appreciate questions about semantics. I do not mean to make light of the question, but whether it is called a committee of parliamentarians or a parliamentary committee is not the point. The point is oversight. Oversight is occurring.

It is called parliamentarians, just to elucidate members of the House, because it is made up of not just members of Parliament but also of senators. Again, the important piece is that we now have, finally, legislation that hopefully will secure passage in the House that would entrench for the first time ever oversight by this institution, both Houses, of the security apparatus in this country. That is the important point.

What is also being missed by questions such as the member opposite's are the important checks on the Prime Minister's role. If the Prime Minister receives information and that information is redacted, that can be reported back to the House. The Prime Minister cannot appoint anyone he chooses from the members opposite onto that committee. He would consult with the House leader of the NDP and the House leader of the Conservative Party of Canada before doing so. Those are important checks on that power, which would make this parliamentary committee that much stronger.

● (1610)

Ms. Leona Alleslev (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Madam Speaker, my hon. colleague has made a point of outlining how important this parliamentary committee is. I am wondering if he could elaborate on the key roles and responsibilities of this multi-party parliamentarian committee and give us some insight as to why it is unprecedented in comparison with other Five Eyes nations.

Mr. Arif Virani: Madam Speaker, the unprecedented aspect of the parliamentary committee and the bill is the scope of what is available for them to review. Fully 20 different departments and agencies are encompassed by the bill. That is much broader than anything that is being done by any other members of the Five Eyes. That is why it has been identified as potentially something that could be a best practice internationally. That is what we are moving toward and that is why I am proud to stand behind the bill.

Ms. Dianne L. Watts (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House to speak to Bill C-22, the national security and intelligence committee of parliamentarians act.

The bill was first introduced in the House of Commons on June 16. It looks to establish a national security and intelligence committee of parliamentarians.

We know that the committee's mandate, as laid out in the legislation, is to review the legislative, regulatory, policy, administrative, and financial framework for national security and intelligence; any activity carried out by a department that relates to national security or intelligence; or any matter relating to national security or intelligence that a minister refers to the committee.

I believe that the overall principle of the bill is relevant and necessary, given what we are dealing with in today's reality. However, there is a significant amount of responsibility and understanding, and it requires knowledge and critical thinking on a number of fronts. This is why I find pieces of the legislation somewhat troubling, especially when the act does not require the members of the committee to have any experience in dealing with security or intelligence-related matters and information.

I will frame this up in order to put some context around the issue.

From a personal perspective, and as a former mayor whose city bordered on the United States and is the second-largest border crossing in the country, next to Windsor, Ontario, I have presented before the U.S. Homeland Security on a number of issues. I have presented and also had the largest RCMP detachment in Canada, and I have dealt with significant financial, legislative, and security issues, from the proliferation of gang activity, cross-border drug and firearms issues, and murder investigations to the importation of drugs from China, Mexico, the Middle East, and the list goes on.

I cannot stress this point enough. The people serving on this committee must have some understanding and experience of sensitive, confidential, and secure information as it relates to national security and intelligence.

The bill is about the security of our country and the committee and its processes must be transparent. Regardless of political stripe, we all bring something unique to this discussion and this debate.

The chair should not be appointed. Rather, the chair should be elected. I want to take a moment here, because at this point one of the government member's stated that the critic said, in a letter, that the chair should be appointed. However, I will reiterate point seven of the letter, which is that the committee should elect its own chair from among its members. This is the practice with the U.K. committee and other allied countries. The election of the committee chair was also a commitment made by the Prime Minister. This was a direct notation from the critic to the Minister of Public Safety.

There is no doubt that this is an issue. It is unfortunate that the chair of the committee was already selected and appointed by the Prime Minister before the mandate of the committee was even established. It undermines the integrity of the committee even before it begins its work.

We need to look at the U.K. model, which was reformed in 2013 to be a committee of Parliament that reported to Parliament, and the members are appointed by Parliament, except for issues of national security, which are reported to the Prime Minister.

The stark difference with Bill C-22 is that the Prime Minister appoints the chair, the members of the committee are recommended by the Prime Minister, and the committee reports to the Prime Minister.

● (1615)

Also, the bill states that:

> If, after consulting the Chair [who is appointed by the Prime Minister], the Prime Minister is of the opinion that information in an annual or special report is information the disclosure of which would be injurious to national security, national defence or international relations or is information that is protected by litigation privilege or solicitor-client privilege or, in civil law, by immunity from disclosure or the professional secrecy of advocates and notaries, the Prime Minister may direct the Committee to submit to the Prime Minister a revised version of the annual or special report that does not contain that information.

While parts of subclause 21(5) of the bill make perfect sense, I believe it is also far-reaching and extremely broad in its context. Virtually, the Prime Minister can have any report from the committee rewritten if he does not like the content. I believe the parameters need to be much more prescriptive and narrower in scope.

Openness and transparency is what we all want. We all want to achieve this while still maintaining the integrity and confidentiality of sensitive or classified information. The current bill as it stands would not instill confidence in the process or the general public when the Prime Minister and the chair of the committee, whom he appointments, can revise and change the committee's report at will. Censorship of the committee just simply will not work.

As I stated earlier, I believe a national security and intelligence committee of parliamentarians needs to be struck. However, we need to get it right, because we are talking about the security of this country and its people.

Therefore, I put forward three points. First, the chair of the committee should be elected. Second, the committee should have full powers to summon any witnesses and require them to give or produce evidence that the committee deems necessary to meet its mandate. Third, the committee should submit an annual report to Parliament, but the committee, in consultation with the Prime Minister and their national security adviser, exclude from the report any information that may, if released publicly, jeopardize national security.

I believe that these three points would add a level of transparency, as the committee would be arm's length from the Prime Minister's Office, and instill a level of confidence within the general public.

I believe all members support the concept and the principles and really want to ensure that we get this done right. We want to make sure that the safety and security of our intelligence personnel are intact, and we do not want the polarization or politicization of the oversight of our national security operations.

Therefore, Bill C-22 in its current state, I will not be able to support.

● (1620)

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister (Intergovernmental Affairs), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I listened with great interest and heard comments that seemed to suggest that the Prime Minister could rewrite the reports from this committee. The clause of the bill that governs the Prime Minister's authority here only refers to him being able to redact facts that may be of a classified nature and inappropriate.

If there is no provision for the Prime Minister to author a new clause, a new paragraph, or rewrite the bill, would the member opposite then support the bill as a result of that being clarified?

Ms. Dianne L. Watts: Madam Speaker, it does state here "after consulting the chair of the committee", who is appointed by the Prime Minister, and then it goes into a litany of things that he could exclude from the report and then submit to the Prime Minister a revised version.

I think everybody is well aware that there is certain information that should not be publicly disclosed for security reasons or national security intelligence; however, there has to be an oversight of what that looks like. In the U.K. model, they still give that information to the Prime Minister. He does not have the authority to start removing information and rewriting reports.

Therefore, I think there is a balance here, and I think everybody is well aware that there have to be parameters in place, because we are dealing with sensitive confidential information.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech.

Given that she is a Conservative member and that it was the Conservatives who passed Bill C-51, I am surprised to hear positive comments about the creation of a committee of parliamentarians to provide oversight for Canada's intelligence agencies.

When her party was in power and passed Bill C-51, which broadened the mandate of intelligence agencies, why did it not create a committee of parliamentarians to meet the needs and expectations that she just mentioned with regard to a committee of parliamentarians? That would have been a little more acceptable.

[*English*]

Ms. Dianne L. Watts: Madam Speaker, I was not here during that time and do not have intimate knowledge as to why that was not set up. However, I know for a fact that many members of Parliament in government were working on that exact principle in terms of looking at oversight of intelligence agencies. It did not come to fruition. Every party that has been elected to the House has put something forward in one form or another. It is about coming together where everyone can agree.

We have a bill before us on which two parties do not agree with the government. I do not think there has been much difference as time has gone by. If there is willingness on all parts, putting political parties aside and doing what is right for the country is what needs to occur. I think we can get there. I hope we can get there. Then we will have the necessary measures in place that we need.

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have just a quick question with regard to the process of committees appointing chairs. It was my understanding that the government was committed to allowing committees to appoint their own chairs, yet for this committee the chair has been appointed by the Prime Minister at an additional cost and appointed before the committee even exists. I wonder if my colleague would comment on that.

Ms. Dianne L. Watts: Madam Speaker, that is what I am saying. That precise move undermined the confidence of the general public. How can a chair be appointed, when the Prime Minister said that it should be an elected chair, before the mandate of the committee is even put forward? That, in itself, has undermined the entire process.

We have to get back to getting the confidence of the general public and the confidence of members on both sides of the House and move forward with what we need to do.

● (1625)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform the House that the question to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment is as follows: the hon. member for Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, Canada Revenue Agency.

Mr. Raj Saini (Kitchener Centre, Lib.): Madam Speaker, for much of human history, threats to a country's security came in the form of other nation states and state-like entities. While at times the odd vigilante, the lone assassin, or a disaffected group may have posed some threat to a state, these threats were rare and often insubstantial. Consequently, from Roman times until the mid-twentieth century, those responsible for state security were primarily concerned with threats posed by neighbouring states, great powers, and nearby armies.

Taken from this perspective, Canada is geographically fortunate. We are protected by shining seas on three sides, and with the exception of the War of 1812, more than half a century before Confederation, our close friendship with our neighbour to the south has meant that Canada has not truly faced tangible threats to its borders.

However, few would dispute the fact that the security landscape in the 21st century looks very different from any other point in our history. Where we once had vast oceans to separate us from invading armies, modern technology and the alarming growth of violent substate and non-state actors means that Canada's security is faced with new types of threats.

While our country is still a safe and secure place to live, ensuring that it remains so is a much more complex challenge than our predecessors could ever have envisioned. As our country has faced new challenges to our security, new tools have arisen to keep Canadians safe.

In our modern world, intelligence gathering and analysis has become a critical weapon in the fight against terrorism and other national security threats. In a globalized world, where the security threats we face are often shared by our partners and allies, Canada has become a member of a number of intelligence sharing agreements, including the Five Eyes alliance. This group, comprising Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom, New Zealand, and Australia has been called one of the most comprehensive known intelligence alliances in history. This security alliance consists of some of our closest partners.

The Five Eyes alliance is an excellent example of international co-operation through the sharing of both best practices and intelligence.

Worryingly, however, our partner countries in the Five Eyes alliance, including some of the most formidable intelligence gathering entities in the world, all have placed a safeguard on their intelligence agencies, while Canada has not.

Specifically, Canada is the only member of this alliance without proper oversight of our own intelligence community. While Canada does have a committee on public safety and national security, our partner states long ago realized the necessity of ensuring specific and specialized oversight of intelligence gathering. In fact, the United States formed its permanent committees on intelligence in the aftermath of the Watergate scandal four decades ago, after the Church committee investigated intelligence gathering for illegality of the CIA, NSA, and FBI.

We are so very fortunate in Canada to have dedicated men and women who serve to protect us with great courage and fortitude. We have the opportunity to be proactive to ensure that proper oversight is put in place at a time when our security apparatus is transitioning to a new era. As elected representatives of the people of Canada, we need to be able to oversee our intelligence community to ensure that it continues to act in the best interests of Canadians. Our partner states realized the importance of this long ago. Establishing oversight of the intelligence community here in Canada is something I believe to be long overdue.

Let me be clear. Calling for oversight does not mean that we lack faith in our intelligence community. For decades, we, as parliamentarians, have had oversight over our police forces and our military. This has had nothing to do with their ability to serve Canadians and do their jobs. Oversight is at the heart of our role as parliamentarians. We owe it to our constituents to make sure that government works in the best interests of all Canadians.

Ensuring that our intelligence and security agencies do just that is a crucial part of that work. As MPs elected to represent the views, beliefs, and aspirations of our constituents, we must ensure that we balance the need for an effective security apparatus with the duty to uphold the democratic rights of Canadians.

● (1630)

The creation of this kind of oversight in the form of a dedicated committee was something we pledged in the last election. This government is keeping that promise by proposing here today the development of a committee that would have a wide-ranging mandate and a free hand to review and scrutinize material related to national security. The committee would be able to perform reviews of both national security and intelligence activities, including reviews of matters referred by a minister and strategic and systemic reviews of the legislative regulatory policy, expenditure, and administrative frameworks under which these activities are conducted. The committee would have robust powers to access important information to conduct its review, information not normally accessible by parliamentarians.

This government believes in the importance of consultation, of listening to different opinions and points of view. We are here to serve the people who elected us, to ensure that Canadians are being listened to, and that their best interests are being promoted and protected. This is an integral part of our duty and public service, of which oversight is an important part. This oversight is one of the best ways we can ensure that our intelligence apparatus continues to remain accountable to Canadians.

Accountability is a fundamental aspect of our democracy, and in my opinion, striking a permanent committee to keep our intelligence community accountable is one of the best ways this government can ensure that the organizations meant to protect Canadians and our country are doing their jobs well.

This government also understands that accountability in Canada's security apparatus, and in all areas of government, works best when accompanied by discussions with ordinary Canadians. This is why I am so pleased to see that this committee is being struck at the same time the Minister of Public Safety is engaging in public consultations on national security. I strongly believe that so long as this government fosters discussion on national security, both within Parliament and throughout our country, Canada can find the best way forward to face new challenges to national security as we combat terrorism and work to keep our citizens safe.

We are in the midst of a brand new era of security, one that is changing rapidly and in unpredictable ways. As we go forward, we must ensure that we are able to use all the tools we have at our disposal. Like any good tool, however, it needs to be used properly and appropriately. By establishing this committee, our government is ensuring that our intelligence assets are being used to best serve the interests of Canadians.

This is a good day for Canadian democracy. This committee will make us safer, stronger, and more secure as we rise to meet the challenges of the 21st century.

Mr. Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC): Madam Speaker, I recognize that my hon. colleague's party is fulfilling a campaign promise, but I should point out the Liberals' campaign platform. It stated:

> To increase accountability, we will strengthen the role of Parliamentary committee chairs, including elections by secret ballot.

I would also point out that Motion No. 431, passed in the last Parliament, and which the member for Regina—Wascana and the member for Ottawa South voted in favour of, reaffirmed the desire of the House to have elected chairs of committees.

Having said all of that, we notice that the chair of the committee that has not been struck has been named. How do you circle this square?

● (1635)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I would remind the member to address the questions to the Chair.

The hon. member for Kitchener Centre.

Mr. Raj Saini: Madam Speaker, the committee would be a committee of parliamentarians that would have nine members, seven members from the House and two members from the Senate. Understanding that the people who will be serving on this committee will have been duly elected by the people of Canada, I am sure that the member will understand and appreciate the fact that the chair of the committee would be someone who has been elected by the people of Canada.

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Madam Speaker, my hon. colleague gave a fairly antiquarian recitation of the beginning of security, reaching back to Roman times, and he talked about how the security needs of the state had changed over the last 2,000 years.

However, I want to remind him that the development of civil and human rights is also part of that same history, traced back to Greek times. The rights of citizens to have freedom of expression, to be free from undue influence from the state, to be free from being spied upon by the state, to have civil rights, and to be free against unnecessary detention are also equally important.

It is very clear in the House that Bill C-51 abridges and abrogates many of those rights.

While the bill before us would create an oversight model, the government has yet to make any substantive changes to Bill C-51, which abrogates the civil liberties and rights of Canadians. I wonder if he would like to share with us how he feels about that.

Mr. Raj Saini: Madam Speaker, this is the reason why the bill is so important. We have to balance the rights of Canadians with the security of Canadians. This bill serves to represent both of those values that are very important to the security and the civil liberties of Canada.

I would ask the member to join with us to ensure we use the important responsibilities that have been given to us by Canadians to ensure their rights are protected and also security is protected.

Mr. Arnold Chan (Scarborough—Agincourt, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to give my friend an opportunity to clarify something. I have been listening very carefully to the opposition in its challenge on the whole notion that this is somehow a parliamentary committee. This is a mischaracterization by many of the members. In my reading of the bill, this is a non-parliamentary committee that is to be formed pursuant to statute, as opposed to under the Standing Orders. All the particular characterizations that my friends on the opposite side have been advancing are based upon the presumption that this is one of the committees formed under the Standing Orders.

Does my friend have a particular comment with respect to that point?

Mr. Raj Saini: Madam Speaker, this committee would be formed by nine parliamentarians, seven from the House and two from the Senate. The seven parliamentarians from the House have been duly elected. This committee would serve the purpose of ensuring that the rights of our security, and the rights and our values are protected.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Michel Picard (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I rise to speak to Bill C-22, which will create a national security and intelligence committee of parliamentarians. There can be no greater obligation than to protect the security of one's citizens, both here and abroad.

The government of a country such as Canada, which cherishes its hard-won freedoms, its democracy, and its rule of law, has another obligation, and that is to uphold the Constitution of Canada and to ensure that all laws uphold the rights and freedoms we enjoy as people living in a free and democratic society.

The need to simultaneously fulfill these two key obligations is at the very heart of the bill before us. This bill is a response to the threats and attacks that have targeted various countries in the world, including Canada and some of our closest allies. Faced with this violence, we must remain alert and never let down our guard.

In addition, Bill C-22 responds to the many calls over many years for enhanced accountability of departments and agencies working in the area of national security. Hon. members will recall that these calls intensified last year when the previous government introduced the Anti-terrorism Act, 2015, also known as Bill C-51. At that time, our party made the argument that Canada's approach to national security legislation should avoid not only naïveté, but also fearmongering.

The threats are real, and so is the need to protect civil liberties. That is why we included improvements to our national security framework, including the creation of a national security and intelligence committee of parliamentarians, as a major part of our campaign platform in the last election.

The bill before us would establish a committee with nine members. Seven of the committee members would be drawn from the House of Commons, and of these seven, only four can be government members. Two members would be drawn from the other place. This committee will be different from other committees and offices established to review security and intelligence matters.

Under the accountability framework, some review bodies can have access to classified documents, but only for a specific department or organization. The members of these committees are not sitting parliamentarians. Parliamentarians may be involved, but they do not have access to classified documents. Those external review bodies are the Security Intelligence Review Committee, which reviews CSIS, the Office of the Communications Security Establishment Commissioner, and the Civilian Review and Complaints Commission for the RCMP. None of those bodies include sitting parliamentarians.

On the one hand, parliamentary committees review security and intelligence issues, but they do that primarily by listening to testimony during their public meetings. On the other hand, the Senate Standing Committee on National Security and Defence has a broad mandate to examine legislation and national security and defence issues.

Moreover, in the House, the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security studies legislation or issues related to Public Safety Canada and the other agencies in the public safety portfolio. They do extremely valuable work, but as a rule, neither of these committees has access to classified information. They have neither the mandate nor the resources to dig deep into the details of national security matters in order to hold the government and national security agencies truly accountable.

Under the bill before us, members of the national security and intelligence committee of parliamentarians would obtain the appropriate level of security clearance and would, therefore, have access to highly classified security and intelligence information regarding national security and intelligence activities across the Government of Canada.

I would also point out that our Five Eyes partners have review bodies that function in similar ways. In those countries, select parliamentarians have access to highly sensitive intelligence so that they can help protect the public interest with regard to civil rights while also helping protect public safety by ensuring that national security organizations are functioning effectively.

Until now, Canada has been alone among the Five Eyes partners in not having a committee where parliamentary representatives can access classified information. This bill would close that gap.

● (1640)

In fact, in some respects, our proposal goes a little further than that of our allies from Westminster parliamentary democracies. This committee will review all departments and agencies whose activities are related to security and intelligence. It will also have the authority to investigate ongoing operations.

When it comes to establishing a national security accountability mechanism, this bill sets a new standard that some of our allies might well follow.

Robust powers are given to this committee, its members, and its secretariat. The committee will be able to access any information it needs to conduct its reviews, subject to some specific and reasonable limits. As is the case with similar committees in other countries, while committee members are not in a position to disclose the classified information to which they will have access, they can bring tremendous pressure to bear on a given organization or the government in power by letting Canadians know that something is not right.

Clearly, this new committee represents a major step forward in strengthening the accountability of our national security and intelligence system. It will provide elected officials with a real opportunity to evaluate our national security policies and operations and to ensure that Canadians and their civil liberties are protected.

I encourage members to join me in supporting this vitally important bill.

● (1645)

[*English*]

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Madam Speaker, I again want to ask a question on the issue of the committee structure and its chairmanship.

It is clear that the public safety minister has indicated that this committee is modelled after the U.K. committee. However, in the U.K., the members choose their chairs. In Canada, not only would the committee not get to choose its chair, but the chair is appointed before the committee exists, appointed by the Prime Minister. Yet somehow Canadians are supposed to believe this is some kind of a non-partisan all-party committee that respects democracy.

Could my colleague help us understand why we should take his party seriously on the issue of non-partisanship when the committee chair has been appointed before the committee even exists?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Michel Picard: Madam Speaker, before I talk about the appointment in any detail, I would just like to say how pleased and impressed I am with the background of our colleague who will be chairing this committee. I think that the committee will only be a greater success under his leadership.

That being said, we are part of a group of five allies. It is perhaps somewhat limiting to look only to Great Britain as a model, since each of the Five Eyes allies has its own process for appointing people to their committees, and they all vary to some degree. Basically, I think that we need to be aware that this is the Prime Minister's responsibility. I therefore think that the appointment is completely appropriate.

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague, the parliamentary secretary, for his speech.

I find it rather surprising to hear members across the way, our Liberal colleagues, saying that they are very proud to have kept an election promise, when the creation of the committee of parliamentarians is just one of many promises that the Liberals made with regard to Bill C-51, which was passed in the previous Parliament. It is just one small aspect, because the most important part of that promise was to repeal the problematic parts of Bill C-51. That was a clear Liberal promise, written in black and white.

The creation of this committee is just one aspect and so I am wondering why they are so proud to have kept only part of their promise. My question is very simple and will require an answer just as simple. I would like to know when the other promises made by the Liberal Party will be introduced in the House and when the government will repeal the problematic parts of Bill C-51, as promised during the election campaign.

Mr. Michel Picard: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for giving me an opportunity to talk about the many promises he alluded to.

In addition to introducing the committee of parliamentarians bill, we announced the creation of a new office of community outreach and counter-radicalization. We have also worked on the passenger protect program and on improving traveller traffic between the United States and Canada in terms of entry and exit, information declaration, and pre-clearance.

We have held lots of consultations. I have held five so far on national security to find out what people want. People can raise any subject they want. I am pleased to have had this opportunity to remind the House about some of the announcements we have made that may have been forgotten.

[*English*]

Mr. Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC): Madam Speaker, I rise today on Bill C-22, an act to establish the national security and intelligence committee of parliamentarians.

It goes without saying that the safety and security of Canadians are one of the top priorities of any government. I am sure every member in this chamber would agree with that statement.

Like many members, I spent the last few months in my riding, travelling from one end to the other. I spoke with countless constituents about the issues that were important to them. For many, their highest priorities were, of course, jobs and the economy. As a Conservative, I am proud to say our record speaks for itself on those two files.

I also heard from people who were concerned about public safety and national security. Across the globe, terrorist attacks are taking place and have taken place. The idea that these types of attacks do not happen in Canada was a common belief a few years ago, but now, when we look at the political landscape, terrorism cannot be overlooked.

As we know, attacks have taken place in our own country, plans have been thwarted many times by our brave women and men in law enforcement. Do not misunderstand me, please, I am not attempting to strike fear into the hearts of Canadians, but I believe it is important that we are not naive about our place in the world.

The most prominent example of this was October 22, 2015, or even most recently in August, when our enforcement agencies stopped an attack. There have been attacks across Europe. We see them in France, Belgium, and Germany, among others, and of course, in the United States. I say all of this because it is important to provide context on what members of the national security and intelligence committee of parliamentarians will have to review.

Our law enforcement, intelligence, and military agencies have played a crucial role in keeping Canadians safe. This bill has legislated a committee of specific design. I think we agree on the essence of it, but there are parts of it that I have issues with, members on the Conservative and NDP benches seem to have the same issues.

The committee will consist of a chair recommended by the Prime Minister. The committee will have up to eight additional members of Parliament, to a maximum of four from the government and no more than two from the Senate. Members of the committee cannot be a minister of the crown, minister of state, parliamentary secretary, and are appointed by the Governor in Council on recommendation by the Prime Minister, and the leader of the other members' party.

The committee is intended to be non-partisan and highly independent, but yet, the Liberal government appointed the committee chair in January before the legislation was even created. This committee will review agencies that were highly specialized and effective in their designated fields; yet, there is no requirement that the members of the committee have any experience in public safety and security issues.

I also find it concerning that the government refused to consult with opposition parties, despite the public willingness by the Conservatives and the NDP to discuss this important committee. In fact, our official opposition critic wrote to the minister twice about this committee. The committee, as it is currently written, is appointed by and reports to the Prime Minister's Office.

I believe, and I think most members on this side believe, that it should be open and reporting to Parliament. The Prime Minister campaigned on a reduced role of the PMO. We all know actions speak louder than words.

The committee is mandated to review the legislative, regulatory, policy, administrative, and financial framework for national security and intelligence, any activity carried out by the department that relates to national security or intelligence, and any matter relating to national security or intelligence that a minister refers to the committee.

I am going to quote the government's own backgrounder here:

> The committee would have robust powers to access any information to conduct its reviews, subject to specific limitations such as to protect third parties, prevent interference in active military operations and maintain the independence of law enforcement functions. While the NSICOP would have a right of access to information it requests, the legislation would allow Ministers to withhold special operational information, but only if the disclosure would harm national security. The responsible minister would need to provide the committee with the rationale for their decision to withhold information.
>
> The NSICOP findings and recommendations will be tabled in Parliament

However, and here is where some of the big concerns I have arise:

> The government will review the committee's reports before tabling to ensure that they do not contain classified information.

I find it deeply troubling that Bill C-22 provides for numerous exceptions, and permits government agencies and ministries to opt out of providing information for review. This weakens the oversight, and does not permit the committee's mandate to be fulfilled.

● (1650)

I also find it concerning that the Prime Minister would basically have a veto on what is in the reports of the so-called independent committee. Would it not be even more appropriate for non-partisan officials or the committee to decide what can or cannot be released? The government in power should not have a veto on what the committee reviews or reports.

As with any committee, the chair provides crucial support and direction to the committee as a whole. It is, therefore, peculiar for a committee of this importance, for a committee that is claimed to be independent and non-partisan, that the government would have already selected who it is going to appoint to this position. We know it is the member for Ottawa South, and like all of us he is political. I have great respect for the member for Ottawa South.

There are many members in the chamber who I am sure would like to be on that committee, and I have no doubt had there been a free election of the chair, the member probably would have won because he is well respected by members on all sides of the House. However, the government will not even give those members the opportunity to select their chair. What happened to the Liberals' sense of accountability? What happened to their transparency? Real change they said. However, the chair, as I have mentioned, was appointed before the committee was even struck.

There are seven exemptions under section 14 in this legislation, including that the committee cannot look at ongoing investigations that may lead to criminal charges. If I am not mistaken, that basically covers every investigation, and operation of law enforcement and security agencies in this country.

It has been made clear that Canada is not the first country to create this type of oversight committee. Many of our allies have enacted similar oversight systems. This includes the British, the Australians, and New Zealand. I will not get into all of the details because it has been discussed by my colleagues.

I would like to thank my colleague, the member for Durham and the official opposition critic for public safety, for his work on this important file.

The importance of a national security and intelligence committee cannot be overstated, and we have heard that throughout the debate. It is, therefore, critical that legislation be properly drafted. As I said earlier, we all agree on the essence of the committee, but there are just some finer points that need to be tuned up in order to appease people on this side of the House.

The committee of parliamentarians should not report to the Prime Minister or the government. This is something the Liberals raised many times in the previous Parliament. It is something the Liberals talked about during the election. They said the PMO has too much power, and that power needs to be given back to Parliament. What do we see with this piece of legislation? The Liberal government is no different than any other government before it. It just has the sunny ways title to go with it.

As the legislation stands now, the government will have the ability to vet and veto the decisions made by this committee. This, therefore, would take away all the independence claims that the government has made. In effect, under the current legislation, the committee would be controlled by the Prime Minister's Office, and the Prime Minister's Office has appointed the chair already. This is an issue I hope all members on both sides of the House would agree that politics should be left out of. After all, the Liberals campaigned on it.

We as parliamentarians need to continue to ensure that our enforcement agencies have the tools and equipment they need to keep Canadians safe.

I would like to take a moment to thank the men and women who put their lives on the line every day, and those who currently serve or who have previously served at home or abroad, in conflict or peacetime. I appreciate their sacrifices. We shall never forget. It is all in the protection of our rights and freedoms. Members of the Canadian Armed Forces, our intelligence agencies, police, fire-fighters, first responders, we thank them for their service.

● (1655)

Mr. Michel Picard (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I also share my colleague's salute to our good men and women, some of whom have given their lives to save our own.

Since the government always relies on the U.K., let me share something with the House. In the U.K. intelligence and security committee, ministers may choose to withhold sensitive information. In Australia, the government cannot be compelled to provide operationally sensitive information.

Why is it so difficult to understand that disclosing information that may be sensitive may put the lives of very good men and women who protect us at risk?

Mr. Jamie Schmale: Madam Speaker, we do not disagree with that point. Sensitive information needs to remain that way in order to protect those out in the field who are doing the important work we have talked about before.

The issue rises with the fact that the PMO would get to vet that information. We all heard that during the campaign. The NDP and the Liberals all stood up during the campaign and said the PMO had too much power, and that we needed to take it away and give it back to Parliament. Okay. Then we look at this piece of legislation, and the Liberal government is no different than any other government.

If the previous Harper government had put forward this legislation, all of those members on that side of the House would have been up in arms, yelling and screaming that the world is coming to an end. Yet, the Liberal government has done the exact thing except that it campaigned on doing things differently and to have real change.

I would like to take the member up on his word. Let us see real change, and have the committee report to Parliament.

● (1700)

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Madam Speaker, I know that we disagreed with the former Conservative government when it introduced Bill C-51. In fact, all political parties, except the Liberals, disagreed with the Conservatives on Bill C-51. There is a real impact on rights and freedoms, but the Liberals voted to support Bill C-51 which has left us in a very difficult situation.

Now the Liberals have introduced Bill C-22. I think the member would probably agree with me, as I agree with him, that there are huge flaws in this legislation. Instead of providing the independent oversight that comes from having an independent chair, we would have a chair who is chosen by the government and by the Prime Minister, which certainly flies in the face of the way our major allies do this type of oversight committee. Then we would have the censorship oath in terms of the information that would be permitted to go to the oversight committee, and a censorship control of the Prime Minister's Office on what comes out of the committee.

Instead of having oversight that Canadians can have confidence in, does the member not think that we have a very flawed piece of legislation?

Mr. Jamie Schmale: Madam Speaker, I agree wholeheartedly with the member. There are very big issues with this piece of legislation. I will quote again from the Liberals' election platform. It stated: "To increase accountability, we will strengthen the role of Parliamentary committee chairs, including elections by secret ballot". That was a pretty big promise.

I will remind my friend from British Columbia, as he will remember, Motion No. 431, which was passed in the previous Parliament unanimously. The motion stated that members of this chamber unanimously referred to the desire to have elected chairs of committees. The Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, the member for Regina—Wascana, and the member for Ottawa South both voted for that motion. Yet, we see they are doing completely the opposite to what they voted on in the previous Parliament, and what they campaigned on. Now that they are on the governing side of the House, their views immediately change just like that.

I think my friend from British Columbia would agree that we would like to see some of that real change the Liberals campaigned on. Otherwise, they are no different, and it is just another broken campaign promise.

Mr. Arnold Chan (Scarborough—Agincourt, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise and join the debate on Bill C-22. I want to use my time to focus not so much on why I am supporting Bill C-22, because I think the arguments have already been advanced quite significantly by the members of the government. I want to use my time instead to address some of the substantive concerns coming from the opposition parties, which is what I will do in the time that has been allotted to me today.

There are some broad themes that have clearly emerged from the opposition that I want to address and put to rest to try to allay their concerns.

The first, which has been advanced by the official opposition members, is the concept that the architecture of Bill C-22 undermines the independence of parliamentarians because of the apparent supremacy of the executive branch over the legislative branch. They have cited the various provisions in the act that deal with the Prime Minister's capacity to appoint the members of the committee under section 5, and the ability of ministers of the crown to withhold information in certain situations under section 16. They have highlighted issues with respect to the ability of the Prime Minister, in consultation with the chair of the committee, to redact certain portions of the proposed report coming from the committee that might be injurious to national security or might disclose information that might be subject to solicitor-client privilege or might be injurious to or impact international relations.

I appreciate this particular point because we do live in a Westminster model, wherein our branches of government, both our executive branch and our legislative branch, are fused into the same body. The supremacy of the executive branch is particularly exacerbated in this type of model, unlike, for example, in the United States, under a congressional model, where there are very clear and separate branches of government, and the executive branch is specifically divorced from the legislative branch.

I would remind my colleagues of a point that was specifically highlighted by the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness in his address to the House on the bill. The mandate of this committee is very broad. If we look carefully at the language of the legislation under section 8, it says that the committee's mandate is to review:

> (a) the legislative, regulatory, policy, administrative and financial framework for national security and intelligence;
>
> (b) any activity carried out by a department that relates to national security or intelligence, unless the appropriate Minister determines that the review would be injurious to national security; and
>
> (c) any matter relating to national security or intelligence that a minister of the Crown refers to the Committee.

Therefore, the oversight role, the review role, is very broad as set out specifically in the act. However, I would point out that the purpose of this piece of legislation is to do exactly that, to review the broad mandates of our national security and intelligence agencies. It is not to go and delve into the specific operational endeavours of the military or our police services to examine specific matters that are of a specific ongoing operational nature. I would submit that falls within the purview of the government's executive branch, to execute, in real time, responses to potential national security threats and to deal with those instances. The role of the committee is to look at these particularly broad mandates.

Some of the committee's other mandates are to review that our security and intelligence services have the right legislative tools, that the resources appropriated to our national security agencies are appropriate, that we have the appropriate interagency co-operation, and that the legislative framework allows for that appropriate exchange of information. I would also argue that it has to deal with some of the concerns that the third party has advanced, which is to ensure that the appropriate procedural and substantive protections are afforded to individuals who may be impacted by the actions of our security agencies.

● (1705)

I believe those are the appropriate measures of review, not the actual review of specific ongoing operational issues. The way I would frame it is that the role of the committee is not to play M in MI6 in a James Bond movie. Its role is to provide oversight and a check on the exercise of executive authority.

The second theme I wanted to address that I think has been overplayed by the opposition is with respect to the ability in terms of both access to information and the ability to redact information. Again, I would invite my colleagues on the opposite side to carefully review the actual language in the bill as it relates to those specific limitations.

Let me take, for example, the provisions that are dealt with under the access to information provisions in clauses 13 and 14, particularly as they relate to the exceptions under section 14. My colleagues on the other side have noted that there are seven exceptions, and they refer to them as being problematic. However, if we examine them carefully, they are very narrowly construed. Basically, they are construed with respect to other rights and immunities and privileges of other classes of persons other than parliamentarians.

Again, I think it is a bit of a mis-characterization that the supremacy of Parliament and the role of parliamentarians somehow supersedes the rights, privileges, and immunities of other classes of persons. I do not think that is a fair characterization. I think we have to always constantly engage and make sure that there is a balance.

We can take a look at the seven specific provisions in section 14. The first one is "a confidence of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada, as defined in subsection 39(2) of the Canada Evidence Act". In plain English, that means cabinet confidences. The question is whether parliamentarians should be subject and be able to access information as it relates to the deliberations of cabinet. Again, I think not.

The second one refers to "information respecting ongoing defence intelligence activities supporting military operations". My point is that those are operational decisions. Again, I do not think that it is within the purview of the committee to be reviewing ongoing military action.

The third is "information the disclosure of which is described in subsection 11(1) of the Witness Protection Program Act". If somebody goes into the witness protection program, I do not think we need to know the identity of who that particular individual is.

The fourth is "the identity of a person who...has been approached to be...a confidential source of information, intelligence or assistance to the Government of Canada". Therefore, if somebody is prepared to spy on behalf of Canada, again, I do not think we need to have that specific type of information.

The fifth one is "information relating directly to an ongoing investigation". Again, that is an operational matter. We can certainly look at it retrospectively and review if there was a problem, but I do not think that this committee should be in a position to compromise an ongoing active investigation.

The sixth is information related to the Investment Canada Act, and seventh is information relating to the Financial Transactions and Reports Analysis Centre of Canada under the Proceeds of Crime (Money Laundering) and Terrorist Financing Act. Again, if we look at these particular sections, they are very narrowly construed.

Therefore, the exceptions that are articulated in the bill are very narrow. Again, I would argue that these are very narrow areas that are carved out, and that the mandate of the committee is in fact very broad.

The other point that has been raised is with respect to subclause 21 (5), the writing of reports and the Prime Minister's capacity to edit the reports.

Again, I invite my colleagues to read subclause 21(5) carefully with respect to what it means. It does not mean that the Prime Minister rewrites the report. It means that a report that has been received by the Prime Minister is reviewed to make sure there is no sensitive confidential information that is then subsequently disclosed to the public. It is this information alone that would be redacted. Through consultation with the chair that information would be subject to review and allowed to be redacted on the basis of national security, on the basis that it might be injurious to international relations, or that the information is confidential because of solicitor-client privilege.

● (1710)

Again, it is very narrowly construed. I simply submit that to my colleagues—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Unfortunately, time has expired, but I am sure the member will have an opportunity to finish his thoughts in the question and answer period.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Provencher.

Mr. Ted Falk (Provencher, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank my friend from Scarborough—Agincourt for his in-depth analysis of the way he perceives Bill C-22. I would suggest that Bill C-22 is a token gesture on behalf of the Liberal government to comply with the campaign promise that it made.

I was on the public safety committee last year when Bill C-51 came through and I think the Conservative government at the time did a very good job of presenting a piece of legislation that was effective and a useful tool for our security organizations. It better enabled them to do the job that they do, and as we can see, we have had very good results in Canada.

I am wondering if the member would agree that the committee could be strengthened in a couple of ways. First, I see a weakness in the fact that members are appointed by one individual, the chair is appointed by one individual, and one individual can redact any information provided by the committee by way of report. I see that as a weakness, and I am wondering if the member would see a benefit to there being more openness, more transparency, and more electability among parliamentarians.

● (1715)

Mr. Arnold Chan: Madam Speaker, I raised a point earlier in questions and comments with respect to the mis-characterization of the nature of this committee. I think all of us are thinking that this is a parliamentary committee. It is not a parliamentary committee. It is a non-parliamentary committee that, admittedly, is subject to a check and balance by the political executive, but membership must be based upon being a parliamentarian. Up to seven of the members must be members of the current House of Commons and two must be senators.

I take the earlier point that the member for Durham, for example, had advanced. The purpose of this committee is to work in a non-partisan fashion and to ensure that the ultimate aim is, first and foremost, the protection of our citizenry and to provide a strong national security apparatus, while at the same time, balancing the important rights and freedoms of individuals.

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Beloeil—Chambly, NDP): Madam Speaker, I heard my colleague allude to the fact that it was okay to give the Prime Minister this discretionary power over redacting reports, because it could be done in consultation with the chair, so I ask my colleague this. Does that not, then, raise the concern about the chair being hand-picked by the Prime Minister and not being elected by the members of the committee?

Our cousins from the U.K. visited us last week and the Conservative MP who chairs that committee talked about the successful model they have and the fight they had to elect the chair. Is that not something the member would be willing to consider?

Mr. Arnold Chan: Madam Speaker, as I said, I want to again clarify that this is not about the Prime Minister having the capacity to edit the report or the findings. It is simply about redacting information that, ultimately, is deemed to be potentially injurious to national security. It is not to, in any way, circumscribe the strength of the committee in terms of its ability to engage in a review of the security apparatus of the country.

As it relates to the selection of the chair, at the end of the day, with all due respect, we carry the majority on this side of the House. We could ultimately elect whatever chair the majority chooses to elect. Ultimately, what is important is that we go through a process to make sure that every qualified member who sits on this particular committee goes through the appropriate security clearance process and serves with the mindset that they are there to serve in the national interest in a national security review for the benefit of all Canadians.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Beloeil—Chambly, NDP): Madam Speaker, this is hardly my first speech in the House, but it is my first as public safety critic, and it is my pleasure to speak to such a crucial bill.

This is one of the many elements we debated during the previous Parliament in the context of Bill C-51 and the parties' election promises. I want to make it clear that we have a lot of criticisms, which I will cover in my speech.

We are willing to support the bill at second reading simply because it is a good first step. The NDP has long believed that we need to create this committee. However, there are some serious problems with the government's approach.

[*English*]

Before we get into the composition of the committee, I think it is important to point out many of the inconsistencies in the government's approach to this particular file, whenever it comes to proposing anything. We still have not heard, despite the minister's great grocery list in question period yesterday, what the actual plan is. There is no bill before the House, despite a lot of talk, as is becoming far too typical on the part of the government.

Well, there is one bill, the bill from my colleague, the member for Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, which seeks to repeal Bill C-51.

That said, we are hearing about all these grand plans from the government to bring specific changes, with no actual legislative plan in place.

[*Translation*]

The other problem is that we can form committees, create all sorts of mechanisms, but the fact is some already exist. One that springs to mind is the Security Intelligence Review Committee. That committee, which currently exists, reviews the activities of CSIS. The way things stand right now, in light of the budget the government brought down in March 2016 and according to the employees of that very committee, funding is expected to drop by $2.5 million annually. Over the next few years, this will lead to the loss of 11 employees assigned to overseeing CSIS. We can certainly form a committee, but we are definitely starting off on the wrong foot if resources are lacking due to budget cuts.

● (1720)

[*English*]

The other big issue is one that has come up a few times. With all kidding aside, we have been parsing the words. The Minister of Foreign Affairs seems to want us to distinguish between “discussions” and “negotiations”. In this regard, I would like the government to understand the difference between “review” and “oversight”. These are not the same thing, despite some of the speeches we are hearing from our colleagues on the other side of the House.

The key to protecting Canadians' rights and freedoms is to have proper oversight, not after-the-fact “review” done at the behest of the minister and the Prime Minister. This word “review” is the other one we seem to be having to parse, in response to the answer given by my colleague in the previous speech.

I will concede that the reports might not be edited, but it will be hard to figure them out under all the black Sharpie that will be left by the Prime Minister on the grounds of national security. That is cause for concern.

[*Translation*]

After all, the MPs on this committee will swear an oath and be trustworthy. The bill gives the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness and the Prime Minister a lot of discretion and that makes me think of the Conservatives' argument when we were debating Bill C-51 during the last Parliament.

The Conservatives argued, or at least strongly implied, that we needed to trust the authorities, that we could not trust parliamentarians to do this type of review, and that independent committees already existed.

I find it downright disturbing because giving cabinet that much power reminds me of the Conservatives' argument. Again, though the government may have changed colours, its approach remains the same.

As I said, we support the bill at second reading so that we can try to make some important changes. At the end of the day, we cannot say no to forming this committee because, after all, it is what we wanted. Nonetheless, there are some serious flaws that need to be corrected, as I said from the outset.

Clearly, the first flaw is the election of the chair. Ultimately, the chair will ensure that the committee will be independent, which will be difficult if the chair is chosen by the Prime Minister.

[*English*]

As I mentioned in my earlier question, we heard from our cousins from the U.K., when they came here at the invitation of the minister himself last week. They shared with us how important it was in the debate they had when creating a similar committee that the chair be elected. I heard the argument from my Liberal colleague before that this does not matter, because the opposition members will be in the majority on the committee anyway. That is not the issue here. The issue is not about which party is the majority. The issue is not leaving it up to cabinet who is carrying the committee. Parliamentarians from all parties need to have a say. I have no doubt that the Liberal members of the committee will make a wise choice to ensure the independence of the committee, much more independence than when it is coming down from the PMO.

[*Translation*]

We will have to make another important change. Once again, I am going back to the points I raised earlier. I am referring to the discretionary authority granted the minister and the Prime Minister. We have serious concerns about this and we want to debate it.

I am taking the opportunity to return to yesterday's news and the Privacy Commissioner's report.

[*English*]

I will read one excerpt from the chapter on Bill C-51 in the Privacy Commissioner's report. He said:

> While our Office welcomed legislation to create a Parliamentary committee to oversee matters related to national security as a positive first step, we have also recommended expert or administrative independent review or oversight of institutions permitted to receive information for national security purposes.

What that says, and I certainly hope it will not be the case, is that the government cannot sit on its laurels now that it has tabled this bill. This is only one piece of a far larger, more complicated puzzle.

● (1725)

[*Translation*]

Nonetheless, the position of inspector general of CSIS was eliminated by the Conservative government. The NDP has been asking for a long time that this position be re-established to allow greater independent oversight by people who, unlike us parliamentarians, have some expertise in the matter. Those two items are closely related and that is the important thing.

To bolster this argument, I will mention the minister's response concerning the government's approach when we asked him about the ministerial directives concerning torture. I am taking this opportunity to officially state in the house that the NDP is calling for the repeal of these directives, because it is completely unacceptable that a country like Canada allows the use of information acquired through torture. The practice does not benefit public safety in the least, and quite frankly, it is immoral and goes against our international commitments.

When we asked the minister the question, he told us not to worry and that the government would establish a committee to deal with such questions and provide oversight. Come on. It is ludicrous to claim that striking a committee makes it okay to keep such a directive in place.

[*English*]

I will say this with all due respect, because it is worth repeating in both official languages that we in the New Democratic Party absolutely want to see this ministerial directive that allows for the use of information on torture taken off the books and gone. It is completely unacceptable that in a country like Canada, we would even ponder using that kind of information. This is not information that will ensure the safety of Canadians and it goes against our values and our international commitments. I will say once again, when the minister stands in the House and says that it is okay, because they have Bill C-22 and we should not worry because all of these things will be supervised, that is absurd. The Liberals are using the bill as an escape hatch, and we do not want to see that.

[*Translation*]

It is important to understand that this is a first step in the right direction. Although the bill before us may be vague and flawed, it is in keeping with the concept that was also proposed by the NDP. This is one of many issues that were raised in the debate on Bill C-51. I hope that the members opposite will listen to what we have to say.

I repeat that we are trusting the Liberal members who sit on this committee to elect a chair and access the information without the Prime Minister exercising his veto power and covering that information up with a big black marker.

After all, we certainly do not want Bill C-22 to become an excuse for not repealing or making major changes to Bill C-51, which violates the rights and freedoms of Canadians.

[*English*]

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister (Intergovernmental Affairs), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I welcome the constructive comments across the way toward the goal we all share of making sure that we have as effective and as strong a set of oversight provisions as possible.

The concern that was raised and needs to be explored is that there is an assumption that if we fix Bill C-51, we will have fixed the problem. We know that Bill C-51 touches more than 60 pieces of legislation and that oversight is not part of that bill and, therefore, that it has to stand alone in another bill. We also know that there are wider-ranging issues out there that extend beyond Bill C-51, if we are going to upgrade and update our rules and regulations around public safety.

Would they not agree that the consultations under way on the full range of public safety is the most responsible way to do it? Bringing those back to full public hearings and full parliamentary hearings is a massive change from the previous government, because it allows for full public input as we move forward with better legislation.

Mr. Matthew Dubé: Madam Speaker, I certainly hope that my colleague will speak to his constituents, because I have no doubt that folks in Toronto want to see Bill C-51 repealed as soon as possible.

However, I will address his questions about the consultation that is happening now by quoting the Privacy Commissioner in the press release that accompanied his report yesterday. Commissioner Therrien said:

> The scope of these consultations is too narrow. They don't appear to be looking at key privacy concerns related to Bill C-51, such as the inadequate legal standards which allow for excessive information-sharing.

That quote speaks for itself. We welcome consultation, but what was promised in the last election campaign was consultation on a concrete proposal. There are no concrete proposals before the House except the one from the NDP asking for the repeal of Bill C-51.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I want to advise the member that he will have three minutes left in his question and comment period the next time this item is before the House.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

● (1730)

[*English*]

CRIMINAL CODE (PASSIVE DETECTION DEVICE)

The House resumed from September 21, consideration of the motion that Bill C-247, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (passive detection device), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): It being 5:30 p.m., the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at second reading stage of Bill C-247 under private members' business.

Call in the members.

● (1810)

[*Translation*]

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

(Division No. 110)

YEAS

Members

Alghabra	Alleslev
Amos	Anandasangaree
Angus	Arseneault
Arya	Ashton
Aubin	Badawey
Bains	Barsalou-Duval
Baylis	Beaulieu
Beech	Benson
Bibeau	Bittle
Blaikie	Boissonnault
Bossio	Boudrias
Boutin-Sweet	Bratina
Breton	Brison
Brosseau	Caesar-Chavannes
Cannings	Caron
Carr	Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)
Casey (Charlottetown)	Champagne
Chan	Chen
Choquette	Christopherson
Cormier	Cuzner
Damoff	Davies
Dhillon	Di Iorio
Drouin	Dubé
Dubourg	Duclos
Duguid	Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)
Dusseault	Duvall
Dzerowicz	Easter
Ehsassi	El-Khoury
Ellis	Erskine-Smith
Eyolfson	Fergus
Fillmore	Fisher
Fonseca	Foote
Fragiskatos	Fraser (West Nova)
Fraser (Central Nova)	Freeland
Fuhr	Garrison
Genuis	Gerretsen
Gill	Goldsmith-Jones
Goodale	Gould
Graham	Grewal
Hajdu	Hardie
Harvey	Hehr
Holland	Housefather
Hughes	Hussen
Hutchings	Iacono
Jolibois	Jones
Jordan	Jowhari
Julian	Kang
Khalid	Khera
Kwan	Lametti
Lamoureux	Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)
Laverdière	LeBlanc
Lebouthillier	Lemieux
Leslie	Levitt
Lightbound	Lockhart
Long	Longfield

MacAulay (Cardigan)
MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Maloney
Masse (Windsor West)
Mathyssen
McCallum
McGuinty
McKenna
McLeod (Northwest Territories)
Mihychuk
Morrissey
Murray
Nassif
O'Connell
Oliver
Ouellette
Pauzé
Petitpas Taylor
Picard
Poissant
Rankin
Robillard
Rota
Rusnak
Saini
Samson
Sansoucy
Schiefke
Serré
Shanahan
Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)
Sikand
Sorbara
Stetski
Tabbara
Tassi
Tootoo
Vandal
Virani
Wilson-Raybould
Young
MacGregor
Malcolmson
Marcil
Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)
May (Cambridge)
McCrimmon
McKay
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
Mendicino
Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Soeurs)
Mulcair
Nantel
Nault
Oliphant
O'Regan
Paradis
Peterson
Philpott
Plamondon
Qualtrough
Rioux
Rodriguez
Ruimy
Saganash
Sajjan
Sangha
Sarai
Schulte
Sgro
Sheehan
Sidhu (Brampton South)
Sohi
Spengemann
Stewart
Tan
Thériault
Trudel
Vaughan
Wilkinson
Wrzesnewskyj
Zahid– — 192

NAYS

Members

Aboultaif
Albrecht
Ambrose
Bergen
Block
Brown
Carrie
Clarke
Cooper
Dreeshen
Falk
Généreux
Godin
Harder
Jeneroux
Kitchen
Lake
Lebel
Liepert
MacKenzie
McColeman
Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound)
Nicholson
O'Toole
Poilievre
Rempel
Saroya
Schmale
Shipley
Sorenson
Stubbs
Tilson
Van Loan
Viersen
Warkentin
Waugh
Wong
Albas
Allison
Barlow
Bezan
Boucher
Calkins
Chong
Clement
Diotte
Eglinski
Fast
Gladu
Gourde
Hoback
Kent
Kmiec
Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Leitch
Lobb
Maguire
McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)
Nater
Nuttall
Paul-Hus
Rayes
Richards
Scheer
Shields
Sopuck
Stanton
Sweet
Trost
Vecchio
Wagantall
Watts
Webber
Yurdiga
Zimmer– — 75

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried. Accordingly, the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights.

(Bill read the second time and referred to a committee)

* * *

CANADA LABOUR CODE

The House resumed from September 22 consideration of the motion that Bill C-234, An Act to amend the Canada Labour Code (replacement workers), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at second reading stage of Bill C-234, under private members' business.

● (1820)

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

(Division No. 111)

YEAS

Members

Angus
Aubin
Beaulieu
Blaikie
Boutin-Sweet
Brosseau
Caron
Christopherson
Davies
Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)
Duvall
Gill
Jolibois
Kwan
MacGregor
Marcil
Mathyssen
Nantel
Plamondon
Rota
Sansoucy
Stewart
Thériault
Vaughan– — 47
Ashton
Barsalou-Duval
Benson
Boudrias
Bratina
Cannings
Choquette
Damoff
Dubé
Dusseault
Garrison
Hughes
Julian
Laverdière
Malcolmson
Masse (Windsor West)
Mulcair
Pauzé
Rankin
Saganash
Stetski
Tassi
Trudel

NAYS

Members

Aboultaif
Albrecht
Alleslev
Ambrose
Anandasangaree
Arya
Bains
Baylis
Bergen
Bibeau
Block
Bossio
Breton
Brown
Calkins
Carrie
Casey (Charlottetown)
Albas
Alghabra
Allison
Amos
Arseneault
Badawey
Barlow
Beech
Bezan
Bittle
Boissonnault
Boucher
Brison
Caesar-Chavannes
Carr
Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)
Champagne

Chan
Chen
Chong
Clarke
Clement
Cooper
Cormier
Cuzner
Dhillon
Di Iorio
Diotte
Dreeshen
Drouin
Dubourg
Duclos
Duguid
Dzerowicz
Easter
Eglinski
Ehsassi
El-Khoury
Ellis
Erskine-Smith
Eyolfson
Falk
Fast
Fergus
Fillmore
Fisher
Fonseca
Foote
Fragiskatos
Fraser (West Nova)
Fraser (Central Nova)
Freeland
Fuhr
Généreux
Genuis
Gerretsen
Gladu
Godin
Goldsmith-Jones
Goodale
Gould
Gourde
Graham
Grewal
Hajdu
Harder
Hardie
Harvey
Hehr
Hoback
Holland
Housefather
Hussen
Hutchings
Iacono
Jeneroux
Jordan
Jowhari
Kang
Kent
Khalid
Khera
Kitchen
Kmiec
Lake
Lametti
Lamoureux
Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)
Lebel
LeBlanc
Lebouthillier
Leitch
Leslie
Levitt
Liepert
Lightbound
Lobb
Lockhart
Long
Longfield
MacAulay (Cardigan)
MacKenzie
MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Maguire
Maloney
Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)
May (Cambridge)
McCallum
McColeman
McCrimmon
McGuinty
McKay
McKenna
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)
McLeod (Northwest Territories)
Mendicino
Mihychuk
Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound)
Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Soeurs)
Morrissey
Murray
Nassif
Nater
Nault
Nicholson
Nuttall
O'Connell
Oliphant
Oliver
O'Regan
O'Toole
Ouellette
Paradis
Paul-Hus
Peterson
Petitpas Taylor
Philpott
Picard
Poilievre
Poissant
Qualtrough
Rayes
Rempel
Richards
Rioux
Robillard
Rodriguez
Ruimy
Rusnak
Saini
Sajjan
Samson
Sangha
Sarai
Saroya
Scheer
Schmale
Schulte
Serré
Sgro
Shanahan
Sheehan
Shields
Shipley
Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)
Sidhu (Brampton South)
Sikand
Sohi
Sopuck
Sorbara
Sorenson
Spengemann
Stanton
Stubbs
Sweet
Tabbara
Tan
Tilson
Tootoo
Trost
Van Loan
Vandal
Vecchio
Viersen
Virani
Wagantall
Warkentin
Watts
Waugh
Webber
Wilkinson
Wilson-Raybould
Wong
Wrzesnewskyj
Young
Yurdiga
Zahid
Zimmer– — 217

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

* * *

[*English*]

INFRASTRUCTURE

The House resumed from September 26 consideration of the motion.

The Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the amendment to Motion No. 45.

The question is as follows. Shall I dispense?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

[*Chair read text of amendment to House*]

● (1830)

[*Translation*]

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

(Division No. 112)

YEAS

Members

Alghabra
Alleslev
Amos
Anandasangaree
Angus
Arseneault
Arya
Ashton
Aubin
Badawey
Bains
Baylis
Beech
Benson
Bibeau
Bittle
Blaikie
Boissonnault
Bossio
Boutin-Sweet
Bratina
Breton
Brison
Brosseau
Caesar-Chavannes
Cannings
Caron
Carr
Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)
Casey (Charlottetown)
Champagne
Chan
Chen
Choquette
Christopherson
Cormier
Cuzner
Dabrusin
Damoff
Davies
Dhillon
Di Iorio
Drouin
Dubé
Dubourg
Duclos
Duguid
Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)
Dusseault
Duvall
Dzerowicz
Easter
Ehsassi
El-Khoury
Ellis
Erskine-Smith
Eyolfson
Fergus
Fillmore
Fisher
Fonseca
Foote
Fragiskatos
Fraser (West Nova)
Fraser (Central Nova)
Freeland
Fuhr
Garrison

Gerretsen
Goodale
Graham
Hajdu
Harvey
Holland
Hughes
Hutchings
Jolibois
Jordan
Julian
Khalid
Kwan
Lamoureux
Laverdière
Leboutthillier
Levitt
Lockhart
Longfield
MacGregor
Malcolmson
Masse (Windsor West)
Mathyssen
McCallum
McGuinty
McKenna
McLeod (Northwest Territories)
Mihychuk
Morrissey
Murray
Nassif
O'Connell
Oliver
Ouellette
Peterson
Philpott
Poissant
Rankin
Robillard
Rota
Rusnak
Saini
Samson
Sansoucy
Schulte
Sgro
Sheehan
Sidhu (Brampton South)
Sohi
Spengemann
Stewart
Tan
Tootoo
Vandal
Virani
Wilson-Raybould
Young
Goldsmith-Jones
Gould
Grewal
Hardie
Hehr
Housefather
Hussen
Iacono
Jones
Jowhari
Kang
Khera
Lametti
Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)
LeBlanc
Leslie
Lightbound
Long
MacAulay (Cardigan)
MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Maloney
Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)
May (Cambridge)
McCrimmon
McKay
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
Mendicino
Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Soeurs)
Mulcair
Nantel
Nault
Oliphant
O'Regan
Paradis
Petitpas Taylor
Picard
Qualtrough
Rioux
Rodriguez
Ruimy
Saganash
Sajjan
Sangha
Sarai
Serré
Shanahan
Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)
Sikand
Sorbara
Stetski
Tabbara
Tassi
Trudel
Vaughan
Wilkinson
Wrzesnewskyj
Zahid– — 182

NAYS

Members

Aboultaif
Albrecht
Ambrose
Barsalou-Duval
Bergen
Block
Boudrias
Calkins
Chong
Clement
Diotte
Eglinski
Fast
Genuis
Gladu
Gourde
Hoback
Kent
Kmiec
Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Leitch
Albas
Allison
Barlow
Beaulieu
Bezan
Boucher
Brown
Carrie
Clarke
Cooper
Dreeshen
Falk
Généreux
Gill
Godin
Harder
Jeneroux
Kitchen
Lake
Lebel
Liepert
Lobb
Maguire
McColeman
Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound)
Nicholson
O'Toole
Pauzé
Poilievre
Rempel
Saroya
Schmale
Shipley
Sorenson
Stubbs
Thériault
Trost
Vecchio
Wagantall
Watts
Webber
Yurdiga
MacKenzie
Marcil
McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)
Nater
Nuttall
Paul-Hus
Plamondon
Rayes
Richards
Scheer
Shields
Sopuck
Stanton
Sweet
Tilson
Van Loan
Viersen
Warkentin
Waugh
Wong
Zimmer– — 84

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the amendment carried.

[*English*]

The next question is on the main motion, as amended. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion, as amended?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Speaker: All those in favour of the motion, as amended, 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:

● (1840)

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

(Division No. 113)

YEAS

Members

Alghabra
Amos
Angus
Arya
Aubin
Bains
Beech
Bibeau
Blaikie
Bossio
Bratina
Brison
Caesar-Chavannes
Caron
Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)
Champagne
Chen
Christopherson
Cuzner
Damoff
Alleslev
Anandasangaree
Arseneault
Ashton
Badawey
Baylis
Benson
Bittle
Boissonnault
Boutin-Sweet
Breton
Brosseau
Cannings
Carr
Casey (Charlottetown)
Chan
Choquette
Cormier
Dabrusin
Davies

Dhillon
Drouin
Dubourg
Duguid
Dusseault
Dzerowicz
Ehsassi
Ellis
Eyolfson
Fillmore
Fonseca
Fragiskatos
Fraser (Central Nova)
Fuhr
Gerretsen
Goodale
Graham
Hajdu
Harvey
Holland
Hughes
Hutchings
Jolibois
Jordan
Julian
Khalid
Kwan
Lamoureux
Laverdière
Lebouthillier
Leslie
Lightbound
Long
MacAulay (Cardigan)
MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Maloney
Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)
Mathyssen
May (Cambridge)
McCrimmon
McKay
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
Mihychuk
Morrissey
Murray
Nassif
O'Connell
Oliver
Ouellette
Peterson
Philpott
Poissant
Rankin
Robillard
Rota
Rusnak
Saini
Samson
Sansoucy
Schulte
Sgro
Sheehan
Sidhu (Brampton South)
Sohi
Spengemann
Stewart
Tan
Tootoo
Vandal
Virani
Wilson-Raybould
Young
Di Iorio
Dubé
Duclos
Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)
Duvall
Easter
El-Khoury
Erskine-Smith
Fergus
Fisher
Foote
Fraser (West Nova)
Freeland
Garrison
Goldsmith-Jones
Gould
Grewal
Hardie
Hehr
Housefather
Hussen
Iacono
Jones
Jowhari
Kang
Khera
Lametti
Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)
LeBlanc
Lemieux
Levitt
Lockhart
Longfield
MacGregor
Malcolmson
Masse (Windsor West)
McCallum
McGuinty
McKenna
Mendicino
Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Soeurs)
Mulcair
Nantel
Nault
Oliphant
O'Regan
Paradis
Petitpas Taylor
Picard
Qualtrough
Rioux
Rodriguez
Ruimy
Saganash
Sajjan
Sangha
Sarai
Serré
Shanahan
Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)
Sikand
Sorbara
Stetski
Tabbara
Tassi
Trudel
Vaughan
Wilkinson
Wrzesnewskyj
Zahid– — 182

NAYS

Members

Aboultaif
Albrecht
Ambrose
Barsalou-Duval
Bergen
Block
Albas
Allison
Barlow
Beaulieu
Bezan
Boucher
Boudrias
Calkins
Chong
Clement
Diotte
Eglinski
Fast
Genuis
Gladu
Gourde
Hoback
Kent
Kmiec
Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Leitch
Lobb
Maguire
McColeman
Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound)
Nicholson
O'Toole
Pauzé
Poilievre
Rempel
Saroya
Schmale
Shipley
Sorenson
Stubbs
Thériault
Trost
Vecchio
Wagantall
Watts
Webber
Yurdiga
Brown
Carrie
Clarke
Cooper
Dreeshen
Falk
Généreux
Gill
Godin
Harder
Jeneroux
Kitchen
Lake
Lebel
Liepert
MacKenzie
Marcil
McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)
Nater
Nuttall
Paul-Hus
Plamondon
Rayes
Richards
Scheer
Shields
Sopuck
Stanton
Sweet
Tilson
Van Loan
Viersen
Warkentin
Waugh
Wong
Zimmer– — 84

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion, as amended, carried.

Order, please. Immediately before the first vote, I saw a stranger on the floor of the House. I am advised that there was another stranger who was also behind the curtains. They quickly left. However, there are new members here since a year ago, I suppose, and there are new staff perhaps. I want members to make it very clear to their staff that they are not to set foot on the floor of this chamber when the House is sitting. I have arranged to speak to both of them momentarily.

It being 6:42 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business, as listed on today's order paper.

* * *

MODERNIZING ANIMAL PROTECTIONS ACT

The House resumed from May 9 consideration of the motion that Bill C-246, An Act to amend the Criminal Code, the Fisheries Act, the Textile Labelling Act, the Wild Animal and Plant Protection and Regulation of International and Interprovincial Trade Act and the Canada Consumer Product Safety Act (animal protection), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak in support of Bill C-246, proposed to ensure laws that prevent animal cruelty, shark finning, and the sale of products made from pet fur.

Because Canada's laws on offences against animals have not been substantively changed since 1892, constituents such as Robin Fru and Judy Daviduk, of Nanaimo, are urging me to move mountains against animal cruelty.

Large sections of this bill advance measures that New Democrats have proposed over time, and we would like to see these become law, and we would like to see the hard work of many community organizations, and parliamentarians of all stripes, recognized.

Most important to say up front is that this is about animal abuse, not animal use. The bill would not apply to lawful activities such as hunting and fishing.

The Department of Justice has been clear: this bill applies to criminal abuse, not lawful activities involving animals. However, because letter writers have conveyed to me that they fear the lawful activities of ordinary Canadians could be interpreted as being affected by this bill, we will introduce amendments to clarify that. The NDP wishes to protect the right to hunt, fish, farm, and trap legally, and we will propose amendments to clarify that. Hunters and anglers are vital conservation partners on Vancouver Island, and we need them to be part of the conversation about criminal animal cruelty.

The first part is about shark finning. Despite action by local governments to ban shark finning, Canada still imports several hundred thousand pounds of shark fins every year. This section of the bill would stop the importation of shark fins.

Thanks to the New Democrat member for Port Moody—Coquitlam, this measure came within five votes of passing in 2013. The only party that stood against it was the Conservative Party, even though 81% of Canadians polled supported a shark fin ban at that time.

One of the most comprehensive studies on shark fisheries was compiled recently at Dalhousie University, in Halifax. In it, scientists estimated that at least 100 million sharks are killed every year around the world. It may be 273 million each year. The study found that shark populations are being depleted faster than they can reproduce. This threatens the stability of marine ecosystems around the world.

The largest culprit is the illegal shark fin harvest, which feeds a growing demand for shark fin soup. Sharks are hooked out of the ocean onto boats and their fins are sliced off while they are still alive. The rest of the shark is discarded into the ocean, where, unable to swim without its fins, it sinks helplessly to the bottom to die. This powerful image was conveyed in the documentary *Sharkwater*. It was horrific carnage that I will not forget.

While sharks have survived earth's mass extinctions for over 400 million years, many shark species could be extinct within decades. A major environmental issue associated with shark finning is that the harvest is not specific to gender, size, or species. Therefore, we cannot target harvests to avoid endangered species, as we do with conservation-oriented fisheries.

A further biological complication is that sharks are naturally slow to breed and mature. This makes sharks particularly vulnerable to overfishing, and it makes extinction for many shark species increasingly likely.

This is why extinction would be absolutely terrible. Shark extinctions would significantly alter ocean ecosystems, and they likely already have, because sharks are vitally important apex predators. Like wolves and lions, their terrestrial counterparts, top predators control the population of grazers below them in the food chain. If left unchecked, this can destabilize entire ecosystems.

Specifically, sharks reduce the over-consumption and depletion of plankton by herbivorous fish. This is relevant to the pressing issue of climate change, because plankton are a carbon sink. Plankton absorb carbon, and when plankton die, they sink the carbon to the bottom of the ocean, where it sits. Without sharks, plankton populations will become depleted, meaning more acidic oceans and more carbon in the atmosphere.

Shark extinctions will exacerbate climate change. The health of the oceans, the climate of the planet, and ultimately the survival of our species might depend on sharks.

● (1845)

If by any chance people still believe the myth that sharks are bloodthirsty human eaters and ruthless killers that might harm our species, I will share this compelling stat with them. More people are killed each year by falling vending machines than by shark attacks. I ask members to please come together and support the ban on shark-fin imports for all our sake.

The second part of this bill includes provisions to strengthen and modernize existing animal cruelty offences. These provisions have been advanced by many members of Parliament, including former New Democrat, Peggy Nash. They passed third reading in the House several times, and they were once even approved in the Senate. These changes are needed. For example, a man was acquitted of beating his dog to death by a baseball bat, but he was acquitted because the dog died quickly. As well, wilful neglect of domestic animals has been hard to prove. This bill today, instead, proposes a gross negligence offence for failing to provide adequate care, where an individual is found to have departed markedly from a standard of care that a reasonable person would use.

Finally, in this bill, the courts would be allowed to impose a lifetime ownership ban on repeat offenders of animal cruelty. Ninety-two per cent of Canadians polled support updating the Criminal Code to make it easier to secure convictions for animal cruelty offences. I hope parliamentarians will stand with these people.

The final part of the bill proposes to ban the sale of cat and dog fur, and also to require source labelling of fur. This would match the laws in the U.S. and the European Union. A 2012 *Toronto Star* investigation revealed that cat and dog fur is used in children's toys, boots, and in trim on coats. Three NDP MPs have previously attempted the measures contained in this bill to ban the sale of that fur and to require source labelling for cat and dog fur.

In conclusion, I want to say again that this bill is not about hunting and fishing. If it were, I would not support it. This is about animal abuse, not animal use. The bill applies to criminal abuse, not to lawful activities involving animals. My riding is built on commercial fisheries. It is full of hunters and anglers doing vital preservation work, and our riding is very dependent on recreational and sport fisheries. Because I do not want anyone to fear that lawful activities like those would ever be affected by this bill, there is an amendment we would propose in committee to clarify that this would not affect lawful hunting and fishing.

Finally, Robert Brodgesell of Ladysmith reminded me of Gandhi's words: "The greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way its animals are treated". I urge Parliament to vote together and show leadership to end animal cruelty in Canada.

● (1850)

Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to rise today as the member of Parliament for Parkdale—High Park and speak on behalf of my constituents in support of Bill C-246, legislation that would strengthen animal protection in Canada.

I want to start with a now familiar quote, "The greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way its animals are treated". That was Mahatma Gandhi. His words, uttered over half a century ago, remain as relevant today as ever. I say that because the last time animal cruelty laws were substantially changed in Canada was 1892. That was the first year Lord Stanley's cup was competed for by hockey teams in the Dominion. That was 124 years ago. Legislative change in this area is long overdue.

I applaud the member for Beaches—East York for introducing legislation that would help bring Canada's animal protection laws into the 20th century.

Before I even read Bill C-246, I heard about it from the engaged residents of my riding of Parkdale—High Park by mail, by phone, through email. I am moved by the passion and dedication of my constituents, people like Ms. Barbi Lazarus and Mr. Kirti Shah, from the Toronto Vegetarian Association. They have been advocating for fair animal treatment practices in our community and around the country for years. Mr. Shah shares the same faith as my wife, Jainism, a religion that teaches about non-violence and respect for all living things. They understand that the kinds of practices Bill C-246 would prohibit have no place in Canadian society.

However, I did not simply hear from adult advocates. In my riding, I also heard from youth. On a visit to the class of Mr. Davis Mirza, at Keele Street Junior Public School, I heard from grades 5 and 6 students about their concerns. They were shocked to learn how long it had been since changes were made to Canada's laws respecting animals. They demanded that we, as parliamentarians, do better to ensure our laws reflect the values of all Canadians, including our young people who care deeply about animal welfare.

I have listened to the concerns of my constituents, and I am committed to doing better by supporting this important bill, which I seconded on May 9 of this year.

However, it is not just the people in Parkdale—High Park who are concerned about animal welfare. Canadians across the country and across the political spectrum care deeply about this issue. A key indicator of this are a few facts: 5,630 people have signed e-petition 509 in support of Bill C-246; 13,000 Canadians signed e-petition 123 relating to the use of cat and dog fur; and on change.org, 48,000 signatures were collected in support of the bill.

Let us turn to the bill. Bill C-246 addresses issues that I consider, to be frank, largely uncontroversial.

First, it would ban the sale of cat and dog fur in Canada. It would require labelling that shows the source of all fur. Amazingly, in our country we do not have labelling requirements for animal fur garments. As I have learned through the advocacy of residents in my community, like Josie Candito, a tireless champion of animal rights in Parkdale—High Park, cat and dog fur is used for trim on coats, the lining in children's boots, and the exterior of toys. This is all permitted to occur because we do not have the necessary prohibitions in place. Bill C-246 would change this.

Second, Bill C-246 would ban the importation of shark fins. I venture to guess that most Canadians are unaware of what shark finning actually involves. Let me explain it briefly. Shark finning is the practice of catching a shark, cutting off its fin, and simply discarding the remainder of the shark's body back into the ocean. The still live, finless shark is completely unable to swim, sinks to the bottom of the ocean, and drowns. This heinous practice has been illegal in Canada since 1994, but the importation of shark fins continues unabated.

● (1855)

[*Translation*]

In 2015 alone, 318,000 pounds of shark fins were imported into Canada. Municipalities such as Calgary and Toronto banned the importation of shark fins, but their bans were overturned in court because they were not under municipal jurisdiction. The court ruled that only the federal government has the power to impose such a ban. Clearly, this is Parliament's cue to take action.

[*English*]

This brings me to my third point in relation to the bill. Bill C-246 also answers the Supreme Court's call for clarity on the issue of bestiality. Allow me to explain.

In the case of D.L.W., our Supreme Court acquitted a man accused of bestiality where the sexual conduct involved a dog and the man's teenager stepdaughter. Because the act in question involved a disturbing act of oral sex and not physical penetration, the Supreme Court of Canada overturned the man's conviction.

In his majority ruling, Justice Cromwell said:

> The term bestiality has a well-established legal meaning and refers to sexual intercourse between a human and an animal.... It is manifestly not the role of the courts to expand that definition. Any expansion of criminal liability for this offence is within Parliament's exclusive domain.

As can be imagined, the public response to this decision was incredulous, not because of the judge's interpretation—Justice Cromwell was simply applying the law—but because the actual definition of bestiality was so narrow. We do not need to be lawyers, we just need to apply some common sense to recognize that the bestiality prohibition ought to prevent all sexual acts with animals as exploitative. Whether penetration occurs or not is not the issue and should not be determinative.

That is exactly what this bill will address, a legal void. It will expand the definition of bestiality, as the Supreme Court invited this Parliament to do to cover all "sexual activity between a person and an animal". This will improve on an important goal, preventing the sexual exploitation of animals in all of its forms, a goal that I am confident all members of the House believe in pursuing.

Fourth, I would like to address some misunderstandings about this bill. Bill C-246 is geared towards preventing animal abuse. It does not affect or prohibit legitimate animal use. Therefore, in the latter category, the rights of anglers and hunters are not compromised by this bill, nor are the rights of livestock farmers.

Concerns about the impact of this bill on legal, accepted practices is unfounded. Allow me to explain. To contemplate a situation where police, conservation officers, and prosecutors across this country would somehow investigate and begin charging and prosecuting hunters, anglers, or farmers engaged in well-accepted animal practices is simply not credible. As a former crown counsel who practised law for 14 years, I know firsthand that police and prosecutors are far too preoccupied with serious criminals to use their precious, limited resources to chase after our important farmers or law-abiding anglers and hunters. Legitimate, well-accepted animal use practices are not the target of this legislation. The target is animal abuse.

Let me provide some examples. Dog fighting, for instance, is not simply a foreign problem. It has reared its ugly head recently in Tilbury East Township in Ontario, where they seized 31 pit bull-type dogs in a case involving 5 different individuals.

Another example of animal abuse is puppy mills. One such mill was discovered in Windsor this past June. A total of 14 dogs were found in the possession of a single woman, and the dogs' physical condition had seriously deteriorated. One of the dogs, a Shih Tzu, was found with six pounds of dried feces attached to its long, matted fur. Those are the types of abuse targeted by this bill.

The proposed amendments in this legislation to the animal cruelty provisions of the Criminal Code would facilitate prosecutions of animal abusers, moving the criminal standard from "wilful neglect" to "gross" or severe "negligence". In addition, this bill will close some of the loopholes that currently exist regarding animal fighting, and those who benefit economically from it. This includes criminalizing receiving money for fighting animals, and breeding, training or transporting an animal in order to fight another animal.

The fifth point that I want to make is that Bill C-246 is based on sound evidence. There are numerous studies and journal articles demonstrating that animal abuse is often a precursor to later, more serious criminal activity, including domestic violence. So there is an important public interest in enacting legislation that targets animal abuse, and works to deter such behaviour. This observation was made in previous submissions and speeches on this legislation.

By enacting Bill C-246, Parliament can deter animal abuse, which will have the derivative effect of helping to address some of the root causes of violent crime in this country, including violence against women.

I would urge members to get behind Bill C-246 not simply because it is based on sound evidence, but also because it is ethically sound. To circle back to the quote from Gandhi I mentioned at the outset:

> The greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way its animals are treated.

This observation rings true, because more so than any other unempowered group, animals are truly voiceless. They cannot advocate for themselves. By definition they require others to take up their cause. In 2016, some 124 years since the last significant change to the animal cruelty provisions in the Criminal Code, I believe it is high time we took up that call as parliamentarians. That is why I am supporting this bill.

● (1900)

Mr. Larry Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House today to speak to Bill C-246, modernizing animal protections act.

I want to start by saying that before my life in this place, I was a full-time beef farmer. All the livestock farmers I know have pets, dogs, and I was no different. Nobody has more respect for animals than those people.

I am speaking not just for myself as a parliamentarian and not just for the farmers in my riding of Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, but for farmers everywhere, and also people who hunt, fish, and trap. This is a bill that has them very concerned.

Bill C-246 is a reiteration of several other pieces of similar legislation that have come before the House over the years. Having been a member of Parliament since 2004, I can say that I have seen some variation of the bill in almost every Parliament I have been a part of. It has been voted down every single time due to concerns that it goes too far and endangers legitimate animal use. I will express these same concerns here today.

The riding I represent is a rural riding. It is home to a lot of farmers, hunters, anglers, and trappers. For the constituents of Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, animal use has always been a vital part of their everyday life. For this reason I will be speaking against the passage of Bill C-246 at second reading, as I feel that it would endanger the livelihoods of the many residents of Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound and across Canada, and possibly put an end to the number of farming, hunting, angling, and trapping traditions across Canada.

I will start by stating that I am fully supportive of legislation and initiatives that seek to promote better welfare for animals and I am in full support of harsher penalties for those who are wilfully and intentionally cruel to animals. Those who are knowingly cruel to animals should face the full force of the law. Nobody is disputing that, and anybody who opposes the bill does not dispute that aspect of it. In fact, in the last Parliament I was pleased to vote in favour of Quanto's law, which was a piece of legislation that enhanced legal protection for service animals of police agencies and the Canadian Armed Forces.

Furthermore, I note that the bill contains provisions surrounding shark finning, which again, I am opposed to, but shark finning has been illegal in Canada since 1994. We should not even be talking about it. There is no need. It is illegal already.

Overall Canada has very good animal welfare legislation at both the provincial and federal levels, but I am always open to discussing potential problem areas to ensure that animal welfare is upheld. These are not the measures with which I have great concerns.

When it comes to Bill C-246, I am concerned with four specific sections of the bill. The first is a section of the bill that moves the provision in the Criminal Code surrounding animal cruelty out of the section dealing with offences against certain property and into the section dealing with offences against persons. This could be the start of a very dangerous trend. Essentially, moving animal cruelty provisions from that section of the Criminal Code to this section of the Criminal Code begins to suggest that animals are entitled to the full rights of human beings and have the right to be represented in court. I find this deeply troubling, as it could be the beginning of the end of hunting, farming, angling, and trapping.

To put this in perspective, it does not mean we do not respect animals, but if I had to choose between one of my family, like one of my grandkids and my dog, in terms of rights, I think there is only one obvious way I would choose. I hope I never have to do so, but the bill could do that.

Furthermore, Bill C-246 contains a number of new provisions that redefine what constitutes criminal activities against animals, the first of which is the inclusion of a recklessness test that would be included alongside the wilful test. What this means is that wilfully causing harm or suffering to an animal has always been illegal, but the bill would add a new host of actions that would fall under the test of recklessly causing harm or suffering.

● (1905)

The problem here is that what constitutes recklessness is not clearly defined. Would hitting an animal with a car constitute reckless harm or suffering? We have all hit animals, or most of us have, if we drive in rural Canada. Would hitting an animal cause reckless harm or suffering? I do not think so. It is not intentional, but accidents happen.

These are the loopholes that make the bill so dangerous. I would not want to see anyone slapped with a criminal record for hitting a racoon, deer, or whatever with a car.

My greatest concern is the following provision, which I will read. Under proposed subsection 182.1(1) it says:

> Everyone commits an offence who, wilfully or recklessly,...(b) kills an animal or, being the owner, permits an animal to be killed, brutally or viciously, regardless of whether the animal dies immediately;

This opens up a very serious can of worms that would result in the criminalization of farming, hunting, angling, and trapping in Canada. The words “brutally” and “viciously” are used here to describe what could constitute an offence against animals under the Criminal Code. A major problem here is that there is no definition of what is meant by brutally or viciously. Furthermore, these terms are completely brand new to any sort of legislation related to animal cruelty in Canada, the U.K., Australia, and the U.S.

Further still, no Canadian court has ever interpreted this language, so we do not know how this will play out once this legislation comes into force. I have heard from a great number of constituents and stakeholder groups that this has the potential to criminalize any sort of animal use in Canada. The language is simply too vague. It is unacceptable.

For example, the group PETA states that animals are not ours to kill, eat, wear, experiment on, or exploit for entertainment. It would seem as though PETA would certainly claim that slaughtering cattle for beef production would constitute a brutal or vicious act against animals. There goes our agriculture industry.

PETA would most certainly state that shooting a deer, moose, or turkey would be a brutal or vicious act against animals. There goes recreational hunting in Canada. A fish with a lure in its mouth: gone is the recreational fishery. A muskrat or beaver in a trap: there goes our trapping and fur trade.

I think members see the point I am trying to make. Because the provisions in the bill are so open to interpretation, and because the interpretations are so wide-sweeping, we could see the end of many different traditions and practices related to animal use in Canada.

While I do not think it was the intent of the sponsor of the bill to criminalize these activities, it is most certainly a major problem with the legislation. Furthermore, a simple solution would have been to clearly state a list of activities that are exempt from the provisions in the legislation. This list should include ranching, farming, hunting, fishing, trapping, and medical research. This would ensure that these legal activities would not result in the handing out of criminal records for otherwise lawful activities.

Finally, I want to discuss a host of proposed changes that have been sent to me by the sponsor and that many stakeholders have been talking about. I appreciate the efforts made by the sponsor to enhance the bill and respond to concerns from the farming, hunting, angling, and trapping communities. However, there is no guarantee that these amendments will be proposed and adopted by the committee.

Therefore, at second reading, I cannot support the bill as currently drafted. I took some interest in what my colleague, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice, said when he spoke to the bill in the first hour of second reading. He stated that,

> Animal cruelty is an important social issue that deserves a comprehensive legislative response. It needs broad public consultation to allow us to get this right. The best way forward is in the review of the Criminal Code that will take place in the future. This way we can hear and attempt to address the concerns of Canadians engaged in legitimate activities of hunting, fishing, ranching, medical research, etc.

While I do not always agree with my hon. colleague on all issues, on this issue he has hit the nail right on the head. We need to consult with those who have expressed concerns about the bill so that we can ensure that we protect animal welfare in Canada in a way that does not criminalize traditions that rely on animal use.

In closing, I would like to say to the member that I truly appreciate that he tried to fix this after the fact, but he could have drafted the bill with the right kind of consultation in advance. I would be happy to work with him on something like that, and there are probably other members in my caucus who would work with him, but we just cannot support it the way it is.

● (1910)

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to speak to Bill C-246 today and I thank the member for Beaches—East York for bringing it forward. It deals with three rather loosely related issues: animal cruelty, the importation of dog and cat fur, and shark finning.

I have received a lot of feedback on this bill from constituents, most of it in favour of the bill because it seeks to strengthen animal cruelty law, but I have also heard serious concern from outdoor enthusiasts who felt that the bill might have inadvertently caught up hunting, fishing, and trapping in the web of animal cruelty provisions.

I have had meetings with three hunters' groups in my riding who expressed this concern clearly. I assured them then and I assure them again that this is certainly not the case and if it were, I could not support it. That said, I would be happy if the committee would explore amendments that would make that crystal clear, and perhaps list the legal activities that would be excluded, as the previous member stated. This is really about criminal cruelty, not legal hunting, fishing, trapping, or agriculture.

I would like to spend the rest of my time talking about the third issue dealt with in this bill, and that is shark finning. Finning is the practice of removing fins from live sharks on board fishing boats, and tossing the big animals overboard, where they die a cruel death. In that sense, finning might belong in this bill about animal cruelty, but it is really the impact on shark populations, and how that changes our ocean ecosystems that I think is a deeper concern.

Many Canadians might not know how widespread, important, and diverse sharks are in Canadian waters. There are 28 species of sharks off of our shores, most of them large predators. Some are at the top of the food chain, and play a key role in shaping our marine ecosystems. Like many large predators, they are slow growing, slow to mature, and slow to reproduce. These are all features that make their populations very sensitive to overharvest, especially the overharvest of adults.

Sharks have been suffering serious population declines in recent decades for a variety of reasons. Of the 245 species of sharks in the world, 65, more than a quarter, are on the red list compiled by the International Union for Conservation of Nature. They are at some real risk of extinction.

The Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada, COSEWIC, has assessed six species of Canadian sharks and listed three as endangered, and three as species of special concern. The two main causes of population declines are fisheries bycatch and shark finning. These two issues are related since many sharks caught in other fisheries, such as the longline fisheries for tuna and swordfish, are routinely finned and tossed back.

Estimates of the numbers of sharks finned each year are difficult to calculate, but all estimates are mind-bogglingly high. One hundred million is the standard answer, but some estimates are over twice that. This practice is changing our oceans forever. Can anyone imagine 100 million bears disappearing from our forests each year, and what that would do to our ecosystems, or what about the loss of 100 million lions from the plains of Africa?

Some species are particularly hard hit by finning. The scalloped hammerhead has declined by over 90%, one study suggesting the loss of 98%, over a period of 30 years off the east coast of North America. Data from the same coast indicates that the population of oceanic whitetip sharks, once one of the most abundant large animal species in the world's oceans, declined by over 70% between 1992 and 2000. That is 70% in only eight years. This species is rapidly becoming functionally extinct, so I heartily support this bill, and its effort to curb the trade in shark fins. It is a good first step, an essential first step, but Canada could and should be doing more on both the national and international stages to make an impact here.

The government has made a lot of effort to get the message out that Canada is back on the world environmental scene, but we are sorely lagging in many aspects of global environmental action. For example, we could be co-operating with other nations in the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas, which have been calling for meaningful bycatch limits for sharks during the tuna fishery, but both Canada and Japan have been dragging their feet on this issue.

We could take the bold step to promote the listing of all shark species in appendix II of CITES, so that the international trade in shark fins can be better regulated.

● (1915)

In our own backyard, Canada needs to reinvest in fishery science and monitoring. Setting regulations about bycatch, and creating laws about shark finning will accomplish little if there is not a significant government presence on our coasts to actually witness what is happening to our oceans.

We could put more emphasis on science, when government receives listing recommendations from COSEWIC. COSEWIC makes annual recommendations on species to add to the species at risk schedules, and government then decides whether to act or not. Bird species are almost always added as a matter of course, but fish species have only a 50-50 chance of being listed because economics often trumps the science of endangerment. We must rebalance this policy to ensure that our ocean ecosystems remain healthy into the future.

I reiterate that I will support the bill. It is about criminal acts of cruelty, not legal hunting, fishing and trapping, agriculture. I support it both for its strengthening of the animal cruelty law, and for its steps to support the conservation of sharks.

Mr. David de Burgh Graham (Laurentides—Labelle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I take no pleasure in rising today on Bill C-246.

[*Translation*]

I am, first and foremost, a rural MP. I was born in Sainte-Agathe-des-Monts. I grew up in Sainte-Lucie-des-Laurentides. At home, we grow and produce most of our own food, including vegetables and meats. Our farm participates in WWOOF, a worldwide program that matches volunteers with organic farms.

I have a fishing licence in my pocket. My father has a hunting licence. We raise chickens, ducks, and geese. We also eat a lot of game. In October, much of my riding empties out because people go deer and moose hunting. People think of the year as a succession of open seasons.

All year, farmers prepare their animals for slaughter so they can sell the meat and feed cities. That is normal, everyday life for people in the regions.

● (1920)

[*English*]

All over the world, there are legitimate reasons to raise and slaughter domestic animals or to hunt, trap, and fish wild animals. The world population of chickens, as an example, exceeds the world population of humans by a factor of about 7:1.

While there are legitimate reasons to work with animals, there are people who have abused them. For example, worldwide problems, such as puppy mills, the wonton waste of shark finning without using the rest of the animal, poaching of elephants and rhinoceroses for their ivory, allowing animals to fight, killing animals purely for sport, or slaughtering them in torturous and unethical ways are all places where the great majority of us would agree improvements must be made.

However, that is not, despite the appearance of social media pressure, the goal of Bill C-246.

The bill, as written, and as is before us here at second reading, is not a moderate bill looking to tangibly and positively improve animal welfare. It is an overreaching bill by a passionate advocate whose incredible work on this file I deeply respect, even if I do not agree. There are few members of this place ever to have put their heart and soul into a cause they believe in as completely and selflessly as the member for Beaches-East York, and I think we all respect and appreciate that .

However, that is not what is before us. What is before is a bill, not a person, and the effect of the bill is to risk criminalizing currently legal animal activity.

I do not believe my family belongs in prison for sustainably feeding ourselves. I do not believe tens of thousands of my constituents should risk prison for feeding their families, either.

We are reassured in supporting statements that the bill has no effect on currently legal activity. However, the only reassurance we have is the statements of those supporting the bill. The language of the bill itself is not so ambiguous.

Section 182.1(1)(b) reads, for example:

> Everyone commits an offence who, wilfully or recklessly,...
>
> ...kills an animal or, being the owner, permits an animal to be killed, brutally or viciously, regardless of whether the animal dies immediately;

It is easy to argue that because killing an animal necessarily results in its death, the act is inherently brutal or vicious. Bringing a legal case against anyone who kills any animal in any circumstance is therefore enabled by this act. There is no exception for aquaculture, agriculture, hunting, fishing, or even accidents, and the instantaneous death of the animal is explicitly removed as a factor for consideration.

To add insult to injury, the Criminal Code, section 429(2) currently reads:

> No person shall be convicted of an offence under sections 430 to 446 where he proves that he acted with legal justification or excuse and with colour of right.

While Bill C-246 would fix the gender-specific references to be gender neutral, it would also remove the justification defence from sections 444 to 446 of the Criminal Code, which are the sections that currently deal with animal welfare.

The penalty is set at up to $10,000 or five years in a federal penitentiary, and regardless of the probability of conviction, the case needed to bring some of these situations to trial would be established by this open-ended bill.

A federal penitentiary is no laughing matter. There is one in my riding at the former cold war missile base at La Macaza. I toured that facility this summer, and I do not wish to return there as a result of our fall harvest.

We are assured by proponents of the bill that the legal system would not tie itself up in these legal cases. This letter I received in my office, for example, reads, in part:

> The Canadian Sportfishing Industry Association's claims about how Bill C-246 would impact fishing are ludicrous. They state that "Even the act of baiting a hook with a worm would be considered an act of cruelty according to the Bill." [The MP for Beaches—East York] and law professor Peter Sankoff contend that such claims about the effects Bill C-246 would have are preposterous. Can anyone imagine Canada's criminal justice system wasting time and resources to attempt to prosecute someone over such a ridiculous allegation?

Yes, I can imagine that. Because, were C-246 to receive royal assent as it is written, a law telling police and prosecutors to do exactly that would be on the books, having been placed there, after thorough examination, by a majority of parliamentarians, and remaining there until one or several judges, being faced with such a ridiculous allegation in their court room, struck down that law.

Moreover, the bill contradicts its proponents on this very point. It creates section 182.5 which states:

> For greater certainty, nothing in this Part shall be construed so as to abrogate or derogate from the protection provided for existing aboriginal or treaty rights of the aboriginal peoples of Canada by the recognition and affirmation of those rights in section 35 of the *Constitution Act, 1982*.

If the bill does not risk a creative new application, why would it need an exemption? It begs the question, what purpose is a law whose authors do not wish it to be enforced? Why go through the trouble of authoring and presenting a bill if the hope is that the justice system would ultimately ignore or reinterpret it? If the desire of the drafters of this legislation is to ensure that existing, accepted, or common practice not be affected by this bill, why does it not state that?

The proponents tell us that it would have no such effect. However, in the case of a disagreement between speeches in Parliament and the text of the resulting act, it is the text of the act that would form the basis of the criminal case.

No one here is against stopping the genuine abuse or mistreatment of animals under any circumstances. However, my job here is also to protect the people who work with animals, live with them, take care of them, live by them, and feed the rest of us.

I want to highlight the good work of the National Farm Animal Care Council, which consists of farmers, processors, the Canadian Veterinary Medical Association, national animal welfare associations, provincial farm animal care councils, and so on. They work on a collaborative basis to enhance codes or practices on our farms. They also adhere to core values, such as accepting the use of farm animals in agriculture, believing that animals should be treated humanely, and supporting projects that are scientifically informed. That is the way we work to improve animal welfare in Canada. Unfortunately, Bill C-246 could undo the good work of those organizations by unfairly targeting them through the legal system.

We have been told that this bill will be modified at committee to address the many concerns that have been raised, which I have only barely scratched the surface of here today. This presupposes the outcome of the committee hearing. As members know, committees are their own masters. To modify the substance of the bill, the unanimous consent of the chamber is required. We have seen that this is not achievable.

Procedurally, a bill at committee cannot simply be redrawn. Amendments may be proposed by members, but it is up to the committee to adopt or reject them. Significant changes are not in order, and the chair of the committee and the Speaker of the House have a responsibility, a duty deeply established in parliamentary convention, to rule as out of order any changes that are beyond the scope of a bill.

To get a bill to committee, the House must agree with it in principle. To change it, the committee must keep it within that principle.

For me to vote for this bill at second reading, I must agree with the text as it is written in principle. I do not believe that hunters, fishermen, trappers, farmers, homesteaders, and others working with animals belong in prison. I do not agree with the bill in principle. I hope that my colleagues will have the wisdom and the foresight to reject the bill, to kill it without further pain or suffering.

● (1925)

Mr. Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague across the way and I have a lot in common. As co-chair of the parliamentary outdoor caucus, I share that role with a Liberal from Newfoundland and Labrador. Sometimes these issues cross party lines and we are supportive of one another across the aisle as well.

I have three concerns with this bill. First, it would potentially criminalize traditional practices of hunting, trapping, angling and fishing, and farming. Second, it would change the definition of animals from property to people. Third, we already have extensive animal rights protection laws in Canada.

I will start with the first.

I think most of us have gone fishing with parents or family, and likewise hunting. A lot of us in this place have backgrounds in farming and agriculture, and have raised cattle to be harvested for hamburgers, steak, or whatever. Certainly, as was mentioned by my colleague on this side of the House, the last people who would want to be cruel to an animal are members of the groups that know those animals and see them every day, like farmers, hunters, fishermen, and anglers. To potentially put these groups of individuals into a place where they could be accused of being criminal is too far-reaching for us.

A key change in what the bill proposes is the new kill an animal offence. Proposed subsection 182.1(1) states:

> Everyone commits an offence who, wilfully or recklessly...
>
> kills an animal or, being the owner, permits an animal to be killed, brutally or viciously, regardless of whether the animal dies immediately;
>
> kills an animal without lawful excuse...

The concern is the words "brutally or viciously". For this chamber of 330-plus individuals, brutally and viciously have different definitions and different meanings. For one, brutally and viciously is understood as something that is inhumane, that affects an animal in a negative way without concern for the animal's sensibilities.

However, another meaning could be considered for the common practices of even catching a fish for instance, where once people catch a fish, they have to end its life so it can be consumed and eaten as a filet for supper. That could be deemed to be brutally or viciously killing. That is my concern. We have groups of people that have traditionally fished, hunted, and trapped, etc. They would now be potentially accused of treating animals brutally or viciously. I know the member who put this bill forward said that would not be the case, but the potential for that definition to be taken far and wide is what concerns a lot of us in this place.

I will speak to the second point as well, about the changing in definition from property to people. The change is significant because it would take animal cruelty offences out of the section dealing with offences against certain property and would move it to the section of the Criminal Code dealing with offences against persons. That distinction is very important because instead of involving property, we would have potential offences against human-type individuals, which certainly would put it into a different level in the Criminal Code than I think most of us would consider acceptable.

Again, I want to get to the premise of Bill C-246. On this side we, and I know many on that side too, do not want to see cruelty to animals. I have a family pet. We have had family pets in the past and we cherish them as members of our family. However, to hold them as members of the family equitable to the human beings in our family is going too far, and I agree with my colleague who said that earlier.

● (1930)

Last, we already have extensive legislation that deals with animal cruelty in Canada. To say that we need more legislation to make sure that this does not happen is just not necessary.

I thought it was interesting that one of the members who said they were going to support this particular bill talked about a certain case of animal cruelty. I think it was dogs that the member said were abused. They were emaciated and down to a fraction of what their healthy weight should be. They were acknowledged as being abused and it was dealt with in the system. The owner was charged and the case went before the courts.

That is an example of the current laws in this place working. It already functions well in dealing with animal abuse and cruelty. We do not need more laws on the books to go even further.

I will go a bit more into what our current laws are, because I think people out there who are watching us tonight may not know and may think that we need laws. Therefore, I will state the laws that we actually do have, or part of them.

The offence is in part 11 of the Criminal Code entitled "Wilful and Forbidden Acts in Respect of Certain Property". These are current laws on the books.

Section 445.1 states:

> Every one commits an offence who
>
> (a) wilfully causes or, being the owner, wilfully permits to be caused unnecessary pain, suffering or injury to an animal or a bird;

That is fairly comprehensive in dealing with animal abuse in my mind. Other subsections are more specific. Section 445 prohibits "wilfully and without lawful excuse...kills, maims, wounds, poisons or injures dogs, birds or animals".

Section 446, "Causing damage or injury", states that one commits a crime who:

> (a) by wilful neglect causes damage or injury to animals or birds while they are being driven or conveyed; or
>
> (b) being the owner or the person having the custody or control of a domestic animal or a bird or an animal or a bird wild by nature that is in captivity, abandons it in distress or wilfully neglects or fails to provide suitable and adequate food, water, shelter and care for it.

Those are just a few parts of the laws that are already on the books to deal with animal cruelty, although I applaud the member.

Shark finning is another one of those practices that is already on the books that cannot be done in Canada legally. If one is caught doing it, one will be charged. Those are laws that are already on the books currently today.

As co-chair of the parliamentary outdoor caucus, I have really learned to appreciate this part of our Canadian heritage. Our forefathers started this place. Hunting and sustenance fishing were part of what we did, and farming as well. It was all part of our tradition, and not just that, it was necessary for our survival. Therefore, to now come in with legislation that would potentially criminalize that historical activity unnecessarily, to us, is an overreach.

Again, I have gotten to know a lot of these folks who would be captured up in this type of legislation, me included, because I fish and hunt. We cannot ask for a bigger group who wants to help the conservation efforts in Canada proceed. Ducks Unlimited and many other groups are supportive of conservation. They do tireless work to see that animals are healthy and that they have places to grow and prosper. To affect this group of really good, well-meaning folks with possible charges of criminal activity, again, goes further than we want to go.

Again, I applaud the member for his intention. As I said, my family appreciates our pets. We had an English Bulldog, but lost our dog a year ago. When it died, it impacted our family. We care about animals, too, but we just think that Bill C-246 goes too far.

Likewise, I will be standing with my colleague on the Liberal side, from Newfoundland and Labrador, my co-chair in the parliamentary outdoor caucus, and we will both be opposing the bill.

● (1935)

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith (Beaches—East York, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank Canadians across the country for caring about, for speaking up for those without a voice, and for standing up for improved animal protections.

My colleagues have been inundated with correspondence in support of Bill C-246. I want in particular to thank Ruby's Love Letter Legacy, an organization that came together to stop puppy mills, and Animal Cruelty Legislation Advocates Canada, both grassroots organizations working to improve our animal protection laws.

When I introduced this legislation, I said that members from all parties support ending animal cruelty. I do not think this is a partisan issue and I do not think it should be. I would stand alongside farmers, like my in-laws, who would disown me, by the way, if I did anything to animals. I stand alongside farmers, fishermen, and anglers against animal cruelty. As any number of colleagues here today have said, this is about ending animal abuse, not ending animal use.

When I introduced the bill, I said the bill would bring our laws into the 21st century. I overstated the case. This is a basket of modest measures, all things considered, to improve our animal protection laws.

There has been a ton of confusion about the bill giving animals' rights, the right not to be tortured and abused, if we want to call those rights.

What would the bill do? The bill would do three things, and we have touched on some of them.

Let me speak first about shark finning. Some folks in the House have said that shark finning is already illegal so we do not have to worry about shark finning. *The Globe and Mail* reported that last year over 300,000 pounds of shark fins were imported into the country. When they are tested they are commonly found to be from endangered species.

Other countries have bans on the importation of shark fins. Ten states in the U.S. have bans on the trade of shark fins. When we look at Australia, there is actually an international norm, a landed shark requirement. The terrible practice is when the shark's fin is cut off and the body is wasted at sea. So, what do countries do? They require that the shark be landed intact and then be finned.

If amendments are required, I am perfectly open to that idea. We in the House should stand against the practice of shark finning and against importing shark fins into Canada.

Let me speak about fur labelling and banning the sale and importation of cat and dog fur. I do not know who could stand in favour of importing and selling cat and dog fur. There have been numerous petitions in the House against the practice. It has been banned in the EU and the U.S. for years. Why Canada would lag in this area is beyond me. The EU and the U.S. require fur labelling. Big companies in Canada already do this. A Canada Goose jacket comes from coyote. Why all companies should not be subject to this practice as a matter of consumer choice is beyond me.

Now, with regard to animal cruelty in the Criminal Code, I have been accused of drafting this legislation in a wrong-headed way. This legislation was drafted in 1999 by the justice department, so ignore my opinion. Instead, take the opinion of the justice department that drafted it, take the opinion of the hon. Anne McLellan, take the opinion of the hon. Martin Cauchon, take the opinion of the hon. Irwin Cotler, all of whom had proposed identical legislation. If you do not trust them, take the opinion of the Cattlemen's Association and the Dairy Farmers of Canada, who in 2004, among many other animal use organizations, wrote a letter to the hon. Irwin Cotler to ask for this legislation to be passed. What legislation? The identical legislation that is before the House with respect to these Criminal Code amendments.

Now, I recognize that we are over a decade later. People do not have the institutional memory. People are worried about this legislation. I listened, I consulted, I met with more agricultural sector groups in my tiny office. I am not the ministry of anything. We consulted broadly over the spring and summer. We heard concerns. Some people said they are political concerns and not policy concerns. I did not particularly care. I am pragmatic enough to know I want something to pass. I want to improve our animal protection laws.

So, I proposed amendments. I proposed amendments to limit the Criminal Code to three specific things: amending the bestiality provisions to address the Supreme Court case; expanding the definition of animal fighting, because no one is going to complain about criminalizing profiting off of animal fighting, breeding, or training animals for the purpose of fighting; and limiting the Criminal Code amendments, the third piece, to gross negligence. Why? Because every standard across the Criminal Code with respect to negligence is a gross negligence offence, a marked departure from the norm. Why would animal cruelty be any different, but right now it is. It is the only standard in the Criminal Code that is wilful neglect.

That is it. It is just these three changes.

As far as the process goes, our job in the House is to support legislation if the object of the legislation is something that we can support at second reading. Guess what? If the changes are not made a committee, and I will be the first to propose changes when I address the committee, the bill will come back to us at third reading and we can vote it down. If these changes are not made, I encourage all members to vote it down. If members do not vote in favour of it at second reading, I encourage them to tell their constituents that they do not care about the object of the bill, which is to end animal cruelty.

● (1940)

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The vote is on the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): In my opinion the nays have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Pursuant to Standing Order 93, the recorded division stands deferred until Wednesday, October 5, immediately before the time provided for private members' business.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[*Translation*]

CANADA REVENUE AGENCY

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House to continue the discussion we began in question period on September 23. I had asked the Minister of National Revenue a question about the infamous Bahamas Papers, the leaked documents from the Bahamas.

We learned that Senator Eaton was very surprised to see her name listed as a director on the board of a company set up as an equity firm in the Bahamas. She was surprised because she had no idea that that was the case.

This raises two serious problems regarding certain countries considered tax havens, including the Bahamas. The first is the extremely strict bank secrecy. The second is the secrecy regarding the information related to businesses set up as equity firms in those countries.

It is extremely difficult to obtain any information on the bank records or any records identifying the directors of companies set up as equity firms in those countries.

I had asked the minister a question about the famous tax information exchange agreements that Canada has signed. We have signed 21 since 2008, if my memory serves me well. These agreements are supposed to give us greater access to this information. We are given the impression that, with these agreements, we can just ask the tax authorities of those countries for information about Canadian citizens who are supposedly hiding their money or who might use the tax system of those countries for tax evasion or aggressive tax avoidance. The problem is that these agreements do not facilitate any exchange of information, far from it.

What is interesting is that these agreements have gained popularity since the OECD established a grey list of tax havens. It created a template for this type of agreement that was supposed to put an end to the secrecy of banks and even the excessive secrecy of corporations. In order to be taken off the list, a country had to sign these agreements.

That was not too difficult. The Cayman Islands, which were on this list, signed 18 agreements in two years. In general these were agreements the country signed with other tax havens so it would eventually be taken off the list. This shows just how meaningless these agreements are.

As I said, Canada has signed 21 agreements so far. Are we talking about agreements concluded with the United States or with European countries, such as France or Germany? No, these agreements were concluded with Anguilla, the Netherlands Antilles, our first treaty, Aruba, the Bahamas, Bahrain, Bermuda, Brunei, and so forth.

Most of these countries are considered tax havens. Canada continues to sign agreements that are utterly ineffective, so much so that when there is a leak like the Bahamas papers, some people are listed as directors without their knowledge.

What I wanted to know when I asked my question, which was not answered to my satisfaction, was whether the Canadian government was going to review the effectiveness of its agreements. Unfortunately, the minister simply responded by reading the notes she usually reads. She talked about the famous $444 million that will eventually be invested, but that does not in any way answer the serious question I asked.

● (1945)

Mr. Emmanuel Dubourg (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to answer my colleague's question.

It is true that, recently, we have heard a lot of talk about KPMG, the Panama Papers, and now the Bahamas. These matters all have to do with international tax evasion or avoidance.

My colleague spoke about various treaties that seek to prevent double taxation. To give him a specific answer, I want to tell him about what the Canada Revenue Agency is doing to combat aggressive international tax avoidance and tax evasion. My colleague spoke about the unprecedented investment of $444 million. The CRA is using that funding to acquire the tools it needs to crack down on tax fraud.

The government is also working with international partners by participating in joint efforts and sharing intelligence so that it can go after tax cheats. In addition, the agency is using that additional funding to escalate and better target its activities to ensure compliance with tax laws, and it will report to Canadians on its progress frequently and transparently. These actions will benefit the middle class and ensure that Canada has a fair tax system.

This new funding, which we announced last spring, will enable the CRA to hire additional tax experts for a five-year period to scrutinize multinational corporations that use tax avoidance structures and to conduct audits of wealthy, high-risk individuals. The new staff will include not only auditors, but also economists, lawyers, and other experts. The CRA will therefore have highly qualified individuals with the diverse range of skills needed to go after complicated schemes designed to escape detection.

The CRA will also tackle more files by using sophisticated business information, as well as the expertise of experts from various disciplines.

In addition, the CRA recently created three other audit teams to focus on large corporations, and it will create additional teams next year. The minister recently signed the multilateral agreement concluded by the appropriate authorities on country-by-country reporting, which compels multinational corporations to report their global banking activities. This international effort allows tax authorities to follow financial transactions all around the globe.

In closing, the CRA is currently conducting 750 audits and 20 criminal investigations focused on individuals who own property abroad. Those are just some of the actions the Canada Revenue Agency is taking to combat tax evasion and international tax avoidance.

● (1950)

Mr. Guy Caron: Mr. Speaker, Canada signs tax treaties with some countries ostensibly to avoid double taxation, but what actually happens is double non-taxation. Instead of enabling us to collect a portion of the tax, a treaty such as the one with Barbados exempts a company that pays a paltry 2.5% to Barbados from paying tax in Canada.

Yes, we need to take a closer look at whether these tax treaties are working, but my argument was about tax information exchange agreements. As we have seen, such agreements, particularly with the Bahamas, are absolutely useless. Why? Because to get information from the countries with which we have treaties, we need information that quite simply cannot be had by those not already privy to it.

It is a bit like having to have all of the evidence before asking for more evidence. Consequently, I am asking the Canadian government to take a look at how well its treaties and conventions are working because they appear to be patently ineffective.

Mr. Emmanuel Dubourg: Mr. Speaker, in the last session, my colleague and I sat here and discussed international tax evasion at length. What I can say is that this is the first time that the Canada Revenue Agency has had this kind of money to combat tax evasion and international tax avoidance and to correct this situation.

My colleague is also here; he is aware of the steps that are taken. I would remind him that, insofar as the exchange of information and the integrity of the system are concerned, we want people to understand that protecting personal information is extremely important to this government. We have some exchange of information treaties and agreements with such countries as the United States that date back to 1942. Extraordinary measures are taken at all times to protect information integrity.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 7:54 p.m.)

CONTENTS

Wednesday, September 28, 2016

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

ORAL QUESTIONS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS