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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Wednesday, October 26, 2016

—

Speaker: The Honourable Geoff Regan

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, October 26, 2016

The House met at 2 p.m.

Prayer

● (1400)

[*Translation*]

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

[*Members sang the national anthem*]

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*Translation*]

TAX HAVENS

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, today is a historic day. For the first time, we, the people's representatives, will vote either for or against tax havens.

Those who vote for my motion will be sending big Canadian and multinational banks the message that they can no longer hide their profits in Barbados. Those who vote against the motion will be encouraging them to do it, and with the blessing of the political class.

If there are those among us who truly believe that the use of tax havens is desirable and appropriate, this affects them. However, I urge them to remember that we are speaking on behalf of the people, who find tax havens disgusting. They feel they are working harder than ever while being squeezed to the last drop as they watch the quality of government services decline. They feel the game is rigged and our institutions and society are corrupt.

Members must figure out for themselves what their constituents expect them to do.

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[*English*]

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Ms. Iqra Khalid (Mississauga—Erin Mills, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, responding to an invitation from Engineers Without Borders, I had the opportunity to visit Kenya with the hon. member for Calgary Nose Hill. What we witnessed there was extraordinary: creative minds strategizing ways of impact, economically and socially.

I met a woman entrepreneur, innovating for the success of her small business, and children striving toward excellence. They are future doctors, lawyers, and tradespeople. I saw it in their eyes; if they get the opportunity, they will succeed.

I speak from experience. Twenty-five years ago, I was a girl child striving for opportunity in a developing country, uniform dusty but eyes gleaming.

Today I am even more committed to working with the Minister of International Development and La Francophonie to further the partnership between Canada, Kenya, and other African nations. As a donor country, Africa is and should remain a priority for us.

* * *

● (1405)

BARRIE

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business recently named Barrie the third most progressive city, out of 122 in the country, for entrepreneurial start-ups in 2016.

Tech companies like FreshSpoke and gShift, web designers Tyger Shark, fresh food producer Not Yer Granny's Granola, realtors March and Joanna Faris, the Mortons of KKP, and Chad and Sandra Ballantyne of The Creative Space, are just some of the examples of excellence in local entrepreneurship.

I commend Barrie city council, Zvi Lifshiz of Invest Barrie, and many others for their focus on supporting the creation of start-ups and for promoting a sound environment for jobs and job growth.

These small businesses are not vehicles for rich people to avoid paying taxes, as the Prime Minister believes. They are the drivers of jobs and the lifeblood of our economy.

Raising taxes on small business is the wrong approach, and the government's tax-and-spend agenda puts the success of these companies in jeopardy.

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[*Translation*]

ANCOP CANADA

Mr. Joe Peschisolido (Steveston—Richmond East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on Tuesday, October 11, I met with some representatives from ANCOP, an organization that helps families, children, and homeless people. This organization is there to meet the needs of the poor.

*Statements by Members**[English]*

ANCOP, which literally means Answering the Cry of the Poor, builds homes, feeds the hungry, and educates children in Canada and all around the world.

Alex Boquerin and Willie Sinconegue, along with others in our Filipino community, are proud of their Filipino background yet are fiercely Canadian. They remind us of the importance of family, faith, and social justice.

We thank ANCOP for its service to our community. It is truly a testimony to the values and principles we all hold dear.

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LIBER ERO FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as an ecologist, I know how important scientific research is to this country, particularly that done by young scientists, with their brilliant curiosity, exploring the world through fresh eyes.

That is why I was so happy today to meet with the Liber Ero fellows. These young Canadian post-doctoral scientists tackle management challenges and conservation issues with novel analyses, novel perspectives, and novel collaborations on subjects as diverse as climate change, marine ecosystems, grasslands, birds, butterflies, bumblebees, and bats.

This program takes its name from the Latin words for “I will be free”, reflecting the importance of independent research.

They are here in Ottawa to learn how the results of their studies can be heard in the halls of government.

I can assure this House that we will be hearing regularly from them and from the new fellows who join their ranks year by year.

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*[Translation]***OUTSTANDING CANADIANS**

Mr. Jean Rioux (Saint-Jean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the grandest gestures and the simplest things can both make a tremendous difference in our everyday lives.

Some people, like Lilianne Bessette, risk their lives. This young woman from Saint-Jean saved a man's life, and was awarded the Medal of Bravery, one of the highest honours in the country. Others, like Dr. André Gamache, help disaster victims. He helped Haitians in the village of Labrousse rebuild their village, and was just awarded the Sovereign's Medal for Volunteers for his efforts.

Every day, community groups work hard, often behind the scenes, to help people confront the various challenges they face with some dignity. These pillars of our society do not always get the recognition they deserve, so I want to thank them here today. Their efforts inspire us and help us pursue our work while remembering our duty, which is to make Canada a better place.

*[English]***STANLEY CUP**

Mr. Gordon Brown (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, tomorrow at one o'clock in the afternoon, the Stanley Cup will be in Brockville, Ontario, in my riding of Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes. It will be on display in the 1000 Islands Mall, just steps from my constituency office, for just over an hour.

It will be displayed by Randy Sexton, a Brockville native who is currently the Pittsburgh Penguins' director of amateur scouting. A Brockville and Area Sports Hall of Fame member, it was not Mr. Sexton's skills on the ice that led him to be part of a Stanley Cup-winning team. Rather, he says, his character, team-first attitude, competitiveness, and passion made the difference. It is those attributes that he likes to instill in youth today.

He looks forward to displaying the cup in his hometown to help inspire people. As he said, “I hope somewhere along the line that even if it's one person...one child, one teenager...I can inspire them to dream big”.

* * *

● (1410)

UNIVERSITY IN BRAMPTON

Mr. Raj Grewal (Brampton East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today is a great day for Brampton and a great day for Canada. The Province of Ontario announced this morning that Brampton will be getting a much-needed university, a university that is going to create over 1,800 permanent jobs in Brampton. I want to congratulate Mayor Linda Jeffrey and all of city council for working so hard to get this much-needed university to Brampton.

I also want to congratulate my fellow members of Parliament from Brampton, who have worked very hard over the past year to ensure the important decision by the Province of Ontario to award the university to the city of Brampton. I look forward to building a world-class university in the city of Brampton. I invite everyone in this House to visit our university once it is built in the near future.

Most important, today is the opening night of the Toronto Raptors season. Go Raptors, go.

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NEW LISKEARD BIKERS REUNION

Mr. Anthony Rota (Nipissing—Timiskaming, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the 2016 New Liskeard Bikers Reunion took place in my riding from July 1 to 3 and was once again a resounding success. For 15 years, motorcycle enthusiasts from across North America have made the pilgrimage to New Liskeard, Ontario to join the Freedom Ride and help raise money for the local community cancer care program.

[Translation]

The businessman responsible for organizing the event, Barry Phippen, announced that, after 15 years, this year will be his last.

[English]

From its very humble beginnings in 1999, Barry was the heart and soul of this annual event, which attracted more than 6,000 bikers and 25,000 visitors to the area. This year, \$165,000 was raised, bringing the 15-year total to over \$1 million.

I would like to thank Barry and his team of volunteers for their hard work and dedication to this extraordinary cause. The world needs more Barry Phippens.

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[Translation]

**BEAUPORT—CÔTE-DE-BEAUPRÉ—ÎLE D'ORLÉANS—
CHARLEVOIX**

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, CPC): Mr. Speaker, just over a year ago, the people of Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix put their trust in me to represent them here in Ottawa.

It has been a year of pure joy working with mayors, Reeves, organizations, and people from all around the riding; a year of discovering all that the majestic St. Lawrence and its back country have to offer, as well as its best kept secrets. What can I say about all the walking trails that provide us with such unforgettable moments of wonder?

I want to thank all those who gave me the opportunity to be their voice here in Ottawa. Today I want to confirm my commitment to giving our riding its rightful place. A special thanks goes out to my family for allowing me once again to live my dream.

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[English]

DIWALI

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal (Surrey—Newton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this past weekend I had the honour of attending a wonderful Diwali gala hosted by the Vedic Hindu Cultural Society in Surrey under the leadership of president Satish Kumar, Parshotam Goel, Munish Goel, Karan Goyal, and Kapil Goyal.

For Hindus, Diwali is a time to remember the release from exile of Lord Rama, his wife, and his brother. For Sikhs, the celebration known as Bandi Chhor Divas marks the anniversary of Guru Hargobind Ji's freedom from imprisonment and return to the Golden Temple.

To all in Surrey-Newton, and across the country celebrating this Sunday, I wish them and their families a very happy Bandi Chhor Divas and a very happy Diwali.

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[Translation]

SOCIÉTÉ FRANCO-MANITOBAINE

Mr. Dan Vandal (Saint Boniface—Saint Vital, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on October 13, I attended the annual general meeting of the Société franco-manitobaine. The francophone community members at the meeting were pleased with the return of the Mobilité francophone program for encouraging francophone immigration. It

Statements by Members

also indicated its desire to see the return of the court challenges program. The community talked about overcoming the challenges of recruiting francophone immigrants, an important issue being studied at the Standing Committee on Official Languages.

Tomorrow evening, the SFM will hold a special general meeting to vote on adopting a strategic plan, the result of the estates general consultations undertaken by the community a year ago. The goal is to ensure our vitality for future generations.

Ours is a tenacious, vibrant, and diverse community, and I am extremely proud to be a part of it.

* * *

● (1415)

[English]

NATURAL RESOURCES

Hon. Mike Lake (Edmonton—Wetaskiwin, CPC): Mr. Speaker, each day, over 600,000 barrels of oil are imported into eastern Canada. The top source countries are the U.S., Saudi Arabia, Algeria, Nigeria, Norway, and Angola.

The oil, which arrives via large tankers and rail, represents millions of dollars taken out of the Canadian economy every single day.

The math here is simple. Oil is already being used, but it is not Canadian oil. Not a single greenhouse gas emission is being reduced.

Simply allowing the market to switch to Canadian oil would increase Canadian jobs, increase funding for Canadian health care, education, and other social programs, and increase our own control over the environment. These are undeniable wins on all counts for all Canadians.

Energy east would create thousands of jobs across the country, and bring in billions of dollars in tax revenues, desperately needed as the Liberal government grapples with budget deficit projections that seem to increase almost daily.

It is time for the Prime Minister to show some leadership on this file for the good of all Canadians.

* * *

[Translation]

THE VETERANS AMONG US CAMPAIGN

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon (Kanata—Carleton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today, one in 35 Canadians is a veteran. Generally speaking, they are younger and more diverse than in the past. If they are not in uniform, most Canadians would not recognize them.

[English]

As part of the “Veterans Among Us” campaign, veterans of the Canadian Forces and RCMP are asked to wear their medals and insignia on November 1 and 30.

I hope all Canadians will take the time to express their appreciation to these veterans, who are so deserving of our recognition. I would like to encourage my colleagues, during this month of remembrance, to honour their sacrifice through action and leadership in the chamber, based on our respect for each other.

Oral Questions

I invite all Canadian Forces, RCMP, and first responder veterans, including my colleagues in this place, to wear their medals and insignia on November 1 and 30 in honour of all who have served.

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MUSLIM COMMUNITIES

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, hate crimes targeting Muslim Canadians have tragically become more frequent in recent years. Each time we hear of another, it weighs heavily on our hearts.

We know that Canada is fundamentally a country of peace.

[*Translation*]

We celebrate diversity and differences. That is part of who we are. However, we must protect these values. The sparks of hatred must be put out. History has taught us that we cannot stand idly by.

We need to fight against hatred targeting any group of people because of their religion, ethnicity, language, or sexual orientation.

[*English*]

We must actively fight hate perpetrated against the Muslim community, and denounce, in this House, Islamophobia in all of its forms.

[*Translation*]

On behalf of all New Democrats, I offer my support to the Sept-Îles Muslim community and remind all Muslim communities across Canada that we are here for them.

* * *

[*English*]

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, reading the latest Parliamentary Budget Officer report, I could not help but notice that the PBO stated that had the Liberal government not booked increased Liberal spending in the 2015-16 fiscal year, the government would have reported a \$2.9 billion surplus.

I mention this as the finance minister has contested this fact multiple times. I hope now that the facts are known, the finance minister will correct the record that the government was, in fact, left a surplus.

We also know that yesterday the Prime Minister was quoted as saying he would not break his promises, yet the Prime Minister was elected on a promise to run a modest \$10 billion-a-year deficit budget.

The fact is that we know these Liberal promises have been broken. It is small wonder that young workers yesterday were protesting against the Prime Minister as, ultimately, they know they will be the ones paying the bill.

My constituents would also like to see the Liberal government keep its promises, including the election promise of a balanced budget by the 2019-20 fiscal year.

• (1420)

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Ms. Yvonne Jones (Labrador, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge the agreement reached last evening between the Premier of Newfoundland and Labrador and the Innu Nation, Nunatsiavut Government, and the NunatuKavut Community Council regarding Muskrat Falls.

A number of concerns surrounding human health, indigenous food security, and environmental protection were addressed after 12 hours of negotiations by strong leadership on all sides.

Make no mistake, the deal reached last evening sets a new standard for indigenous relations in Newfoundland and Labrador. It is an issue of grave importance to our communities, one that we care deeply about as Labradorians, and one we know that our government and Canadians care deeply about as well.

I look forward to seeing these continued partnerships between all leaders, all governments, and all people in our province.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[*English*]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, while the battle to retake Mosul from the Islamic State is under way, the Prime Minister is not being transparent with Canadians about our role in these combat operations. He called it a training mission, but we have learned through social media that our troops are on the front lines and engaging the enemy. This is serious.

Why is the Prime Minister withholding information about our true role in this conflict instead of being transparent and admitting our troops are engaged in combat?

Canadians should not learn about this on Twitter.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, all Canadians can be proud of the men and women of the Canadian Forces, who continue to step up, and put their lives on the line in places all around the world while they stand for our values.

The fact is we have sent them on a mission that is important in terms of supporting, assisting, and training the local forces to take back their towns and communities.

We are engaged, as we predicted we would be engaged, in a mission that is dangerous, but very important to make sure that Canada does its part in the fight against Daesh.

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we support our troops 100%, but this is about transparency.

It has been a regular practice for the government to provide technical briefings to the media, and to Canadians when our soldiers are deployed in battle. Top commanders were made available to explain the threat that our soldiers faced. The Prime Minister has changed that policy for political reasons. He promised to end a combat mission that he is actually expanding.

Will the Prime Minister be transparent, and resume these briefings, so Canadians can know exactly what our men and women in uniform are facing?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have changed somewhat the approach of the previous government. We will not put our men and women of the Canadian Forces in harm's way for communications purposes.

We remain open and transparent about what this mission is, and about the extraordinary work they are doing, but we will not compromise their safety for a communications exercise here at home.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the television show *J.E.* reported troubling facts about discrimination against members of the Canadian Armed Forces based on their sexual orientation.

The Prime Minister is aware of those facts because the member for Louis-Saint-Laurent personally handed him a letter from Lucie Laperle on this very subject on March 21.

Seven months later, Ms. Laperle has still not heard back from the Prime Minister. Why has he not yet responded to these veterans?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are always very concerned about discrimination and intolerance, wherever they are happening.

With regard to the troubling report about the Canadian Armed Forces, we are looking into it. As members know, this government is always prepared to stand up for the rights and freedoms of each and every person, particularly those in vulnerable communities.

* * *

[*English*]

ETHICS

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister put in place rules, in black and white, regarding ministerial conduct for fundraising. He did this because he knows that it is wrong to have ministers charging \$1,500 on behalf of the Liberal Party of Canada to have a meeting on a government file. Yet, that is exactly what is happening. Sadly, the people of Ontario know this very well.

Is the Prime Minister now taking fundraising advice from Kathleen Wynne?

• (1425)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is important to remind Canadians that the federal system has some of the strictest fundraising rules and expectations of any jurisdiction in this country. The fact is there are still jurisdictions in

Canada that have no limits on personal donations, that allow corporate developers and allow unions to donate.

We have a system that has very strict limits on only personal donations, and has total transparency. Canadians can know that the federal system around fundraising is secure, transparent, and ethical.

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we know those rules because we actually brought them in.

There is a word for the Prime Minister's attempt to defend the Liberal fundraisers, wrong. We need the Liberals to follow the rules. The Prime Minister knows very well that what is happening is wrong, and he should not be defending this. Canadians should not have to pay \$1,500 to access their government.

The Prime Minister put in place clear rules on ethics and accountability, and he and his ministers are now violating them.

Does he really believe in his own rules for an open and accountable government, or is this—

The Speaker: The right hon. Prime Minister.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, members opposite, indeed all Canadians, know that the level of access Canadians have to this government, including Canadians who disagree with this government, is unprecedented. Whether it is town halls with Canadians who disagree with me or whether it is pre-budget consultations that the finance minister is doing across the country, we are an open and accessible government. People do not have to pay a cent to have us hear their concerns.

That is what Canadians expect. We follow all the rules and laws around fundraising. This is why we are proud that we have one of the strictest regimes around fundraising of political parties in the country.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we do know that there is political fundraising that may currently be legal but is also clearly unethical.

On November 27, 2015, the Prime Minister recognized this when he instituted new ethics rules for members of his cabinet, and he boasted about that. These rules clearly prohibit “preferential access to government, or appearance of preferential access” for political donors.

If the Prime Minister is indeed serious about setting the bar higher, why does he not do as the Ethics Commissioner has suggested and put his rules into law?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians can be reassured that at the federal level we have some of the strictest limits on donations of anywhere in the country. There are still places where developers can give unlimited amounts of money to political parties in our country. At the federal level, we cannot.

We have \$1,500 maximum donations per year on personal limits and total transparency as to who gives that money. That means there are no ethical contradictions between fundraising for one's party and—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Oral Questions

The Speaker: I would remind members that most members in the House can hear things they may or may not like without reacting and are able to wait their turn to speak. Let us have the rest of us do that, please.

The hon. member for Outremont.

[Translation]

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the question is obvious. If the Prime Minister believes in his own rules, why does he say nothing when his ministers break them?

Let us be clear. We are not talking about spaghetti dinners in a church basement. That is not what this is about. We are talking about selling preferential access to ministers to the wealthiest Canadians.

If he does not feel like enforcing his own fundraising rules, will he give the Ethics Commissioner the power to do so in his place?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have very clear rules about political donations at the federal level. It is impossible for anyone to give more than \$1,500 a year to a political party. This is done with full transparency and the level of accountability that Canadians expect.

At the same time, this government is the most open and accessible in the history of Canada. We regularly meet with people who have different views. We regularly meet with Canadians who have concerns. That is what people expect of us.

* * *

• (1430)

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister proclaims that no relationship is as important as that with indigenous peoples, yet he is refusing to hand over the court-ordered \$155 million to end the discrimination that indigenous children have faced for far too long.

Can the Prime Minister tell the House that his government will support our motion to end discrimination against indigenous children, yes or no?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government understands the tremendous importance of repairing relations with Canada's indigenous peoples, of engaging respectfully with them, and of partnering with them to address the huge challenges they face.

That is why we have made a historic five-year investment of \$8.4 billion. We know that an investment in the future of young indigenous people is an investment in the future of our country. It is important for our country to be fair, equitable, and open.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is also important to comply with the law.

[English]

The Canadian Human Rights Tribunal has issued a historic ruling that the government discriminates against first nations children in its delivery of child welfare services on reserves. Since that ruling, the tribunal has issued two further compliance orders to force the Liberals to act.

Instead of continuing to fight first nations children in court will the Prime Minister support our motion to put an end to this discrimination?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know that Canadian governments over the past years and, indeed, generations have failed indigenous people with not giving them the respect, the tools, or the support needed to be successful. We know this is something that is going to take time to turn around. It is why we are investing a historic \$8.4 billion over the next five years to begin to fix these terrible wrongs.

We know there is much more to do, and we continue to work on that.

* * *

[Translation]

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Hon. Denis Lebel (Lac-Saint-Jean, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has proven that he is incapable of signing major trade agreements.

Why does the Prime Minister prefer taking part in fundraising activities for the Liberal Party over signing trade agreements that would benefit all Canadians?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada has done its job, and we remain committed to signing CETA as soon as the European Union is ready. I cannot say the same thing of the Conservatives.

When we took office, that very important agreement had stalled because the Conservatives could not reach a deal with the European Union.

We have done our job, and now it is up to the Europeans to do theirs.

Hon. Denis Lebel (Lac-Saint-Jean, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Europeans must be very proud to hear that they are not doing their job.

If I understand correctly, my colleague is saying that Mr. Barroso did not do his job when he came to Canada to speak with Mr. Harper about that agreement. There was an agreement, but the Liberals could not close the deal. Perhaps we should have stayed.

That said, do the Liberals want our 400,000 forestry workers to pay \$1,500 each to attend a fundraising event so that they can finally resolve the softwood lumber issue?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government has followed through on its commitments to Canadians. I cannot say the same thing of the previous government. The only thing it did with Mr. Barroso was throw parties to celebrate an agreement that had not yet been concluded.

CETA had stalled under the previous government. Our government did the work needed to get it back on track. Now Europe needs to do its part.

Oral Questions

[English]

ETHICS

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, *The Globe and Mail* reports that the Liberals took deliberate steps to keep their cash for access fundraisers secret and exclusive, using Internet protocols to keep them out of search engine results. Now the Minister of Finance is set to attend another fundraiser at the home of a registered lobbyist for Shaw Communications, and Google search produces no results.

If these fundraisers are above board and ethical, why are the Liberals trying so hard to keep them secret and what other unethical behaviour are they covering up?

• (1435)

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take a quick moment, because there are many communities that will be celebrating this weekend, to wish all members in the House and all Canadians a happy Diwali and happy Bandi Chhor Divas.

To answer the member's question, he knows very well that federal politics is subject to some of the strictest rules when it comes to finance legislation. I can assure the member that everybody on this side of the House complies with all the rules.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals used a privilege of government to raise money for themselves. This time, the Minister of Finance charged \$1,500 a ticket just to meet with him.

Young Canadians cannot afford to spend two months' rent in order to be consulted. Times are tough for everyday Canadians, yet the Liberals will make everything cost more for everyone with the carbon tax.

I know these tickets probably cost about the same as one of the Minister of Finance's shoes, but when will he stop padding Liberal pockets, stop hurting Canadian families, and get Canadians back to work?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this government ran on a commitment to engage with Canadians and to work with Canadians. We ran on a platform, and we are committed to advancing that platform.

We committed to a more open, more transparent, more accessible government. We have reduced taxes on the middle class. We have increased taxes on the 1%. We will continue to make the investments we are making to ensure Canadians have a government they can continue to work with.

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when it comes to cash for access fundraising events, the Liberals keep saying they are following the rules, but that is just not the case. The Prime Minister's own rules clearly state ministers should not grant preferential access to stakeholders.

Barry Sherman, the chairman of Apotex, is helping organize the Minister of Finance's next cash for access even in Toronto. The

Minister of Finance defends these secret fundraisers as being part of the budget consultation process.

When did secret events at the homes of millionaires become legitimate parts of the budget consultation process?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member is intentionally confusing an open and transparent budget consultation process with lawful and ethical fundraising.

The federal rules are some of the strongest in the country, and the member knows that we follow all the rules, and he knows it very well.

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, these events are not open to all Canadians. Most Canadians cannot afford the cover charge to get into these special secret consultations.

Once again, the Apotex chairman is helping organize the Minister of Finance's November high roller event. Apotex has lobbied the Minister of Finance's staff multiple times. They have lobbied the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, the Minister of International Trade and the Minister of Health. Plus, Apotex is suing the government for \$500 million.

Does the Prime Minister really expect Canadians to believe that these donations are not buying special access to his cabinet?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will repeat that federal politics is subject to some of the strictest political financing legislation and regulations in the country, and the party fully complies with the Canada Elections Act in all cases.

When the rules are followed, no conflict of interest can exist. We will continue to follow the rules.

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[Translation]

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Ms. Karine Trudel (Jonquière, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this weekend, the minister walked out of negotiations with Wallonia and since then her government has refused to budge on the deadline.

Millions of Europeans and Canadians are concerned about this agreement. Yesterday, the Prime Minister expressed his support for yet another agreement, the trans-Pacific partnership.

I have two questions for the government.

Is the minister committed to fixing the free trade agreement with Europe?

Oral Questions

Will she finally admit that her government supports the TPP, which will cause us to lose thousands of jobs?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, frankly, I am surprised that the NDP cannot get behind an agreement that has the full support of socialists across Europe.

Last week, the German Vice Chancellor, a social democrat, said, quote, that CETA provides us with a great opportunity to set fair and good rules for progressive globalization.

Manuel Valls, France's socialist prime minister, said, "It is a good agreement".

• (1440)

[English]

Ms. Tracey Ramsey (Essex, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the NDP supports trade with Europe, but this deal is too important to get wrong.

The fact is that millions of Canadians share similar concerns about CETA as Europeans. Where are the consultations with Canadians about fixing this deal?

Speaking of consultations, the trade committee has been doing the minister's work of consulting on the TPP. At yesterday's youth summit, the Prime Minister signalled his support for the TPP.

Will the minister finally admit what we have known all along: that Liberals support the job-killing TPP?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am frankly astonished that the NDP cannot get behind a deal that has the full support of socialists across Europe.

Last week, the vice chancellor of Germany, who is a social democrat, said, "CETA is a good and modern agreement, providing us with a great opportunity to set fair and good rules for ongoing globalization".

Manuel Valls, the socialist prime minister of France, calls it an exemplary deal.

Are there any trade deals the NDP will ever support?

* * *

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister just said a moment ago that he did not trust senior members of the Canadian Forces to be open and transparent, and give briefings on the mission in Iraq. This is ridiculous, and he should stand in his place and apologize.

Despite the Liberals' claim that Canada's training of the peshmerga is ongoing, generals have confirmed that the operations have shifted away from training.

Our contribution to the battle to retake Mosul was supposed to include a field hospital, but the Liberals could not get it done.

Will the Minister of National Defence take responsibility, lift the curtain of secrecy, and confirm to the House that he has sent our troops to the front line without proper medical support?

Hon. John McKay (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as you know, the Canadian Forces are engaged in an anti-ISIL coalition. There was a meeting in Europe this week and we are proud partners in that coalition. At this time, the coalition is pursuing its mandate to advise, to assist, and to train and it has not gone beyond that mandate.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I think the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence should change his answer as his notes are not up to date.

Last month, we learned from the Canadian forces leadership that the mission had evolved. It has changed, but the government has kept this information from Canadians, who still do not know exactly what our soldiers are doing in Iraq. According to rumours, our soldiers are doing more than giving advice; they are engaging in combat.

The government prefers to conceal this information instead of being transparent. When we were in power, we were more transparent about what our soldiers were doing without putting their operations at risk.

When will the government finally be transparent with Canadians and tell them the truth?

[English]

Hon. John McKay (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is wrong. The mandate has not changed. It is a train, assist, and advise mission. In addition, we have provided air support and we are in the process of providing hospital services as the fight proceeds. To think of the hon. member's party as an open and transparent party is, in some respects, a contradiction in terms.

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is a ridiculous answer.

Despite the deafening silence by the government, commanders of the Canadian Armed Forces have confirmed that the mission against ISIS has evolved. Yesterday, the defence minister would not rule out putting our troops on the ground in Syria, this despite the fact the Prime Minister once said his position was clear, that expanding the mission into Syria, committing our Armed Forces to the dangers of an ill-defined combat mission, would not serve our national interests.

Is the minister aware that he has contradicted the Prime Minister? Why are the Liberals saying one thing in opposition and quite a different thing in government?

Hon. John McKay (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said in previous answers, the mandate has not changed. We remain committed to an advise, assist, and train mission. We are an important and committed partner in the international coalition against Daesh. We will assess the needs of the coalition as time goes on, but under this current mandate, our mission is focused in Iraq.

Oral Questions

•(1445)

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal government's lack of transparency is troubling. Yesterday, the minister did not rule out a possible extension of the mission against ISIS. When we extended the mission in Syria, we put it to a vote in Parliament and the Liberals opposed it.

Now that they are thinking of extending the mission in Syria, will they put it to a vote in Parliament, or will they continue to operate in secret without informing Canadians?

[English]

Hon. John McKay (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are currently focused on the train, assist, and advise mission in Iraq with our coalition partners. We are not taking military operations in any place else, and we are not about to engage in speculation as to where anything might go in this conflict.

* * *

*[Translation]***INFRASTRUCTURE**

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Beloeil—Chambly, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals made many promises about infrastructure to Canadians and to municipalities. Although phase two of their plan is still under construction, we have learned that the privatization our public infrastructure is on the table.

The Minister of Finance is discussing the possibility of more private investment in infrastructure and the potential sale of our roadways, bridges, and airports.

Was it always the government's intention to go the privatization route and to sell our infrastructure to foreign investors?

[English]

Hon. Amarjeet Sohi (Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are delivering on a historic commitment to invest \$120 billion in Canadian communities from coast to coast to coast. In order to do that, we are engaging with the municipalities. We are engaging with the provinces and territories and we will also engage with the private sector to do more to help Canadian municipalities build the necessary infrastructure for their communities.

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Beloeil—Chambly, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I do not remember a commitment to privatization of public infrastructure in the last election campaign. The Liberals promised investments in infrastructure, but there is something sketchy about the rollout of the second phase. While the minister is holding talks behind closed doors on an infrastructure investment bank, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities is worried that funds promised for public transit and social housing, among other things, will end up diverted to that scheme.

Can the infrastructure minister explain what good it is listening to municipalities if the finance minister is going to listen to people who can pay to get into these rich fundraisers?

Hon. Amarjeet Sohi (Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am proud of the unprecedented level of co-operation we have with the Federation of Canadian Municipalities and the big city mayors. As a matter of fact, last week the Minister of Finance, the Minister of Environment, and I all met with the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, as well as big city mayors, to listen to them, to work with them, to deliver on the commitments we made.

* * *

*[Translation]***OFFICIAL LANGUAGES**

Ms. Linda Lapointe (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, can the Minister of Canadian Heritage tell us how the programs offered by her department support our official languages and the vitality of our official language minority communities across the country?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Rivière-des-Mille-Îles for her important question.

Our government is proud to provide positive leadership on official languages and to promote the vitality of our linguistic communities across the country. That is why we have an official languages support program through which my department invests \$340 million a year in those communities. By so doing, we reaffirm the social contract that unites us as citizens of this country.

* * *

*[English]***YOUTH**

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when the Prime Minister got an invite to the Canadian Labour Congress young workers' summit, he thought it was a ticket to selfie heaven. Instead, youth turned their backs on him, because he turned his back on them.

Most young people get their first job from small and medium-sized business, but new payroll and carbon taxes will leave less money for these job creators to pay young employees. Why is the Prime Minister taxing away the opportunities of our youth?

Hon. MaryAnn Mihychuk (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to indicate that we are all in on helping young Canadians find a meaningful career, both in terms of educational opportunities and skill development. As we face the new industrial revolution, Canadians are becoming prepared for change.

Oral Questions

●(1450)

PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, like young people, disabled Canadians want the opportunity to work. A million of them already do, and private sector companies like Tim Hortons, RBC, and KPMG want to continue hiring them, but a disabled worker earning minimum wage can lose as much as \$1.20 in clawbacks and taxes on every new dollar he earns. No one can afford to work with a 120% tax rate. Will the finance minister show leadership to remove this poverty trap and make work pay?

Hon. MaryAnn Mihychuk (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to talk about the enhancements we have provided to all Canadians in terms of skill development and access to new opportunities in the labour force.

We are continuing to support small business with reductions in EI payments, work share opportunities by doubling the length of opportunity, and providing more opportunities for small business to create new jobs for Canadians.

* * *

FINANCE

Ms. Dianne L. Watts (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a report that the Minister of Finance commissioned is recommending that the Liberals spend \$40 billion to set up an infrastructure bank. Is it the minister's plan to take that \$40 billion away from infrastructure projects already promised to communities, or is it his plan to burden working Canadians with yet another tax?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to talk about the Advisory Council on Economic Growth that provided its recommendations to me last week. This august group provided us with some important recommendations on how we can amplify the impact of some of the measures we put in budget 2016.

I was very pleased to receive its recommendations. We are studying them, and we are considering how we can use its insights, as well as our policies, to make sure we can grow our economy for the long term.

[Translation]

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, first, the government announced that Canada would be joining the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, and now we have learned, again through the media and not here in the House, that the government is planning to set up a Canada infrastructure bank. The problem is that we have no idea where the money for either of those projects is going to come from.

The Liberal government has already saddled our children and grandchildren with an out-of-control deficit and imposed taxes on Canadian families, so where does the Minister of Finance intend to get the money for this?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last week, I received a report from our advisory council on economic growth. This report contained important recommendations on how we can amplify the economic impact of our policies. That is very important. We must consider these recommendations in order to find

a way to improve economic growth for Canadians across the country.

* * *

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Salaberry—Suroît, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have been getting messages from students who tell me the government has not yet paid them for work they did for various departments this summer. That is outrageous.

All workers deserve to be paid for their work, whether they are permanent, temporary, or students. Not paying these young people only adds to the job insecurity already facing those in their age group. The government owes these young Canadians, who have had to pay very high tuition fees, thousands of dollars.

How many students have not yet been paid?

When does the government intend to pay them?

Ms. Leona Alleslev (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the public service pay problems are totally unacceptable and have put many public servants in a difficult financial position. We know this situation is very frustrating.

Departmental employees are working tirelessly to meet the October 31 deadline, but we are behind schedule. Resolving these cases is our priority.

[English]

Ms. Sheri Benson (Saskatoon West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Phoenix pay system is causing havoc for Canadians across the country who are still not getting paid. The government will likely miss its promised October 31 deadline.

When asked, the government had an endless list of excuses for why it cannot meet its own timelines. Since they are delaying yet again, what is the minister's new deadline? What assurances can the government give workers that it will not miss this one, too?

●(1455)

Ms. Leona Alleslev (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the ongoing public service pay problems are completely unacceptable, and there is no question that there are many employees who are facing financial hardship as a result.

We understand and we feel for those employees, and we know that it is a frustrating situation. We are working extensively to meet the deadline and are now a little behind. However, resolving these cases remains our top priority.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC): Mr. Speaker, earlier, the Prime Minister talked about looking into it, so let me try again. Thousands of Quebeckers watched *J.E.* on TVA yesterday. The program told the story of Canadian veterans who were discriminated against because they were homosexual.

The Prime Minister received a letter from former Canadian Forces member Lucie Laperle, a resident of my riding, Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, on March 21, but there has been no response from the Prime Minister. Seven months have gone by.

Why has the Prime Minister not replied to this veteran?

[English]

Hon. John McKay (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is an important question, and it is clearly a historical wrong. It is a societal wrong. It is a governmental wrong. It is a departmental wrong.

In fact, the government is fully engaged on a wide departmental basis to address the very issue he raises. I am rather hoping that we respond in a fulsome way.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on March 21, the member for Louis-Saint-Laurent hand delivered a written letter by Canadian veteran Lucie Laperle to the Prime Minister.

In her letter, Lucie detailed her story of facing discrimination in the military in the 1970s and 1980s because she was gay. It has been seven months and the Prime Minister has not even had the decency to acknowledge her letter or her experiences.

Why could the Prime Minister not have taken a few minutes to respond to Lucie's letter?

Hon. John McKay (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said in an earlier response, this is clearly a historical wrong, and it is wrong on the part of the government prior to 1992. It is a wrong by the Department of Defence. It is a wrong by other departments.

The letters have been received. In order to be able to have a proper response to the person, we need to address this with a whole-of-government approach. The defence department takes the view that it is the policy of the Canadian Forces that any member can—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Yorkton—Melville.

* * *

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in the 1990s, Canadian troops were used as test subjects for the malaria drug mefloquine, produced by Apotex. This week, our committee is hearing from veterans who are suffering the horrific side effects of this drug. Shockingly, an Apotex executive is hosting a Liberal cash for access event next week, starring yet again the Minister of Finance.

Veterans are listening right now for the answer to this question. How can veterans trust Liberals to do the right thing when their party

is being financed by fundraisers organized by the chairman of Apotex?

Hon. Kent Hehr (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, at the core of my mandate is the health and wellness of veterans and their families. I know very well that much information is being presented at the standing committee this week, and I appreciate the standing committee's work in this regard as it will filter into the decisions made by our department.

I encourage all the members who have issues regarding military service to come forward to our department. We have 4,000 mental health professionals ready, willing, and able to stand by to assist them. They are not alone. We are here to help.

* * *

STATUS OF WOMEN

Mrs. Deborah Schulte (King—Vaughan, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, only 26% of members in the House are women, and we know we need to do more to get more women into politics. Can the Minister of Status of Women inform the House of the actions the government is taking to ensure more women can run for office?

[Translation]

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Status of Women, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for King—Vaughan for her excellent question.

[English]

Our government is committed to gender equality and to removing barriers facing women who want to enter politics. However, we still witness some of these areas in the House, like a frequent lack of respect for women and their contributions. We need to ensure that women can see themselves as having a place in politics.

Last night, I announced \$1 million for Equal Voice to help address these barriers. To quote the executive director of Equal Voice, "When women feel included in our democratic institutions, they are empowered to participate in political and public life."

* * *

● (1500)

EMPLOYMENT

Mr. Matt Jeneroux (Edmonton Riverbend, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as Albertans continue to face a devastating jobs crisis, the Liberal government's plan is still missing in action.

To add insult to injury, we now have the infrastructure minister telling Albertans we will get through this crisis by "holding hands with each other". We cannot make this stuff up. What is next? Is their carbon tax going to bring us rainbows and unicorns instead of killing more Albertan jobs?

Can the Minister of Infrastructure and Communities please explain to Albertans exactly how his warm embrace would help put food on their tables and roofs over their heads?

Oral Questions

Hon. Amarjeet Sohi (Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we all know that families in Alberta are struggling. We work hard with the province and the municipalities to help in whichever way we can. That is why I am proud to say that, as of today, we have approved 72 projects, working in consultation with the municipalities and the province, with a total combined value of \$3 billion to create jobs and prosperity for Albertans.

* * *

[Translation]

CANADIAN HERITAGE

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, ADISQ is in crisis over streaming, print media is asking for help transitioning to digital media, and creators are once again considering purchasing advertising spots in children's programming. In the meantime, the Minister of Canadian Heritage keeps handing blank cheques to Facebook, Google, and Netflix, who are not paying their fair share and are literally working under the table.

Will the Minister of Canadian Heritage stand up for the system for which she is ultimately responsible and ask her colleague the finance minister to ensure that these people pay their fair share?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his important question.

The current upheaval in the media and entertainment industry is precisely what prompted my team and me to take leadership on this issue and go beyond what is asked of us in our mandate letter.

We will consult all stakeholders in order to come up with a new method and a new program to meet the great challenge facing Canadian content in the digital age. This is an issue for every culture minister around the world and I am very pleased that we are showing such leadership.

* * *

[English]

TRANSPORTATION

Ms. Pam Damoff (Oakville North—Burlington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in my riding of Oakville North—Burlington, I have long advocated for safe cycling as founder of Cycle Oakville and working with groups like the Burlington cycling advisory committee, Halton Regional Police Service, and Share the Road Cycling Coalition.

People are concerned about being able to ride safely. Over the years, sadly, we have lost members of our cycling community while they were riding their bikes.

Can the Minister of Transport tell us what he is doing to enhance bike safety?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I certainly can. I would like to thank my colleague from Oakville North—Burlington for her important question and for her involvement in this file.

[Translation]

Safety is very important to us and of course our thoughts are with the families and loved ones of those who lost their lives.

That is why I am very pleased to announce that the federal government is working with its provincial and territorial counterparts. We have created a working group to address the issue and reduce the number of accidents. We are working on this file in order to improve the situation—

The Speaker: Order.

The hon. member for Beauport—Limoilou.

* * *

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Mr. Alupa Clarke (Beauport—Limoilou, CPC): Mr. Speaker, according to new union reports, the office in Miramichi is processing files from just 46 of the 101 departments that are experiencing problems with the Phoenix pay system.

This means that the minister was not aware of these 55 other departments that also deserve to be given priority, or worst still, was attempting to conceal the situation altogether. In other words, the number of problem cases might be much higher than the 80,000 known cases.

Instead of setting impossible deadlines, will the minister finally just fix the pay system so that all public servants can pay their rent or their mortgage and put food on the table?

Ms. Leona Alleslev (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the problems currently affecting the public service pay system are totally unacceptable.

We know that this situation is extremely frustrating. Employees of the department are working non-stop; resolving this matter is our top priority.

* * *

● (1505)

[English]

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, far from being a gift-wrapped package for the new government, in the words of Professor Gus Van Harten, CETA was in fact a ticking time bomb. People who know this file knew that the Europeans were not really happy with this deal. To defuse the ticking time bomb, the new government has a unique opportunity. Fashion this deal in the interests of Europeans and Canadians, remove the offensive investor-state provisions, and get to a deal on the real issue, which is trade.

Will the Prime Minister consider removing the investor-state provisions from CETA?

Routine Proceedings

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the fact is, when we came into government a year ago, we discovered that the CETA deal was in deep trouble. Indeed, Europeans had real concerns about the investor-state dispute mechanisms. That is why we sat down with the Europeans and created a new ISDS approach that actually makes it the gold standard, makes it an extraordinarily progressive deal that Europe has happily signed on to. We are confident that in the coming days we will see a positive outcome for this historic deal.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[*Translation*]

INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

Ms. Yasmin Ratansi (Don Valley East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1), I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, two reports of the delegation of the Canadian Branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association.

[*English*]

The first concerns the bilateral visit to Providenciales and Grand Turk, Turks and Caicos, and Georgetown, Guyana, from February 7 to February 14.

[*Translation*]

The second report concerns the International Parliamentary Conference on Energy, Sustainability and Development, held in London, United Kingdom, from March 14 to 17.

* * *

● (1510)

[*English*]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

FINANCE

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the sixth report of the Standing Committee on Finance entitled “The Canada Revenue Agency, Tax Avoidance and Tax Evasion: Recommended Actions”.

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

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour of tabling the dissenting opinion of the Conservative Party of Canada to the sixth report of the Standing Committee on Finance.

We are cautiously optimistic that the government can build on our strong record of combatting tax evasion. We are very concerned that the expenditures it plans on making will not provide the expected return on investment, and if these measures do not bear sufficient fruit and without “duty of care” provisions in place, a more robust CRA may begin to target ordinary Canadians and small business owners rather than the large corporations and high net-worth individuals evading taxes.

CANADA REVENUE AGENCY ACT

Mr. Len Webber (Calgary Confederation, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-316, An Act to amend the Canada Revenue Agency Act (organ donors).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce a bill that would assist the provinces in growing and maintaining their organ donor registries. Four thousand six hundred Canadians are currently awaiting a transplant, and we can help.

My bill would ask Canadians, on their annual tax return, if they consent to having their provincial or territorial government inform of their desire to be added to their organ donor registry. The bill would be a sensible, cost-effective way of using an existing and legally binding document to annually update organ donor registries throughout the country. It would respect provincial jurisdictions and utilize existing privacy and information-sharing agreements. It would have the potential to save many lives.

I want to thank the hon. member for Calgary Shepard for seconding my bill. I look forward to having support across all parties.

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

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HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH ACT

Hon. Judy A. Sgro (Humber River—Black Creek, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-317, An Act to designate the month of October as Hispanic Heritage Month.

She said: Mr. Speaker, this is truly a great honour on behalf of the Hispanic community, which has a population of well over 900,000 people who contribute an immense amount to the cultural vibrancy of our great country of Canada.

I would be thrilled if we could move forward between now and the next October so that October would be officially recognized as national Hispanic month.

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

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MULTICULTURALISM

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, following discussions with all parties in the House, I hope you will find consent for the following motion. I move:

That the House join the 69,742 Canadian supporters of House of Commons e-petition (e-411) in condemning all forms of Islamophobia.

[*Translation*]

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

Hon. members: Agreed.

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

Hon. members: Agreed.

Routine Proceedings

(Motion agreed to.)

* * *

• (1515)

[English]

2016 OLYMPIC AND PARALYMPIC ATHLETES

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions among the other parties and if you seek it, I believe you would find unanimous consent for the following motion. I move:

That, notwithstanding any Standing Order or usual practice of the House, following question period on Wednesday, November 2, 2016, the House resolve itself into a committee of the whole in order to welcome Canada's 2016 Rio Olympic and Paralympic Games athletes; that the Speaker be permitted to preside over the committee of the whole and make welcoming remarks on behalf of the House; and, when the proceedings of the committee have concluded, the committee shall rise.

The Speaker: Does the hon. parliamentary secretary have the unanimous consent of the House to propose the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

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RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in light of the motion that was just adopted by the House, and given that tomorrow is International Religious Freedom Day, I would like to seek the unanimous consent of the House for the following motion. I move:

That, this House condemns all forms of persecution against all religious groups including Christians, Jews, Hindus, Buddhists, Sikhs and Muslims.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

PETITIONS

SENIORS

Hon. Alice Wong (Richmond Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to present a petition to the House this afternoon regarding a national strategy for Canada's seniors.

The petitioners call upon the government to appoint a minister for seniors and to develop a national strategy for seniors.

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, like my colleague from Richmond Centre, I have the honour to present a

petition calling on this Parliament to develop a national strategy for Canada's seniors.

Currently one in six Canadians is a senior. In the next 14 years, that number will rise to one in four, including myself. With an aging population of seniors outnumbering youth in Canada, this is a pressing and future need.

Parliament must listen to Canadians and appoint a minister of seniors and develop a national strategy for seniors.

WILD SALMON

Mr. Fin Donnelly (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table yet another petition in support of my private member's bill to strengthen the Fisheries Act, Bill C-228. This petition is signed by Canadians from Ontario, Quebec, and British Columbia.

The petitioners call on members of the House to vote yes to Bill C-228, when it comes to a vote later this year, and help save wild salmon.

Although the rules of the House do not allow me to endorse a petition, I am thrilled that Canadians right across the country support my bill.

SENIORS

Mr. Len Webber (Calgary Confederation, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is also my pleasure to rise today to present a petition regarding seniors.

The petitioners call upon the House to appoint a minister of seniors and to develop a national strategy for seniors. It is their hope that such a focus will allow for better treatment of seniors and a better focus on the issues that affect seniors.

SMALL BUSINESS

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition signed by campers with respect to the Minakwa Lodge in Gogama, Ontario, which is located in the picturesque riding of Nickel Belt.

The petitioners call upon the government to ensure that campgrounds with less than five full-time, year-round employees will continue to be recognized and taxed as small businesses.

HOUSING

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

The first petition is from residents of Saanich—Gulf Islands, particularly Salt Spring Island and Mayne Island.

The petitioners call upon the government to follow the advice of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities and move to an affordable housing strategy for Canada.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is very specific to the Saanich Inlet. It is a very small inlet and pollution problems are mostly discharged from people living aboard their vessels.

The petitioners are working with Transport Canada, but ask that this be expedited to create a pollution-free, discharge-free zone for the Saanich Inlet.

150TH ANNIVERSARY OF CONFEDERATION

Hon. Peter Van Loan (York—Simcoe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as part of the government's war on history, neither Confederation nor its history are included as permitted themes for the 150th anniversary of Confederation.

The petition I present today has been organized by members of three historical societies: the Williams Lake Museum & Historical Society, Williams Lake being a community whose history dates back to the Confederation era; the Barrhead & District Historical Society in Alberta, which runs the Barrhead Centennial Museum, a museum established in 1967 as a centennial project; and, the North Peace Historical Society, whose museum is located in Centennial Park in Fort St. John, B.C. Historical projects like these were undertaken across Canada to celebrate the centennial of Confederation in 1967.

To help Canadians know and celebrate their history, the petitioners call upon the government to reverse the decision to exclude Confederation as a theme of the 150th anniversary of Confederation, and to pay respect to Canada's history by making Confederation a theme of the 150th anniversary of Confederation.

• (1520)

ANIMAL WELFARE

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions to introduce today.

The first petition is from a number of constituents who are deeply concerned about the extent of animal use in both private and publicly funded scientific research in Canada.

The petitioners point out that these animals are made to endure severe pain that is near or above the pain tolerance threshold of unanesthetized conscious animals, and that the studies may be of long duration, after which the animals may be killed or recycled.

They request that the government implement an immediate ban on any scientific research on animals that fall under the Canadian Council on Animal Care's categories of invasiveness D and E. They would like Canada to be a North American leader in the use of humane approaches that are proving more effective, cost efficient, and humane.

BLOOD DONATIONS

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is from a number of people who are concerned about the ban on men who have sex with men from donating blood if they have not had sexual contact for at least one year.

The petitioners point out that every blood donation has several blood samples taken to test for infectious disease. They point out that studies have recognized that the human immunodeficiency virus and STDs are transmittable across all genders and sexualities.

They therefore would like to adopt a science-based screening process for blood donors that does not discriminate on the basis of gender or sexual preference, and have Canada immediately defer this

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policy and change it so all people can donate blood, regardless of their sexual orientation.

CELL TOWERS

Mr. David Tilson (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition with almost 1,400 signatures of people who are concerned about cell towers.

The petitioners point out that there are studies in Brazil, Israel, and Germany which show that the cancer rate increases up to 40 times higher within 400 metres of a cell tower than beyond 1,000 metres.

They ask the government to ensure that cellular antennae towers are kept away from schools and other sensitive areas, and enforce continuous monitoring during and after the installation of cellular antennas/towers for minimum achievable radio-frequency and microwave radiation levels.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I ask that all 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]

CANADA BUSINESS CORPORATIONS ACT

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.) moved that 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, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

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He said: Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak to Bill C-25. This government is making innovation a priority. That means helping Canadian companies drive growth and create jobs that strengthen the middle class. It also means growing companies that can compete in the global marketplace.

The government's inclusive innovation agenda is a plan to drive economic growth through innovation. As legislators, we have a responsibility to set the ground rules for doing business, and we have the means to create the winning conditions for people and companies to innovate and thrive.

[*Translation*]

It is no accident that our innovation agenda has the word “inclusive” attached to it.

[*English*]

This government recognizes that our country is at its most prosperous when everyone has a fair chance to succeed.

[*Translation*]

Bill C-25, which I present to the House today, makes important adjustments to the framework laws that govern the Canadian marketplace. These laws set out how corporations are organized.

• (1525)

[*English*]

They also promote investor confidence and a competitive marketplace. These conditions support long-term investment and economic growth, and this bill would make it easier for Canadian companies to harness their innovation to succeed. It would also position businesses to operate in the global and digital marketplace.

Before describing these changes in more detail, I will speak to the global context in which these framework laws operate.

Today's marketplace is complex and changing rapidly. Global companies are becoming local companies and competitors, and new technologies are providing companies with vast amounts of information to make decisions.

Technology also allows transactions to happen quickly across the global, and the global marketplace is more interconnected than ever before. A disruption or discovery in one part of the world can have profound consequences in another.

[*Translation*]

To remain competitive, companies must understand how their partners, suppliers, competitors, and customers do business. Our government is committed to making Canada a global innovation leader.

[*English*]

This means enabling businesses to grow, increasing our country's productivity, and creating well-paying jobs for the middle class. It also means Canada's marketplace framework laws must be updated to reflect a global and digital economy.

These laws must be updated to enhance investor confidence, foster competition, and contribute to an inclusive economic growth agenda.

These laws should also support investment and innovation without unduly burdening businesses.

The amendments I have tabled today would provide the foundation for a 21st century marketplace.

[*Translation*]

They will align Canada's framework laws with best practices in jurisdictions around the world.

[*English*]

The bill sets out measures to modify the way corporate directors are elected. The bill also contains measures to improve diversity on corporate boards and in senior management level positions.

The goal is to attract the best and brightest from as wide a talent pool as possible. This is how Canada can make full use of the competitive advantage granted to us by this extraordinary diversity of our population.

Additionally, Bill C-25 would improve corporate transparency.

[*Translation*]

It will eliminate outdated instruments of commerce and modernize shareholder communications. These changes will reflect the new norms and practices of a digital economy.

[*English*]

The bill would increase business certainty and flexibility as well. It would allow Canadian businesses to focus on what makes them most productive, efficient, and innovative. The laws being amended in this bill include the Canada Business Corporations Act, or CBCA.

This statute sets out the rules that facilitate the interaction among shareholders, directors, management, and other interested parties involved in corporate decision-making. In 2015, there were approximately 270,000 companies incorporated under the act. The CBCA serves as a model for other governance laws.

The Canada Cooperatives Act is the framework legislation for federally incorporated non-financial co-operatives. The Canada Not-for-profit Corporations Act is the framework law for non-share capital corporations. In 2015, there were more than 19,000 federally incorporated not-for-profit corporations under the act.

The Competition Act is a law of general application that addresses anti-competitive business conduct. It examines and seeks to address the activities of firms that may be harming competition in the marketplace. By improving and clarifying the rules under which our firms operate, we are positioning them for long-term growth.

[*Translation*]

We are also aligning Canada's practices with international best practices in corporate governance.

• (1530)

[*English*]

October is Women's History Month. This is a time when we celebrate the women who have shaped Canada's history as leaders, entrepreneurs, scholars, artists, and trailblazers in all spheres of life. Let me address what the bill does for diversity.

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[Translation]

As I have said before, I firmly believe it is our moral duty to promote diversity and inclusion.

[English]

Under-representation of different segments of our population is not only a question of fairness, it affects the bottom line. In the boardroom, as in life, taking into consideration viewpoints from a variety of perspectives can lead to innovative thinking and better performance. Innovation requires fresh ideas, new ideas, and the best ideas can come from anyone, anywhere.

We live in an age when anyone with a smartphone can connect, create, collaborate, trade, and sell, regardless of distance. Because the tools to create knowledge and value are now available to everyone, a teenager can start her own technology company.

[Translation]

A university student can launch a social-media platform that becomes a global sensation overnight.

[English]

The broader the talent pool, the greater the potential for the next great app to emerge.

Our government is committed to doing all we can to unlock the full potential of Canadians, especially those who are under-represented in certain sectors of today's economy. I know that all parliamentarians support this goal as well.

Earlier this year, this Parliament unanimously passed, and this was a point of pride, Bill C-11, which allowed Canada to become the first G7 country to adopt the Marrakesh Treaty. I was proud to announce this piece of legislation in the House and see it receive the support of all parliamentarians.

The Marrakesh Treaty benefits three million Canadians who are visually impaired or print disabled. As a result of the treaty, they will have better access to books and other copyrighted materials. As a result of better access to knowledge, these Canadians will be able to fully participate in the economy. That is how our government's commitment to diversity allows Canadians from all walks of life to become productive members of society.

Bill C-25 builds on that commitment to innovation and prosperity through diversity.

As part of the reforms to the CBCA, corporations would be required to disclose to shareholders the composition of their boards and senior management. They would also be required to make public their diversity policies. Those corporations without a diversity policy would have to explain why they do not have one.

[Translation]

This amendment will complement existing measures already adopted by most provincial securities regulators.

[English]

It would apply to all publicly traded CBCA corporations, regardless of which securities regulator they reported to.

By taking into account the composition of boards, investors could make informed choices when they exercised their voting rights.

These reforms are designed to facilitate a conversation between shareholders and corporations on how they are promoting diversity.

[Translation]

The goal is to encourage corporations to consider a broader range of candidates and skill sets among their senior leaders.

[English]

The second set of amendments contained in Bill C-25 aims to promote greater shareholder democracy. The goal is to ensure that the voting process allows shareholders to have their voices heard in a meaningful way.

The bill would make three key reforms to the process of electing corporate directors. These reforms would affect publicly traded CBCA corporations and publicly traded co-operatives incorporated under the Canada Cooperatives Act.

First, the bill would require the prescribed corporations and co-operatives to hold annual votes for the election of corporate directors. Currently the law permits directors to hold office for up to three years before a vote is required. The entrenchment of company boards can hamper innovative thinking.

[Translation]

Ensuring that shareholders can make changes more often is a step in the right direction.

●(1535)

[English]

Second, directors under the CBCA would be elected individually, not as a slate or a group of candidates. An all-or-nothing approach prevents voters from meaningfully exercising their democratic rights and bringing in the board they want.

Third, the bill would permit shareholders to vote explicitly against a candidate in an uncontested election, that is, when the number of candidates was the same as the number of board positions to be filled. Even when there was no competing candidate, a prospective director would still need enough votes in support of her candidacy to make up a majority of the votes cast to be elected.

[Translation]

Of course, there is more to shareholder participation than simply voting. Transparency and clarity are important to shareholders as well.

*Government Orders**[English]*

The bill would modernize shareholder communications to align practices with how businesses are conducted today. The bill would permit CBCA corporations and co-operatives incorporated under the Canada Cooperatives Act to provide their shareholders or members with online access to relevant documents related to an annual meeting. This notice and access system would reduce costs, conserve resources, and increase business efficiency.

In addition, the bill would simplify the deadline for shareholders to submit proposals to directors so that they could participate in meetings more often and effectively.

The fourth amendment would make it clear that CBCA corporations and federal non-financial co-operatives would be prohibited from issuing share certificates and share warrants in bearer form. Much like cash, a bearer share is owned by whoever holds the physical stock certificate. The issuing firm neither registers the owner nor tracks any transfers of ownership, and when these instruments are issued in blank form, they can be used as a vehicle for money laundering or terrorist financing. That is because they are easily transferrable and untraceable.

This amendment would require all shares to be registered. It is a preventive measure that would be particularly relevant to law enforcement.

[Translation]

It will ensure that Canada aligns its rules with the recommendations of the international Financial Action Task Force.

[English]

The bill would also amend the Competition Act to broaden the understanding of what makes one business entity affiliated with another. Currently, because of its outdated definition, there is a risk that business between affiliates could be viewed under the law as a joint action with competitors.

The existing law does not fully account for non-corporate structures, such as sole proprietorships, partnerships, or trusts. This uncertainty could lead to companies being needlessly exposed to sanctions under the act, and reorganization among affiliated companies could be interpreted as a merger of competing firms.

That process could require notifying the Commissioner of Competition. It could also incur a fee and a significant amount of paperwork. There is also the risk that a collaborative project between two affiliated companies could be treated as an arrangement between competing firms. It could be misrepresented or misinterpreted as harmful competition or outright collusion.

To address this legislative gap, the bill would update the Competition Act's rules on affiliation and would make the rules business structure-neutral. This update would ensure, clearly and explicitly, that businesses that are engaged in joint ventures with their affiliates are not subjected unwittingly to the act's enforcement provisions.

[Translation]

This amendment will create certainty and replace an outdated framework that can cost businesses unnecessary time and resources.

[English]

One of the key features of this bill is that it positions Canada among world leaders in corporate governance. For example, most member states of the European Union have implemented gender diversity legislation. Both the United Kingdom and Australia have required disclosure, including a comply or explain model in the latter case, which saw significant improvements in terms of board representation.

In the United States, publicly listed companies have adopted policies on majority voting for corporate directors. Even in Canada we have seen provincial securities regulators adopt similar rules that promote greater shareholder participation and corporate diversity.

● (1540)

[Translation]

These amendments are an important step forward.

[English]

They would modernize corporate governance laws to align with today's technological realities and support business efficiency. They would promote greater transparency, accountability, and public confidence in the marketplace and give investors the information they need to make informed decisions about their investments.

Above all, these amendments recognize the great asset that is our country's diversity. Canada's business community would have a crucial role in promoting diversity. Some have already done so, and I know that others will step up to show that they are committed to growing our economy by tapping Canada's full potential. By modernizing our ground rules and aligning with international standards, Canada can position itself for the inclusive innovation and growth that would propel this country going forward.

I am proud to be launching this important initiative today on behalf of the Government of Canada.

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Madam Speaker, comply or explain is one way we can go about having gender equity on boards. It is important to note that this is only the second time this bill has been looked at and amended. We are looking at 40 years of not being actively engaged on this file, and we have seen a lot of financial issues that affected Canadians not only here at home but internationally.

The minister is looking at a comply or explain strategy, but why not take the full step and set targets to chase after to ensure that we do not have to wait around to see what is next.

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Some jurisdictions that have gone with this have not been successful in making the transition, so I would suggest that perhaps we need a stronger stick. The carrot-and-stick approach is often used with corporations that have not been doing a good job with regard to some of the equality issues we have had to deal with, and this is one of them. It is not just in Canada, in particular. We are in a time when we need to make sure that there is going to be greater enforcement.

If that is not going to work, I would ask if the minister is open to an amendment I will be proposing that there be a review of this legislation within five years. I want to ensure that there is actually going to be a continuation of this goal of having greater equity in boardrooms across this country. I believe that there will be quite a discussion about comply or explain at the end of committee deliberations, but what is the backup plan?

Hon. Navdeep Bains: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague for his very thoughtful question and his engagement on this bill. We have had numerous discussions about the subject matter that he raised.

The member is right. The last time we had significant changes to the framework and the framework laws was in 2001. He is absolutely correct in his assessment of the situation at the corporate board level. Only 13.1% have women corporate directors right now. That is absolutely unacceptable. There are 40% of companies that do not have any women on their boards.

This is the challenge with which we are dealing. The idea of comply or explain, and putting forward this policy is really a reflection of watching what happened in the U.K. and Australia, when they put these measures into place. They did see a significant jump in the number of women at the senior level positions, senior management, and at the board level. We are trying to see how this unfolds.

I do acknowledge that the member opposite has put forward some ideas and thoughts with respect to amendments. There is a process in committee to look at that. As a government we do not have a monopoly on good ideas. We always look forward to the opportunity of engaging the opposition, and seeing what ideas they come back with.

That is the underlying premise of this bill. It is promoting diversity, different viewpoints and thoughts, and coming together with a progressive agenda that really speaks to our diversity, and the fact that we want to have an inclusive agenda going forward.

The member opposite raises some good points. I look forward to having that discussion, and so do my colleagues at committee, when he brings those amendments forward.

• (1545)

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Toronto—Danforth, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I was happy to hear this presentation, and to hear the minister speak about requiring comply or explain in boards of directors.

Just today, I was at a lunch where we talked about the media coverage of women in sport. One of the issues that came up was that at a board of directors meeting, if there are not that many women present, and they are discussing what kind of coverage they should have of women in sport, the discussion might be quite different if

there are more women sitting at the table and participating in that discussion.

Does the minister agree that it is not only about having more women on boards, because it is good to have more women on boards, but because of the ripple effect that it can have as to the way we do things in this country? It can have a ripple effect that could actually bring gender parity all the way through different ripples, if we include more women.

Hon. Navdeep Bains: Madam Speaker, the member raises a very good point. It is not simply a moral duty and obligation that we have as a society to make sure we see better diversity reflected at the most senior levels, at the board level, and senior management, it is also good business practice. It is good for the bottom line. It is good for the customers. It is good for having new, creative ideas and solutions, and being innovative, thoughtful, and progressive.

We want to make sure that we see this replicated, not only in corporate Canada but at the government level. Under the leadership of our Prime Minister, we want to demonstrate that, as we move forward with appointments, we have a process that is really going to bring the best and brightest forward. We are also going to have a strong diversity lens to make sure that we reflect the true diversity in society in the government appointment process.

We also want to not only show leadership at the government level but to tell corporate Canada and businesses that they have a responsibility, an obligation, to promote diversity. I am confident, when they put forward the diversity policies, it is going to be very engaging for the shareholders, and it is really going to be good for the bottom line.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Madam Speaker, this bill is clearly of great interest to us.

I was the mayor of Thetford Mines for seven years, and there was only one woman around the table of ten councillors. When she decided to step down, I was very worried that the council would not have female representation. That would have been unfortunate. Together with other community members, I had to find ways to attract women to the job and to ensure that they were engaged and not intimidated by the overrepresentation of men. They have their place on municipal councils and also on boards of directors. I believe that women really do have a place there.

Has the minister thought of other ways to promote these positions on corporate boards? It is good to show openness, but we must pave the way and ensure that women really do have a place, and not just a symbolic place.

Hon. Navdeep Bains: Madam Speaker, I agree with my colleague. He makes a strong case and asks a good question.

[*English*]

His view is shared by many in the House, and those who were part of the consultation process. Just to highlight that, the Canadian Coalition for Good Governance, for example, is very supportive and said when these amendments are enacted, the federal government will have made many of the important changes required to bring Canada's federal corporate laws to best in class global standards.

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We have also received support from the Ontario Securities Commission. Its CEO said:

As we continue to call on corporate Canada to make gender diversity a priority in the boardroom and executive suite, we are especially pleased by the proposal to expand our comply or explain approach to more Canadian companies.

Again, there is more support from the Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan. We want to create this new inclusive culture that promotes diversity at the board level. Hopefully, it will expand to different levels of government, and different aspects of society because it is not only the right thing to do but it is also good for businesses.

• (1550)

Mr. Wayne Stetski (Kootenay—Columbia, NDP): Madam Speaker, I have always believed that the more diverse a committee, or a board, or the House of Commons, the better the discussion and the decision-making.

I am happy to see these changes coming forward. I also hope that the hon. member will support the amendment, and actually attach some targets to it.

I am curious, if there are no targets, what is the government planning to do to at least measure whether this is actually having any impact or not moving forward?

Hon. Navdeep Bains: Madam Speaker, the objective of the bill is to change behaviour. The objective of the bill is to see improvements at the corporate level, at the management level, and we will be monitoring it very closely.

We want to see how progress is being made, and that is part of our government's overall objective in promoting diversity. With respect to amendments or changes, I look forward to the discussion that will take place at committee with hon. colleagues. I also look forward to appearing before committee as well to speak about that and many other issues that will be presented.

Hon. Diane Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk, CPC): Madam Speaker, before I begin, I ask for unanimous consent to share my time with the member for Mégantic—L'Érable.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Does the member have unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Hon. Diane Finley: Madam Speaker, the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development introduced Bill C-25, which is an act to amend the Canada Business Corporations Act, the Canada Cooperatives Act, the Canada Not-for-profit Corporations Act, and the Competition Act.

The proposed amendments by the Liberals in Bill C-25 stem from a House of Commons committee-led statutory review in 2010, which in turn led to further consultation undertaken in 2014 by our previous Conservative government. Stakeholders raised many important and complex points on a number of aspects of corporate governance during those consultations.

After our previous Conservative government concluded the consultations in 2014, we made a proposal to modernize Canada's corporate governance framework in our 2015 budget. For those in the House who may not be aware, let me read an excerpt from page 140 of that 2015 economic action plan:

...the Government will propose amendments to the Canada Business Corporations Act to promote gender diversity among public companies, using the widely recognized "comply or explain" model...Amendments will also be proposed to modernize director election processes and communications... to strengthen corporate transparency through an explicit ban on bearer instruments... Amendments to related statutes governing cooperatives and not-for-profit corporations will also be introduced...

I hate to steal the minister's thunder, but Bill C-25 is the minister's second piece of legislation he has tabled since being in office now for one year. Just like his first piece of legislation, this, Bill C-25, came straight from our previous Conservative government's 2015 budget.

I am really pleased to see that all the hard work that our previous government did is continuing through the Liberals, and their need to produce at least some form of legislation, but I cannot help but wonder if this is what the Liberals meant when they talked to Canadians about real change.

If adopted, Bill C-25 would result in changes to the corporate governance regime for reporting issuers incorporated under the Canada Business Corporations Act. The CBCA is the incorporating statute for nearly 270,000 corporations. Although most of these are small or medium-sized and privately held, a large number of Canada's largest reporting issuers are also governed by CBCA.

The proposed amendments cover several key corporate governance matters, including majority voting, individual voting, annual elections, notice and access, diversity related disclosure, and shareholder proposal filing deadlines.

I am pleased to see that the Liberals moved forward with the comply or explain model that we recommended. It has been proven that more diverse boards lead to better overall decision-making, better corporate performance, better organizations, and, indeed, better economies.

Our Conservative Party has never been on the sidelines when it comes to diversity firsts in Canada. In fact, it was the Conservative Party who had the first female prime minister; who elected the first female MP to the House of Commons; the first Chinese, Muslim, Black, Latino, Hindu, Pakistani, Japanese, and physically disabled MPs; and that list goes on. That is a record of which to be proud.

Our Conservative Party believes in merit not quotas. I am pleased we are not going to be missing out on talent, nor will we be losing out on that talent because of artificial quotas.

Since the Ontario Securities Commission implemented the comply or explain model just two years ago, the number of women on boards there has steadily increased to 20%.

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However, looking at Canada as a whole, in larger companies women make up an average of 34% of boards. Implementing the widely used comply or explain model is the first step to seeing those numbers increase too. If enacted, that change would affect about 600 of the approximately 1,500 companies on the TSX.

• (1555)

When it comes to modernizing corporate governance and reducing red tape, our previous government made massive strides. We believe in fostering an environment in which businesses can grow and contribute to Canada's long-term prosperity. In fact, we recognize that businesses play a vital role in creating jobs and generating economic growth, and that strong business strategies are central to a company's success in creating and sustaining a competitive edge.

The changes proposed to the Competition Act, as we are discussing today, will do just that. They would reduce business uncertainty, create a competitive marketplace, and prevent anti-competitive practices. The amendments would also reduce the administrative burden on businesses.

Our previous Conservative government set a precedent, the first of its kind in any country in fact, when we introduced the one-for-one rule, which brought a new level of discipline to how government fosters a more predictable environment for business through the reduction of red tape.

We took a number of steps to reduce red tape facing businesses. Indeed, since 2012, the red tape reduction action plan has proven to be a successful, system-wide control on the growth of regulatory red tape. Our previous government saved Canadian businesses over \$22 million in the administrative burden, as well as some 290,000 hours in time spent dealing with the unnecessary regulatory burden.

Further enhancing the changes that we made while in government, Bill C-25 was to be our next step in maximizing corporate governance.

More accountability and transparency are key for any organization in government, and a high-performance board is one that is accountable. The right to vote is important for shareholders and for fundamental democracy.

I am pleased to see that shareholder democracy and participation will better align with securities rules and that corporations would be required under the CBCA to hold annual elections, elect directors individually, and use a majority voting standard. This proposal will bring an end to the debate over those circumstances in which an under-supported director may remain on the board.

The proposed amendments in Bill C-25 would further implement many policies and practices that are already addressed under TSX rules and security laws. Modernizing the acts addressed in Bill C-25 is a welcome improvement to the federal corporate statute and a reflection of the need to enhance companies' corporate governance practices.

If the minister wants to continue putting forward legislation that comes straight from Conservative budgets, well, those would be welcome too.

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

Madam Speaker, I suspect the bill would not have been necessary if the former prime minister and Conservative government had been successful at getting the job done on the file. However, I am glad and grateful that the official opposition appears to be supportive of the legislation.

Part of it is also demonstrating leadership on the file. I think we have seen that leadership demonstrated virtually from day one by this particular government when it appointed a gender-neutral cabinet.

Would the member not agree that not only is it important that Canada bring forward this legislation but also that it demonstrates the good will we have seen from the Prime Minister and other jurisdictions in Canada to date?

• (1600)

Hon. Diane Finley: Madam Speaker, in fact, when we formed government our cabinet was extremely diverse. It had more women than ever before in cabinet, and we were very proud of that.

Not only that, but all of the women who were in cabinet were paid according to their responsibilities. It was not just equal pay for equal title, but equal pay for equal work, which I believe is important. It goes back to being a meritocracy.

As a woman, I do not want to think I got the job just because of the way my jacket buttons, if the buttons are to the right or to the left. I want to know that I got that job because of my abilities. We want to make sure that boards do the same thing, which is why we do not believe in quotas. We know, too, that all the records show that as the diversity of boards increase, so does the performance of the company.

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Madam Speaker, I appreciate those comments and would follow up on the comply or explain model to look at what has taken place in Germany. Chancellor Merkel, one of the strongest women leaders we have known in our generation, just passed legislation to have quotas because in Germany they have been stuck for many years at a smaller amount under comply and explain. Therefore, they have moved to a quota system that will take place rather quickly, by 2018, mandating 30% for blue-chip companies and 50% for the public sector, that being hospitals and not-for-profit organizations.

I would ask the member to perhaps reflect on the German experience and what Chancellor Merkel has done in her country.

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Hon. Diane Finley: Madam Speaker, it is important to recognize that numerous studies have been done over many years to try to determine what the effect is of having more women on boards and of having people with disabilities on boards, and, indeed in the workplace. In fact, just a few years ago, it was shown that having people with disabilities included in an organization, in particular on the board, increased the morale, productivity, and overall performance of the company.

The question becomes, does the company do better because of hiring those people, or is it a better company because it hires those people? The smart companies do bring on people who have a range of perspectives and talents, and they do not artificially hold anyone back. We want to make sure this happens here, not something that is introduced through artificial quotas.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Madam Speaker, I really liked my hon. colleague's comments to the effect that having a seat on a board of directors does not depend on whether the buttons on your jacket are to the right or to the left. Many women are very talented. A large number of women and people of diverse backgrounds have a lot of talent, but they still hesitate to apply for a job and take their place.

Could my hon. colleague suggest some steps that could be taken to help these women take their place—their rightful place?

[English]

Hon. Diane Finley: Madam Speaker, one of the best ways of recruiting board members is the word of mouth of those who are in the business. One of the biggest things that can happen to help promote more women to boards is for other board members to recognize the talent and promote those individuals that they know will do a good job, because, frankly, once the board members see what a good job these women are doing, they will go looking for more. I truly believe that.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would first like to congratulate my colleague on her speech. She was here back when we started talking about this bill to modernize Canadian companies.

I am very pleased to see this bill because this matter was important to the previous government, our government. It is the product of the work done by my colleagues who were here at the time, along with the other members of that Parliament. It stems from a legislative review that a House of Commons committee conducted in 2010, which led to more in-depth consultations in 2014 and the solutions we saw in budget 2015.

I had to laugh when I heard the Minister of Economic Development promote diversity on corporate boards and talk about the importance of considering viewpoints from a variety of perspectives, from all kinds of people and cultures, considering that he advocated for a single economic development minister for the whole country. Seriously.

Back in the day, we were lucky because each region of Canada had its own economic development minister. I am sure that brought some diversity and some interesting debate to the table during

cabinet meetings. Unfortunately, this government decided to get rid of that diversity in cabinet by not appointing ministers responsible for regional economic development agencies.

Now, let us return to the matter we are debating today. An American president once said that he liked the noise of democracy. Unfortunately, the same cannot be said of corporate boards in Canada, because the democratic process used by many Canadian companies is much more silent. At present, shareholders can vote for directors, but their vote is largely meaningless and has little to no influence on the outcome, as surprising as that may seem.

Some will even say that the election of corporate board members in Canada is more dictatorial than it is democratic. The current process only gives shareholders one option, and that is to vote for a candidate for a board position, or to abstain. In other words, if no one can vote against a board member, it only takes one vote for a candidate to be elected.

For years now, shareholders big and small have expressed frustration with the way corporate boards are voted in. They can clearly see that these boards have no accountability, because shareholders have little to no voice when it comes to electing them. When board members become inflexible or too tied to the opinions of management and they no longer represent shareholders' interests, in a way, shareholders no longer have any flexibility to remove individual board members or the entire board.

About 10 years ago, Canadian shareholders began working with the Canadian Coalition for Good Governance to call on Canadian businesses to voluntarily adopt a majority voting policy, which means that when a board member gets less than the majority of votes, he or she must step down from the board of directors, which must accept the resignation, unless there are exceptional circumstances.

The coalition's efforts are definitely starting to pay off, given that, over the past few years, more and more Canadian firms have adopted such a policy. Nearly everywhere, particularly in the United Kingdom, Europe, and Australia, and in most developed countries and markets, boards are elected by shareholders through a majority vote, that is, they must obtain a majority of the votes cast and not simply a plurality of votes, as is presently the case in Canada.

It is a bit embarrassing to see that Canada is still out of step with the rest of the world on such a fundamental issue as corporate governance. Whatever the historic reasons, the time has come to adopt a majority voting system in Canada to allow shareholders to have a say in how their corporation is run.

Jean-Philippe Décarie said the following in *La Presse*: “Large pension funds and institutional investors have been calling for this fundamental rule of democracy to be applied for years. They want boards of directors to do more to defend the rights of shareholders.”

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The bill before us today is essential and it is what stakeholders have been calling for.

What is more, it requires some corporations to present shareholders with information on the diversity among board members and senior management. The purpose of this requirement is to make boardrooms more diverse.

• (1605)

In June 2014, the minister of labour and status of women at the time tabled a report entitled “Good for Business: A Plan to Promote the Participation of More Women on Canadian Boards”. This report set out the methods that the public and private sectors could use to increase the representation of women on boards. Even at that time, there was talk of making changes to boards.

In October 2014, women held nearly 20.8% of seats on boards of registered companies. That number is now 30.1%, according to what the minister said today.

The previous government's 2015 budget proposed:

...to modernize Canada's federal corporate governance framework to increase women's participation in corporate leadership...

[by] using the...“comply or explain” model...

Amendments will also be proposed to modernize director election processes and communications with shareholders...

Many activities were initiated to promote greater gender parity on Canadian boards. The resulting momentum will help increase the representation of women on boards to over 30% by 2019, as recommended in the report entitled “Good for Business: A Plan to Promote the Participation of More Women on Canadian Boards”, which was tabled in 2014.

Quebec is one province that took a step in that direction by passing a law on crown corporation governance. That law came into effect in 2006, and women now make up 52.4% of those board members.

However, the law does force boards and crown corporations to recruit women and ensure proportional female representation. Those who were listening to what my colleague was saying earlier will know that the idea is for women to become board members because of their skills and what they can contribute, not because corporations are forced to fill a quota. I think that is important.

With respect to diversity on corporate boards, we should also talk about the age of board members. I think we need incentives related to that, too. In 2013, a Quebec organization called Force Jeunesse surveyed board members of 22 large crown corporations in Quebec, and the results were disappointing. Only 0.07% of all board members were under the age of 35. The Régie des rentes du Québec was one of the very few crown corporations with a board member under the age of 35. At the time of the survey, the average age of board members was 51.

If we want boards to be more diverse and more innovative, as the minister mentioned earlier, boards of directors must also take the age of their administrators into account.

The law is no longer up to date if we want to remain competitive in an increasingly globalized world. Good corporate governance is one of the mechanisms that help support economic efficiency and

growth. I believe that the proposed legislation will act as a critical foundation upon which Canadian companies can innovate and grow to scale in the modern economy.

Given that the last comprehensive amendments to the Canada Business Corporations Act were made in 2001, the act has not kept pace with certain international best practices and the rules governing publicly traded companies.

Improving the director election process and supporting diversity on boards will bring different views to the table and help foster innovation. Modernizing shareholder communications, improving corporate transparency, and clarifying competition rules will help ensure that Canada's marketplace frameworks reflect the new economic realities.

In order to grow and thrive in the global economy, Canada needs a strong corporate governance framework that both reflects and facilitates the best practices of Canadian corporations. I will therefore be voting in favour of this bill, which the previous government worked so hard on, while the current government is reaping the benefits of that work today.

• (1610)

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am delighted that the Conservatives are going to be supporting this piece of legislation. It is a good piece of legislation and we are always prepared to share credit. We hope to see it pass second reading relatively quickly, but we will wait and see what takes place.

It is important to recognize that the objective of the bill is to increase shareholder democracy and participation. It would increase women's participation on corporate boards and senior management. Improving corporate transparency is something that is really important, as are reducing the regulatory burden and increasing business certainty. These are all very important attributes of this piece of legislation.

Would the member be inclined to agree that this is the type of legislation that should receive virtually unanimous support in the House, especially given the Conservative Party's response here today?

• (1615)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Madam Speaker, I believe that a bill that refers to all the good objectives that the member opposite just listed, like diversity, the presence of women, or better communications, should indeed receive broad support in the House.

Any bill that manages to go from one government to another so easily must be built on solid foundations, and I sincerely think that members should support it.

Government Orders

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Madam Speaker, I commend my colleague on his speech. It is nice to see a topic like this one come so close to achieving unanimity. Everyone seems to be working toward the same thing and that is very good.

When we look back over the past 40 years, this is only the second time that Parliament has addressed this type of issue. In my neck of the woods, Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, the museum of women decided it would organize a big meeting to encourage women to step into the boardroom. Alexandre Taillefer, from XPND Capital, even came by to tell the women that their contribution and ideas were needed.

Does my colleague believe that the amendment that the NDP plans to propose calling for a legislative review of the bill every five years is appropriate? I do believe we should not wait another 40 or 20 years to review the measure.

Mr. Luc Berthold: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague very much for his question and also for his efforts to achieve equitable representation on the boards of these organizations.

I did the same thing with my municipal council. My greatest fear was to lose the only woman councillor we had. I am very pleased because three women were elected. It does take effort. The issue has to be addressed. There are competent women who can take their rightful place on our corporate boards.

On the specific question of my colleague's amendment, I will look at it once it has been drafted. If the amendment is worthy of our support, it will have it. However, we must first take the time to read it carefully.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I recognize that the member was hoping to be able to respond further, so I will allow him to respond to the comment, if he would.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Madam Speaker, in closing, I would just like to say that we will be supporting the bill. It is worth supporting. I am pleased that the parties all seem to want to support this bill.

However, I would like to remind the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development of the importance of diversity. It is also important at regional economic development agencies. We need diversity, we need ministers responsible for the different agencies to represent Canada's diversity within their departments. I would like to take this opportunity to remind the minister of that.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): It is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Windsor West, Infrastructure; the hon. member for Brantford—Brant, Small Business; the hon. member for Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship.

• (1620)

[*English*]

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am here to speak to something that is very important and it is good that this Parliament is bringing this forward. I think Bill C-25 is a positive initiative.

The minister mentioned the Marrakesh Treaty. That was a treaty that Canada signed onto through a bill passed here, which was important for the blind and for other Canadians, for larger print. It is one of the indications that we can actually move things through the House of Commons and we can have things done for Canadians.

The bill is movement in the right direction. As New Democrats, we are going to support it, for sure. There is no way that we would not support the initiatives of the bill, but there are some shortcomings with the current proposal. We will point out a couple of those, but we want to hear testimony from witnesses as well.

Bill C-25 is an act to amend the Canada Business Corporations Act, the Canada Cooperatives Act, the Canada Not-for-profit Corporations Act, and the Competition Act. Essentially what we are talking about is boards of governance in general, when we put the three core elements together. It is an opportunity to update and to include modern changes that are reflective. On the private sector model with the private corporations, blue chip corporations, and others, they have been very derelict, quite frankly, across the world in not having more of an inclusive nature. This is why it has come to the forefront, not just in Canada but across the world.

When we look at Europe and even at the United States, Canada has become known as a laggard with regard to this and there is no doubt about it. When the Conservatives talk about this getting through, after the 10 years it took them to bring something forward, right now we are happy to do so. Unfortunately, we are getting into a bragging competition between the Liberals and the Conservatives about this. However, I wonder why the bill is being launched again, another year and a bit later, basically the same as what it was before, especially given what we have seen with the more fundamental changes that are taking place in Germany and other places, which I will get into later, that are very important.

We are here today to at least take that first step forward in this process. To be clear, the most recent change to the measures in the bill was in 2001. That was just prior to my time here. It was under Jean Chrétien's government at that time, and prior to that it was decades before. We are really looking at nearly 40 years of letting them have the whole show so to speak. Right now, and this is how far things have come along and how difficult it still is, we require a legislative arm on this because still the right thing is not being done. Our corporate boards and tables across this country, where decisions are made about employees and about Canadians, do not even reflect anywhere near the diversity they should, and that is a shame. It is a shame that we have had to come this far.

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Hence, one of the amendments that the New Democrats will be bringing forth is to have some type of a review of this process in the legislation. There will be a good debate. I know some civil society organizations and some governance organizations, especially related to the advocacy of women, have questioned the voluntary element in this initiative and said that there should be some monitoring of that.

The one way we can do it, and it is a very respectful way, is to make sure we have this coming back to Parliament so that we and Canadians have a voice to ask why a company is not complying and being reflective to some degree of the Canadian people, or at least coming to the benchmarks, generally speaking, that reflect our society. There are those people historically who have popped through the different barriers that take place. However, I have a concern because of the thoughts we have had in the past related to boards. They were referred to as the “old boys' club”, and that is very real.

• (1625)

It is also an indication that not only is this an issue of gender, ethnicity, and diversity, but also of social class. We have people who are basically disavowed and ruled unable, unequal, or unworthy of rising through the ranks. They have to go through exceptional circumstances to break those barriers, and they have been some of the most ingenious people we have had. However, the time and day has come when everyone should count on who they are, what they think, what they do, and how hard they work, versus whom they know or who their family are, or at the very least, what their gender is.

We need to make sure that a number of things will be looked at here. These are very important.

The bill would have annual elections for directors. Right now, it can take up to three years for a director to be looked at. An annual director position can set the course on how a corporation responds to its shareholders.

If we believe in the essence of capitalism at face value, the argument there is that the shareholder is a voter and that in a democracy there are voting rights as a shareholder for the board and the CEO who controls it at that time. However, the current situation is that those meetings are not held, and if there is not that connection between the board and the shareholders, accountability can be avoided. Accountability can also be avoided by not publicizing meetings, or by not making sure that there is enough time in advance so that people can attend the meetings. Therefore, barriers can be created, similar to what I would call “non-tariff barriers”. When we are trying to sell products in another country, we cannot do so, because the non-tariff barriers or rules are so bad. It is the same with shareholders.

When we talk about shareholders, we are talking about ourselves. They are people who have invested their pensions or earnings. They buy those shares and the company gives them that equity in it, but if they cannot have any direct control whatsoever in terms of voting, because the CEO does not have the proper rules in place or has not been following them for up to three years. Then it becomes a problem. Therefore, the bill would require an annual meeting, which we are very supportive of.

Also, there is the structure of the old boys' club that was there regarding the election of directors as individuals. They used to run slates in the old boys' club, so to speak, making it more difficult for some other individuals who were trying to advance because the old boys' club was grouped against them. We would call that bullying today, but the reality is that we had a number of people who could not get through because the fix was in, so to speak, and the slate was developed. Now, with individual votes for those board members, at least there will be an individual case to made for each person.

I think that is the right way to do it, because, for example, some slates carried baggage where one could basically say, “I like three of the four, and I can live with them”. They would come out with a number of different things, as opposed to giving the right and basically saying that a single selection should be the way to go. I think that is going to be a good advancement.

On the issue of comply or explain, I noted that different countries have done different things. However, comply or explain is a way to bring the numbers up, and the current 18% or less share of women on boards is obviously not reflective of our society. With women making up over 50% of the population, but occupying less than 18% of board positions, it is an obvious problem that has to be fixed.

In surveys we have found that when comply or explain was used in the past in other countries and there have not been improvements in these numbers as a result, they have argued that not enough qualified people applied. That is the ceiling that is created. It is hard to challenge that, because we cannot have access to the confidential documents and information about who applied, who got left behind, and a number of different personal things that are very complicated, and so the target does not move at all. That is one of the reasons Chancellor Merkel in Germany moved legislation on this and now has a target of 30%.

• (1630)

Germany was simply fed up and said that for CEOs and blue-chip corporations the rate would be 30% and that they would have some time to bring that in. The time was shortened because they would need some time to comply or explain. For German not-for-profit boards and others, the rate is going to be 50%. There is a difference between 30% and 50%.

I was not privy to the debate and have not looked at what has taken place in the German legislation, but I am sure it will come out in testimony. Not-for-profit boards are found in hospitals, public institutions, and so forth. On those boards, of course, the rate should be 50% because taxpayers pay for those boards, and with 50% of our population being women they are directly paying 50%. We know that to be a fact. They need to have the same representation. In fact, they deserve to have the same representation. It is an absolute shame if they do not. This can be easily corrected. If women are supposed to be equal, then they deserve an equal voice in running those boards. We New Democrats are arguing for at least a review of this.

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This goes back to what we are proposing in terms of an amendment, so that people at the very least are made aware of this. There might be others who do more on comply or explain. There could be a better amendment, and New Democrats are open to that. However, we are not going to give a blank cheque to this piece of legislation. There is no way we are going to let this legislation go through without fighting tooth and nail to the end, without adding accountability to change the current situation. We will not let that happen. We have not come this far on so many other measures, and we still have much further to go, that we would basically put up our hands on the bill and say good luck, we will leave it to the other guys, and we will see everyone later. We are not going to do that. We have done that enough. I have seen that happen too often here in the chamber, most recently with another bill that looked at gender parity with respect to electoral reform, and it was turned down in the House. Sadly, it was another lost opportunity.

This cannot be another lost opportunity. This cannot go back in the record books for another 40 years without any action taking place. That is why I am particularly interested in the German case. Germany has gone through it and has changed.

We do know that the provinces have moved on this as well, and it will be interesting to hear the testimony at committee. They have moved on comply or explain and a few other things. We will be getting some of the results from them as well. I will be interested in hearing what is going on out there in committee. That will also give us a better sense of things.

Maybe we are wrong in the sense that corporations and not-for-profits will act quickly on this. I worked in a not-for-profit industry for a number of years and was successful in bringing in this model. Not-for-profits will comply and move toward that. This is our opportunity to bring it to Parliament and to Canada as a whole. We can find out if those who are laggards have a problem with it and how they are going to fix the problem. That is what we are going to see with this legislation. Hopefully we will see amendments that would make this happen, because we are just not going to leave it alone.

Another missed opportunity with respect to this issue is corporate CEO compensation. We are calling for more shareholders and investors to have a say on CEO pay. We are interested in looking at executive compensation as it is a part of the package. We have seen in Canada and around the world CEOs getting big bonuses while companies tank, and fire their workers left, right, and centre at the same time. We have to look no further than the CEOs at our banks. Their compensation was increasing at a time when banks were having some problems and we had to backstop some of them. The banks had record profits and their CEOs received increased compensation. During the last financial crisis, the average increase in their compensation was about 19%.

• (1635)

How is it that so many Canadians and so many small businesses are going through this problem that we have had. The challenges and the insecurity and the services they are supposed to get are challenged; government, which is funding this, is going into massive debt; and CEOs get almost 20%. Those banks have some of the highest credit card costs not only in Canada but across the world.

When it comes to credit card service fees, just talk to small merchants. Look at what is happening in Australia. Australia has a 0.5% cap and it is reviewing this and lowering it because banks are still making lots of money. It is bad for small business.

Here our small business people struggle when they go to the banks to get loans, and if they can get them, they are at high interest rates. Or public institutions like the BDC, or credit unions, have stepped in on riskier loans. What do the banks do in response? They fire more workers, close more branches, and they increase service fees. They do all of those things and the Conservatives set up what is basically a voluntary system for credit cards. It is like playing hockey and getting a penalty for cross-checking someone, but it is a voluntary penalty and if players want to go in the penalty box they can time themselves out if they want to. If they do not, that is okay, play on, play on.

Meanwhile CEOs are making 20% profit. This sends a message that bad behaviour is rewarded. What person does that? We do not do that in our home life. We do not reward bad behaviour, and if we do, it will probably not lead to a good solution in the end. No one does that kind of stuff and that is what we have done with CEO compensation.

Look at Target, for example. It came in and took over a Canadian company, Zellers, which was making a profit. That is key. Zellers was making a profit. It also had a unionized workforce and a wage just over the minimum. It had some benefits and it was making a profit. It was a company that was fulfilling its mandate for people, being a place to work, a place with benefits, a place that respected Canadian laws, but Target came in and what did it do? It ended up going bankrupt and shutting Zellers down, and the CEO of Target, Gregg Steinhafel, received a severance package of \$61 million, just \$10 million shy of the total severance package for the entire Target workforce. Great, that is capitalism at its best. That is a wonderful example of the Canadian dream being fulfilled.

I recently reviewed the Investment Canada Act, which has had so many changes made to it by previous Liberal and Conservative governments, it is in shambles with regard to this type of behaviour. There was nothing wrong with forcing Target to have some type of mandate or guarantees when it came into this country, so that we could preserve these workers' jobs and stop a bunch of black holes in shopping malls in communities across this country just because of corporate greed.

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At the end of the day, with \$61 million I am sure that the former CEO is not in our country. The people with the compensation are here and wondering what to do. Guess what we do as taxpayers? We have to fill in the pensions, the employment insurance, and we have to make sure that employees get retrained or find other jobs. So CEO compensation is significant and it goes on. The CEO with the highest pay, but worst stock return, is Donald Lindsay. His compensation right now is \$9.6 million and there is no remorse on his part. Encana Corporation compensation is \$10.8 million. Scott Saxberg of Crescent Point Energy Corporation gets \$8.8 million in compensation, despite the company's shareholder falling by 34.5%.

All of these things are taking place that detract from what could be in the bill and what could be greater accountability for Canadians. When we review the bill, let us make sure we crack open the elements that are necessary for full accountability. The big difference and why Canadians need to care more than ever before is that many Canadians are now investing in their own funds for their future. They go online and make purchases and that is why we need to make sure they have their rights protected.

• (1640)

Mr. Greg Fergus (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for Windsor West for giving a very passionate speech. He brought forward perhaps two initiatives.

Could he could talk a little further about the first initiative on having this bill up for review? Could he just expand on that a little more as to what he is looking at and what type of time frame?

Mr. Brian Masse: Madam Speaker, I and the parliamentary secretary are missing committee right now, though I am sure we will be updated.

It is important to note that all parties have been working on an excellent manufacturing report, which hopefully will be tabled in a collegial way at the industry committee. I look forward to working to see that to conclusion.

We are open to having a review process, and it has been done in different ways. We are proposing, at a very minimum, a five-year review. However, I have seen a three-year review done for the initial stages of a bill, just to see whether they are venturing into it. There are pros and cons to a three and a five-year review for that, but we would want, at a very minimum, a five-year review.

That would ensure that once the act were completed and implemented, it would have to be looked at by Parliament. Those under the review process, being the affected boards, the not-for-profit sector, and whatever, would know that the clock would be ticking for them to have to explain where they were at.

That process could be quite quick. If we find things are really good out there, then there can be a quick review and be done, basically, in a day. If we have a systemic problem, that could be further commentary for Parliament in hearings. It lends itself to be available and quite successful for those who are under it.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to acknowledge how much my colleague from Windsor West knows about this issue.

I think that he clearly established how big of a joke self-regulation is. We need to come up with good legislation in this regard. Capitalism can certainly be beneficial and it can certainly create wealth for everyone if it is administered properly. However, this huge gap between the salaries of senior management and regular employees is unacceptable. I can relate to the example that the member gave of black holes in shopping malls. I have seen it in Longueuil. It is affecting the people there. We had a Zellers. In fact, there was also a Zellers not far from here on Sparks Street. Employees with over 25 years of service lost their jobs while some joker draws a multimillion-dollar pension in the Bahamas. That is shameful.

I would like my colleague to expand on this subject because I imagine his region also had a Target that shut its doors.

[*English*]

Mr. Brian Masse: Madam Speaker, that is an important question and I would like to build on it. What is taking place is kind of unique and connects to what my colleague is saying.

People now have a little more control over their finances and how they make decisions about them. That is becoming the way of the future. We should all have an interest in ensuring it is democratized.

If people are participating and deciding where to move their money in a stock market system, they are protected in having a say. Decisions are not being made behind some curtain somewhere without their input, but there is a set of rules and accountability because they are having a say-to-pay. People get a chance to vote with their money in these corporations. If they are a true democracy, then they should have no problem complying with those who are funding them having a say in their matters.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Greg Fergus (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I appreciate this opportunity to rise in support of Bill C-25, an Act to amend the Canada Business Corporations Act, the Canada Cooperatives Act, the Canada Not-for-profit Corporations Act, and the Competition Act.

Our government is committed to growing the economy, creating jobs, and strengthening the middle class. As such, we are building the right foundation for an inclusive and innovative Canada. We want to foster new thinking by harnessing the full talents and experience of all Canadians.

We recognize diversity as a strength. Bill C-25 ensures that we create the right conditions to keep Canada at the forefront of a global economy.

Madam Speaker, I apologize for forgetting to ask for your permission and the approval of the House to share my time with the Minister of Status of Women, the member for Thunder Bay—Superior North. I hope to get your approval.

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•(1645)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member does not need permission to share his speaking time for a 20-minute speech. He must only seek permission at the beginning of the debate, when it is being debated for the first time.

Mr. Greg Fergus: Madam Speaker, my mistake. Thank you for the clarification.

Bill C-25 ensures that we create the right conditions to keep Canada at the forefront of a global economy. It will provide a transparent and predictable business environment for firms to innovate and grow.

Bill C-25 makes a number of modernizing adjustments. First, it will require publicly traded corporations to disclose to their shareholders the composition of their boards and senior-management ranks.

The measures in Bill C-25 call on corporations to tell their shareholders how they are promoting diversity at the senior-leadership level. Under representation of certain groups in society is not only a question of fairness. It can also affect the bottom line. This disclosure facilitates a frank conversation between corporations and their shareholders.

I am particularly proud to be speaking about this bill during Women's History Month. It is a time when we celebrate the women who have shaped Canada's history. We honour their courage, sacrifice and leadership in all spheres of life.

With this bill, our government is committed to addressing the under-representation of women and other groups in the highest levels of corporate leadership. This bill encourages corporations to reflect on whether they are drawing from the largest talent pool available to improve their performance.

This government is committed to inclusive growth. We have made our views on diversity very clear. We have already achieved gender parity in cabinet.

We also announced changes to the process for Governor in Council appointments. These changes ensure that diversity is a critical factor in selecting those who lead our public sector corporations and boards.

Bill C-25 builds on those initiatives. The bill recognizes that embracing diversity should be adopted as a good practice in corporate governance. We are not alone. We have already seen a similar commitment by other governments. Securities regulators and the private sector have also worked to increase diversity on corporate boards and within executive ranks.

Most securities regulators have adopted "comply or explain" rules that require publicly traded corporations to disclose gender composition and diversity policies for their executive ranks. Some private sector and non-profit organizations have adopted diversity policies or voluntary targets to increase women's participation on corporate boards. We commend their efforts.

To improve shareholder democracy, Bill C-25 will also reform the process of electing corporate directors. It will introduce a majority-voting model when elections are uncontested. In our current system,

a candidate can be elected even when there is only a single vote in favour, and all others were withheld.

If the proposed amendments are passed by the House, in an uncontested election, a candidate can only be elected if they have the majority of votes cast in their favour. This practice gives shareholders the right to vote against a candidate instead of simply withholding their vote.

•(1650)

Bill C-25 will also require publicly traded corporations to hold annual elections for corporate directors. It will also ensure that shareholders can vote for individual candidates rather than a group of candidates.

These reforms support diversity, shareholder democracy, and corporate performance. They allow shareholders to consider individual candidates on a more frequent basis. As a result, there are opportunities for deeper reflection on what diverse skill sets and experiences are best suited to govern a corporation.

Bill C-25 will also permit shareholders to access corporate materials online. This amendment will bring market framework laws into the digital age. It will increase business efficiency and reduce operational costs, while aligning with provincial securities rules. This amendment will also increase transparency and shareholder democracy.

Another amendment contained in the bill is an update to the Competition Act. This amendment ensures that our laws keep pace with contemporary ways that corporations structure themselves. Specifically, the bill takes into account how corporate affiliates are recognized under the act. The amendments do away with the risk that affiliates would be mistaken as competitors in the eyes of the law.

Making the law clear and neutral on this point eliminates business uncertainty. It also avoids the unnecessary time and resources that are currently spent on ensuring that companies comply with the law.

Madam Speaker, I would just like to clarify something. May I speak longer than my 10 minutes when I am sharing my time?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): No, the hon. member may not. The member has 20 seconds left. If the hon. member can wrap up, he will have five minutes for questions and comments.

Mr. Greg Fergus: Madam Speaker, I will close by saying that the amendments proposed in Bill C-25 will set the stage for a modern economy and a renewed commitment to innovation.

I look forward to seeing this bill become law.

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The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): When a member chooses to share his or her time, it means that that member and the member sharing the time each have 10 minutes. If the first member goes over that 10 minutes, then the other member will not get a chance to speak.

The member for Essex for questions and comments.

• (1655)

[*English*]

Ms. Tracey Ramsey (Essex, NDP): Madam Speaker, the parliamentary secretary brought up Women's History Month. That is incredibly important when we look at this legislation. As a woman who serves in the House and someone who has dedicated themselves to gender equality, I appreciate the spirit of the bill. However, as a feminist, I see weak language that would do little to see real change for women in the way that I think is the intent of the bill.

Will the government agree to the NDP amendment to have a five-year review clause inserted into Bill C-25 to ensure Canada keeps up to date on corporate and shareholder best practices, as well as to review the comply or explain, and to ensure that it has the intended effect on board gender diversity, and to show a true commitment to the women of the House and to feminists across our country?

Mr. Greg Ferguson: Madam Speaker, the proposal the hon. member for Essex has suggested should very much stand on its merits.

It is important that we allow the bill to go to committee and for the committee members, as the member for Windsor West suggested, to listen to witnesses and to try to make the most sensible and the most needed amendments to the bill to improve it. That is the wonderful thing about this process.

[*Translation*]

I think that also shows how open our government is to ideas from the opposition parties. We know that we do not have a monopoly on good ideas. We count on the willingness of all members of the House of Commons to propose amendments to our bills.

In closing, I think that this bill is logical and consistent. I cannot guarantee anything, but we are going to send the bill to committee to continue the process.

[*English*]

Mr. Alexander Nuttall (Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for the production of the bill and for placing it on the floor of the House.

I think it is important to recognize that a large majority of the work for the bill was conducted under the previous government, along with the other bill that is being moved by the ministries that fall under the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, so we have had two bills in one year.

When can the House expect a bill that will address the needs of the oil and gas, manufacturing, and other sectors across the country that have been losing jobs all year long?

Mr. Greg Ferguson: Madam Speaker, I am grateful for the opportunity I have had over the last year to work with the hon. member for Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte on the industry committee. It has been a pleasure to work with him.

In regard to the bill, we are very much looking forward to having it not only introduced but brought through the legislative process and passed.

A number of good intention bills were suggested by the previous government. However, it never followed through in getting them through the legislative process, although it was very much aware of the parliamentary calendar that was in place. The big difference is that where there is good legislation, no matter where it originates, this government is committed to seeing that legislation pass. Therefore, I am very much looking forward to Bill C-25 passing, and addressing the issue of greater diversity on boards.

With respect to the other issues that the hon. member raised, I am afraid those are perhaps issues that are not necessarily germane to the debate we are having today on this bill. Therefore, I am certain the hon. member will allow me some leeway to take his questions under advisement to give proper reflection to them.

• (1700)

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Status of Women, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise to speak in support of Bill C-25, an act to amend the Canada Business Corporations Act, the Canada Cooperatives Act, the Canada Not-for-profit Corporations Act, and the Competition Act.

[*Translation*]

Our government understands that Canada needs all the available talent to stimulate innovation and economic prosperity. To ensure that this happens, we must engage people of different genders, with different backgrounds, skills, experience, and ideas to manage all segments of the economy.

[*English*]

We see diversity as a source of Canada's strength. With the bill, we are calling on all leaders and decision-makers, including shareholders, to promote diversity and inclusion.

In today's global economy, it is to our economic benefit that our workforce reflects our rich diversity. Ensuring we have diversity in all aspects of our society contributes to better performance and innovative thinking, which affects the economic security of our communities and our country. We need leadership and commitment not only in government but also in the private sector to instill diversity and inclusion as core to good corporate governance.

Bill C-25 promotes diversity in leadership roles, something that is integral to creating environments where a diversity of voices make decisions that are of consequence to all of us. Research shows that leaders who embrace diversity in their organizations and give diverse voices equal exposure are more likely to have employees contribute to their full innovative potential. Change can happen. For example, the Canadian Board Diversity Council, the leading Canadian organization advancing diversity on Canada's boards, in order to help drive increased shareholder value, established diversity 50.

Government Orders

Diversity 50 is designed to help directors identify diverse board-ready candidates beyond their own networks. The initiative expands the definition of experience, expertise, education, geography, and age to include such considerations as women, visible minorities, aboriginal peoples, and people with disabilities. There are 13 CEOs from the telecommunications, energy, financial, and media sectors that support diversity 50.

Organizations such as Catalyst Canada have also created voluntary measures, such as the catalyst accord, which, in 2012, called on Canadian corporations to join and increase the overall proposal of the *Financial Post's* FP500 board seats held by women to 25% by 2017.

Canada's 30% club, whose membership comprises leading directors and executive officers, established an aspirational goal of 30% female representation on boards by 2019 and works with Catalyst on the catalyst accord. These are important targets that I am certain corporate Canada can reach, not only because we have the talent but because meeting these targets will drive stronger companies, better decision-making, and ultimately, a richer economy.

Another important dimension of the bill complements these measures by further facilitating the conversation between shareholders and corporations on how they are pursuing diversity in their leadership. The bill would also require distributing corporations and co-operatives to hold annual elections. This not only supports accountability but can provide opportunities for diversity on boards. Women make up 48% of the workforce and earn half of the university degrees, yet the latest figures show that women hold 13.1% of all Canadian board seats, 19.1% of seats on the boards of the FP500 companies, and 20.8% of seats on the boards of Standard & Poor's TSX 60 companies.

If Canada's workforce and economy are to remain modern and competitive internationally, we need to tap our full potential. We need to encourage change to ensure that the full diversity of Canada is represented in the business world. Bill C-25 would require Canada Business Corporations Act corporations to disclose diversity information such as the composition of their boards and policies to their shareholders, or to explain why they do not have diversity policies. The bill would also require corporations to provide diversity information to the director of Corporations Canada, so that progress can be monitored.

With the introduction of Bill C-25, it is important that boards and recruiting committees review the diversity of their boards and senior management and consider more inclusive practices. When businesses expand their pool of candidates, they can find new backgrounds, skills, and experiences that may have been overlooked in the past. This is true at the senior level and down through the organization.

• (1705)

[*Translation*]

I am honoured to have the opportunity to participate in the debate on Bill C-25 during Women's History Month. In October, we celebrate the women who shaped Canada's history.

It is an opportunity to honour their courage, sacrifices, and leadership. Our government is determined to eliminate the problem of under-representation of women and other groups at the highest levels of corporate management.

[*English*]

The amendments in Bill C-25 would allow government and businesses, working together, to promote diversity and put innovation at the core of their business strategy. It is essential that corporations demonstrate progressive leadership and create a culture of inclusivity and innovation.

By recognizing diversity as a strength and ensuring we have the full spectrum of ideas at the table, Canada stands to benefit with firms that are increasingly innovative and increasingly financially successful.

Ms. Sheri Benson (Saskatoon West, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to thank the Minister of Status of Women for her comments and for giving a good description and sharing with us some very important statistics that really describe a situation we know, that corporate Canada and the many boards are still very unequal. They do not have gender parity and still need to move a very long way when it comes to reflecting the diversity of their communities and the diversity of the population on their boards.

We have known the business case for diversity and gender parity on boards for a very long time. Those companies whose management and boards reflect gender parity and the diversity within their communities are more profitable. Most large corporations have known of this business case for a very long time, but it has never been enough to actually move the needle, from my perspective, far enough, fast enough.

I am sure the minister would agree with me there is something, and here is what we see we need to put in place in order to do that.

I guess what I would like to put to the minister is that I do feel we need to have some goals, some way to bring this back to Parliament, so we know whether we are making progress. I would just like to hear her comments on the need for goals and timelines when it comes to this issue.

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Speaker, I think the hon. member makes a really good point. What we do not measure, we cannot do. We need to be able to measure progress, and I think there are number of aspects in the bill that would allow us to start to do that.

The comply or explain piece around having corporations identify what efforts they are making to diversify their corporations but also explain that to others is one step in terms of measurement. Certainly, this government would not be opposed to reviewing the progress, after an appropriate period of time, to make sure that the measure is stringent enough that we get to where we are aiming to go, which is at least 30% women.

Government Orders

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the efforts that the minister has made to date on what I believe is a very important file to all Canadians, dealing with the status of women and gender equity.

How important is it to demonstrate leadership? We have a Prime Minister who has shown leadership, virtually from day one in his appointment with a gender-neutral cabinet to what we are debating here today. I would just ask the minister about the importance of seeing that strong national leadership on such an important file.

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Speaker, leadership is incredibly important in any culture change. If there is not an expectation that culture will change then, of course, we have no impetus to actually move toward a more equitable culture.

I think the hon. member is quite right in his assertion that leadership matters. We have a Prime Minister who has taken the conversation of gender equality, in my mind, to a place that we never have been in this country before, and it is inspiring, in fact, international leaders.

I think what smart business leaders know is that when they set the tone, they can drive change throughout all levels of their organization. More than that, I think they see that this is not just a social justice issue but this is a fiscal issue. Good social policy, good inclusion policy, means better fiscal policy. That is driving change in ways that we have not seen before, as well.

• (1710)

Ms. Sheri Benson: Madam Speaker, I would just like to ask the minister to reflect on this comment. We know that the Canadian Board Diversity Council, after reviewing comply or explain, where it has been used, and where it has been applied, has not found that it has really led to meaningful change or consistent improvement in the case of change.

I would like to hear her comments on that.

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Speaker, I reflect back on the experiences I had in public health driving complex behaviour change.

In fact, if a move is made to go straight to legislation, often there is no compliance and there are many other barriers. People find ways around the legislation.

What we are hoping to build here is a consensus among organizations, corporation organizations, that this is good, not just for their businesses, not just for social justice, but for good fiscal outcomes. Then we can assess that progress as we go.

Mr. Alexander Nuttall (Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte, CPC): Madam Speaker, I rise today to speak to Bill C-25.

I do not believe that there is a person in this room who can effectively argue that this bill, in any way, hurts our country. I am the father of two, a three-year-old son and a one-year-old daughter. I want an even playing field for my children so that they know that if they work hard, if they make sensible choices, and if they take calculated risks, they can succeed without concerns about gender, without concerns about race, and without concerns about ethnicity.

What I fail to understand, though, is why Bill C-25 does not propose more. Why is it on one subject with all that is going on around us? It is difficult to understand why there is no original work coming out of the office of the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development.

I do not think the minister understands the gravity of the jobs market Canadian families are fighting in to make ends meet. If he did, we would not be discussing changes on disclosure today without widespread reforms to make Canadian employers more competitive and to create jobs for Canadians looking for new or better jobs. This affects all women, all men, and all children who will soon be in the workforce.

Now I know that the minister will argue that another accountant filling out another line on another tax form so that another bureaucrat in Ottawa can create another spreadsheet is an intensely important issue that needs to be prioritized above all else, but I am sorry, I cannot.

We are a year into the mandate of the government, and so far, the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development has failed to introduce one piece of legislation regarding innovation. So far he has tabled two bills, the first regarding copyrighted works and the second regarding the disclosure of the makeup of boards. I do not believe that these bills are unworthy of presentation in any way. That is not what I am saying.

After all, it was work done by the former Conservative government that created these bills in the first place. What Liberal insider in what ivory tower decided that the most pressing issue to deal with right now is not the estimated 52,000 oil and gas workers laid off since last year and unable to pay their bills? What Liberal insider decided that the priority is not finding a way to support the more than 40,000 manufacturing jobs lost in the last year? What Liberal insider decided that the priority is to go to a roomful of work by the previous government, change the colour of the binder it was written in, and put this on the floor of Parliament, without a single mention of the struggling families at home? That is if they can get a home, after the government instituted new borrowing rules that make it even more difficult for first-time home buyers to purchase a coveted first home.

I get it. When the Prime Minister is reducing the average Canadian worker's take-home pay with new payroll taxes, when the Prime Minister is eliminating tax credits for children for sports and culture, when the Prime Minister is removing opportunities for Canadians to save money tax-free through tax-free savings accounts, and when the Prime Minister is introducing a carbon tax that will take \$2,500 out of every single Canadian's pocket, the finance minister needed to change the qualifications for mortgages to higher thresholds.

Government Orders

Why? It is because Canadians have less take-home money in their pockets to afford their mortgages. The government is setting up a permanent tax office in the pockets of Canadians. Please tell me how this helps Canadian men or women break the cycle of poverty. It is another government-created solution to another government-created problem.

Canadians only have take-home pay if they have jobs. That seems to be a pretty big issue right now, and I think people at home would agree.

We have fewer jobs in two of the largest sectors of our economy and an affordability problem in housing at the same time. As if it is some comedy of failures we would see in a Shakespearean play, the government does not stop with taking money people are earning now; they run up Goliath-sized deficits so they can take more of their money tomorrow. Yet we are discussing changes to corporate disclosure laws and rules without any mention of the Canadian economy and how it is failing women and men of all ages.

Not only has the number of manufacturing jobs been reduced by over 40,000, the number of jobs available for youth aged 15-24 is down by a whopping 48,000 year over year, according to Statistics Canada. These results are blinding when compared with the Liberal promises that outlined an increase in youth jobs by 40,000 this year alone. "We will invest to create more jobs and better opportunities for young Canadians" is literally a portion of the Liberal platform.

• (1715)

How is it that the current government can contribute only two bills in 12 months, from the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, and with those bills fail to consider the daily fight to make ends meet for Canadian workers? Perhaps I am not effectively communicating the state of the economy for Canadian workers. Maybe the government is inclined to listen only to international elites on the state of the economy the Liberal government presides over. That is just fine.

In October, the International Monetary Fund downgraded Canada's real GDP growth to 1.1% from 1.3%. It makes total sense. Fewer Canadians working plus fewer Canadians buying houses and services equals less Canadian wealth and less Canadian GDP. The problem is that the IMF, the International Monetary Fund, has also downgraded economic growth for 2017. Instead of growth at 2.2%, the International Monetary Fund has reduced the outlook to 2% flat. Following this downgrade, the Bank of Canada has followed suit and has reduced our current year's outlook for economic growth from 1.4% to 1.2% and 2017's economic outlook from 2.1% to 1.9%.

Yet the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development is silent, some would say MIA, missing in action, and without a single competent piece of legislation to support our struggling economy, unless changing the rules of disclosure and copyright will spur the economic growth we have been looking for in this country. Again, I am not against the bills that were tabled. I am merely highlighting how ineffective and lacking the government's approach to our current economic woes has been and continues to be.

I believe that governments are elected to institute a plan, one that will hopefully improve the lives of Canadians. After our government determines what that plan is and the best way to achieve it, each and

every piece of legislation should work toward achieving that goal. Maybe these two pieces of legislation that have been tabled and moved by the federal government this year will do that and help the government achieve these goals. Unfortunately, there has been no plan communicated or brought forward before this House to validate them against.

After a full year in office, the Liberals have failed to provide a copy of their plan to underpin the Canadian economy, to spur innovation and reform in struggling sectors, or to tell our hard-working Canadian families what it is they are trying to achieve on our behalf. If Canadians believe these folks in government, and if they believe the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, they will believe that the Liberal Party has a plan that is really good, really big, really fantastic.

On February 1, the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development told the House that the government had a plan. On February 3, 18, 23, and 25, the minister said that the government had a plan. On March 7 and 8, he said that they had a plan. The only problem is that his government's budget just three weeks later, in March, said that the Liberals would get a plan together at some point in the next two years.

I have said before in this House, and I will say again today, that the government does not have a plan. Prime Minister Trudeau does not have a plan for Canada to succeed, and the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development does not have a plan to spur innovation or job growth or to create an environment in which Canadian businesses and Canadian workers can succeed. They have a plan—

• (1720)

Mr. Adam Vaughan: Madam Speaker, I recognize that the member is reading prepared notes, and those notes may not have been prepared necessarily for presentation in the House, but when one makes a presentation in the House, one is not to use the proper names of members who are duly elected.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The member mentioned the name of the Prime Minister. As members know, they cannot name individuals who are elected in the House. They can mention them if they are no longer elected to the House.

Mr. Alexander Nuttall: Certainly, Madam Speaker. I try not to say his name as much as possible, so I certainly apologize to the member on the other side of the House.

The Liberals have said that they have a plan, but unfortunately, all they have is a plan to have a plan. It is so good, so big, and so fantastic, it is imaginary and does not exist.

Government Orders

A plan to have a plan does not create a single job. A plan to have a plan does not put food on a single Canadian table, except the minister's, of course, and a plan to have a plan does not pay extremely high Ontario Hydro bills. A plan to have a plan does not help unemployed oil and gas workers get back to work. A plan to have a plan does not spur confidence or hope in the opportunities that exist in this country.

I am sure the minister wants to know why. It is because while he is taking two years to come up with a plan, people are actually hurting. People are wondering how they will pay for food this week, their mortgage next week, their rent the month after, their kids' sports, their parents' medical bills, their anniversary dinner, and their gas to get to work.

Canadians do not have two years to wait. Some do not have two weeks to wait, yet the only response to the downgraded economic outlook by the Bank of Canada and the International Monetary Fund is silence. "Wait," the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development would say, "we have a plan and a committee of innovation leaders to prove it. We appointed 10 innovation leaders to ask people out there and to teach us how to make Canada more competitive".

For the record, if the government wants to know how to innovate, then ask the most innovative leaders in Canada and maybe start with the Canadian Council of Innovators, 50 of the country's top tech and advanced manufacturing CEOs in Canada. In fact, we do not even have to go out to find them. They actually came here last week, the same day the Prime Minister was meeting with their top competitors from outside of Canada.

I decided to meet with them and listen to their ideas. They told me that the committee of successful bureaucrats, university and college professors, and venture capitalists from the innovation leaders committee had not interviewed a single one of the top 50 tech CEOs in the country. The committee whose sole purpose is to discover how to harness the power of innovation has not consulted the top innovators in Canada.

These government folks love the photo ops, love committees, and love talking, especially about plans, but when it comes to delivering real results, identifying real opportunities, with real innovators, real change went to Amazon.

I can see it now. My Liberal colleagues will say that they do not need to move bills in the House of Commons to be effective in government. They can spend money, or as governments always say, invest.

First, I would ask why we do not spend money on a plan that would help Canadian employers become more competitive. That is only half the problem. The real problem is that governments of all stripes can just spend our money and then pat themselves on the back for doing it.

Government members will stand up in this House bragging that they have given tax dollars to this company and that company. It is wrong. I do not want the government to measure its success by the amount of money it is spending recklessly to race to the bottom of the well known as the Canadian taxpayer. We want the government

to measure its success by how successful it is, not by how much money it can spend and how fast it can do it.

I want to focus on the practical plans the government should engage in. Number one, do no harm. Keep taxes low and red tape minimal and allow entrepreneurs to do what is best for their businesses and their workers.

Be responsive. When 50 of the country's best and brightest come all the way to Ottawa, show up.

Streamline programs, making it easier for companies to respond to and be successful in their applications, as it has become so onerous and slow that companies do not bother to respond and miss opportunities to create jobs.

Recognize why these problems exist and reform them as necessary. Too often, programming is designed to make it easier for the government to do the business of government rather than for business to do business.

Be proactive. Pick up the phone. Mandate ministry-wide quotas on client outreach to find ways to support entrepreneurs creating jobs.

Set measurable targets, as it has with the bill. Whether it is the level of technology, the number of successful companies, market share, or productivity, replace the platitudes of politicians and spending with measurable targets.

Reform the CanExport program so that companies can effectively enter and expand in target marketplaces instead of penalizing companies that have fostered a footprint in a marketplace already.

Recognize that there is a brain drain to the United States and focus resources on creating conditions that keep our talent at home in Canada, and target international talent to make Canada their home.

Ensure that our technical standards are adopted, especially where we are industry leaders and where it will benefit our industries to maintain excellence and a competitive edge for our entrepreneurs.

• (1725)

Finally, follow-through on a commitment to give employers who hire young people, both male and female, a 12-month break on employment insurance premiums.

Instead of enacting these types of practical approaches to maintain jobs, or help the private sector create jobs, the government is treading water.

I support the use of good data to support good decision-making. I know that the bill would encourage the collection of data, and outline the participation level of different demographics on boards of directors, but this measure by itself is not going to deliver a single job to a single person, male or female.

Government Orders

It is also ironic that the government is finding the knowledge and capacity to project measurable standards on the private sector corporations, but has not outlined a single, measurable economic target for itself in its full year in office.

I guess my expectations from our government is this: that it would bring forward practical solutions to help people dealing with a slumping economy; that it would prioritize the citizens of our country who are hurting as job losses mount month after month, with the only exception being the public sector.

I do not want the government to focus on new ways to get information from businesses and accountants, and call it a strategy to grow the number of jobs for women in this country. I want the government to present a plan that would create conditions for Canadian workers, regardless of gender to do what they do best, provide for their families and build their future.

Is it a noble cause to require big corporations to be transparent with the make-up of their board? Yes, it is. But as I have said, this does not put a single person to work, put food on a single table, or help a single Canadian who is struggling to make ends meet.

Canadians expect more out of their government, more than photo ops and selfies, more than non-stop spending, more than new lines on tax forms, and more than more taxes and fewer jobs. Canadians demand the vision to plan and the gumption to act.

We know the government can see what is happening. It gets the same information we do from the Bank of Canada, Statistics Canada, and the International Monetary Fund, yet it is failing to act.

In the words of Helen Keller, the most pathetic person in the world is someone who has sight but no vision.

Today, I will finish with my favourite proverb from the Book of Proverbs, “Where there is no vision, the people perish...”

The government has no vision for our economy, and Canadian jobs are perishing daily in the private sector.

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister (Intergovernmental Affairs), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I listened to the member opposite talk about the brain drain. I can certainly say that from my vantage point, there has been no brain drain in my constituency, but the half from that side of the bench has seen a lot of brain drain, considering the quality of comments we are hearing in this debate.

The issue of parity in the corporate sector is to ensure everyone has a fair chance to succeed inside the corporate structure of our country, and to ensure that regardless of gender, someone has a position and an opportunity to lead. We know that women have been paid 63¢ on the dollar for generations. We know that women have been held back by discriminatory hiring practices. To say that the bill has no economic impact in the country is to say that women have no economic impact in the country. I find that, quite frankly, insulting to everyone who sits in the House.

The issue is this. The government does have a plan. The government has invested close to \$60 billion more over the next 10 years in infrastructure, infrastructure that your party did not invest in—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. I want to remind the member that he is to address the Chair. We do not say “your” or “you” in the House. Also, if the member wants a response today, we would need to provide that opportunity right now before we go to votes.

● (1730)

Mr. Adam Vaughan: Madam Speaker, I am not sure I do want a response, but I will try to ask a question.

On the infrastructure spend, every billion dollars in infrastructure supports 16,700 jobs. That comes from private industry itself.

Do you not agree that infrastructure—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. I may not agree because the member has redirected his question. Again, it is not “you”.

I know the parliamentary secretary has been here long enough to know that he needs to address the Chair.

A very brief answer from the member for Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte.

Mr. Alexander Nuttall: Madam Speaker, it is interesting that the member opposite talks about not knowing about the brain drain. That is because the Prime Minister and his party did not show up to the top 50 tech CEOs who told us that, hour after hour last week, and they failed to consult those who know in the community.

Quite frankly, regarding the bill, I have said over and over again that I support it, and I do. What I am looking for is more than two bills that you took off the old government shelf, and put out on the floor a year into your mandate. Do something—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. I want to remind the member that I had just reminded the other member to address the Chair.

The member will have seven and a half minutes remaining for questions and comments when the bill is back before the House.

Private Members' Business

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

NATIONAL MATERNITY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM STRATEGY ACT

The House resumed from October 19 consideration of the motion that Bill C-243, An Act respecting the development of a national maternity assistance program strategy and amending the Employment Insurance Act (maternity benefits), 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-243 under private members' business.

Call in the members.

• (1810)

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

(Division No. 135)

YEAS

Members

Aboultaif
 Albrecht
 Allison
 Amos
 Anderson
 Arnold
 Arya
 Aubin
 Badawey
 Barlow
 Benson
 Bernier
 Bezan
 Blaikie
 Blaney (North Island—Powell River)
 Bossio
 Boulterice
 Brassard
 Breton
 Calkins
 Caron
 Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)
 Chong
 Christopherson
 Clement
 Cullen
 Davies
 Dhaliwal
 Donnelly
 Drouin
 Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)
 Duvall
 Easter
 Ellis
 Eyolfson
 Fast
 Fillmore
 Finnigan
 Fonseca
 Fraser (Central Nova)
 Fuhr
 Garrison
 Genuis
 Gladu
 Gould
 Graham
 Hardcastle
 Hardie

Albas
 Aldag
 Ambrose
 Anandasangaree
 Angus
 Arseneault
 Ashton
 Ayoub
 Bagnell
 Baylis
 Bergen
 Berthold
 Bittle
 Blair
 Block
 Boucher
 Boutin-Sweet
 Bratina
 Brown
 Cannings
 Carrie
 Chen
 Choquette
 Clarke
 Cooper
 Damoff
 Deltell
 Di Iorio
 Dreeshen
 Dubé
 Dusseault
 Dzerowicz
 Eglinski
 Eyking
 Falk
 Fergus
 Finley
 Fisher
 Fraser (West Nova)
 Fry
 Gallant
 Génèreux
 Gerretsen
 Godin
 Gourde
 Grewal
 Harder
 Harvey

Hoback
 Housefather
 Hussen
 Johns
 Jordan
 Julian
 Kelly
 Khalid
 Kmiec
 Lake
 Lapointe
 Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)
 Lebel
 Leitch
 Liepert
 Lobb
 Long
 Ludwig
 MacKenzie
 Maguire
 Masse (Windsor West)
 May (Cambridge)
 McCauley (Edmonton West)
 McDonald
 McKay
 McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)
 Mendès
 Moore
 Mulcair
 Nantel
 Nater
 Nicholson
 O'Connell
 Oliver
 Ouellette
 Paul-Hus
 Poilievre
 Ramsey
 Ratansi
 Reid
 Richards
 Romanado
 Rudd
 Rusnak
 Sahota
 Samson
 Sansoucy
 Saroya
 Schiefke
 Schulte
 Sgro
 Shields
 Simms
 Sorbara
 Stanton
 Strahl
 Sweet
 Tassi
 Trost
 Van Loan
 Vaughan
 Viersen
 Wagantall
 Warkentin
 Webber
 Whalen
 Wrzesnewskyj
 Zimmer— 231

Holland
 Hughes
 Jeneroux
 Jolibois
 Jowhari
 Kang
 Kent
 Kitchen
 Kwan
 Lametti
 Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
 Laverdière
 Lefebvre
 Levitt
 Lightbound
 Lockhart
 Longfield
 MacGregor
 MacKinnon (Gatineau)
 Maloney
 Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)
 May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
 McColeman
 McGuinley
 McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
 McLeod (Northwest Territories)
 Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound)
 Morrissey
 Murray
 Nassif
 Nault
 Nuttall
 Oliphant
 O'Toole
 Paradis
 Peterson
 Quach
 Rankin
 Rayes
 Rempel
 Ritz
 Rota
 Ruimy
 Saganash
 Saini
 Sangha
 Sarai
 Scarpaleggia
 Schmale
 Serré
 Shanahan
 Sikand
 Sopuck
 Sorenson
 Stetski
 Stubbs
 Tan
 Tilson
 Van Kesteren
 Vandenbeld
 Vecchio
 Virani
 Warawa
 Waugh
 Weir
 Wong
 Yurdiga

NAYS

Members

Alghabra
 Bains
 Beaulieu
 Bennett
 Boissonnault
 Brisson
 Carr
 Chagger
 Chan
 Dabrusin
 Dhillon

Alleslev
 Barsalou-Duval
 Beech
 Bibeau
 Boudrias
 Caesar-Chavannes
 Casey (Charlottetown)
 Champagne
 Cormier
 DeCoursey
 Dubourg

Private Members' Business

Duclos	Duguid
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Ehsassi
El-Khoury	Fortin
Fragiskatos	Freeland
Garneau	Gill
Goldsmith-Jones	Goodale
Hajdu	Hehr
Hutchings	Iacono
Joly	Jones
Khera	Lamoureux
LeBlanc	Lebouthillier
Leslie	MacAulay (Cardigan)
Marcil	McCallum
McCrimmon	McKenna
Mendicino	Mihychuk
Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Sœurs)	
Monsef	
Morneau	O'Regan
Paupé	Peschisolido
Petipas Taylor	Philpott
Picard	Plamondon
Poissant	Qualtrough
Rioux	Robillard
Rodriguez	Sheehan
Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)	Sidhu (Brampton South)
Sohi	Ste-Marie
Tabbara	Thériault
Trudeau	Vandal
Wilson-Raybould	Young — 78

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried. Accordingly the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities.

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

* * *

[Translation]

INCOME TAX ACT

The House resumed from October 20 consideration of the motion that Bill C-240, An Act to amend the Income Tax Act (tax credit—first aid) 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-240 under private members' business.

● (1820)

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

(Division No. 136)

YEAS

Members

Albas	Albrecht
Allison	Ambrose
Amos	Anandasangaree
Anderson	Angus
Arnold	Arseneault
Arya	Ashton
Aubin	Ayoub
Badawey	Bagnell
Barlow	Barsalou-Duval
Baylis	Beaulieu
Beech	Benson
Bergen	Bernier
Berthold	Bezan
Bittle	Blaikie
Blair	Blaney (North Island—Powell River)
Block	Bossio

Boucher	Boudrias
Boulerice	Boutin-Sweet
Brassard	Bratina
Breton	Brown
Calkins	Cannings
Caron	Carrie
Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)	Chen
Choquette	Christopherson
Clarke	Clement
Cooper	Cullen
Damoff	Davies
Deltell	Di Iorio
Donnelly	Dreeschen
Drouin	Dubé
Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)	Dusseauit
Duvall	Dzerowicz
Easter	Eglinski
Ehsassi	El-Khoury
Ellis	Eyking
Eyolfson	Falk
Fast	Fillmore
Finley	Fonseca
Fortin	Gallant
Garrison	Généreux
Genuis	Gerretsen
Gill	Gladu
Godin	Gourde
Hardcastle	Harde
Hardie	Hoback
Holland	Hughes
Hussen	Iacono
Jeneroux	Johns
Jolibois	Jordan
Jowhari	Julian
Kang	Kelly
Kent	Khalid
Kitchen	Kmiec
Kwan	Lake
Lametti	Lapointe
Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengary)	Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)
Laverdière	Lebel
Lefebvre	Leitch
Lemieux	Levitt
Liepert	Lobb
Lockhart	Long
Longfield	Ludwig
MacGregor	MacKenzie
Maguire	Maloney
Marcil	Masse (Windsor West)
Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)	
May (Cambridge)	
May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	McCauley (Edmonton West)
McColeman	McDonald
McGuinty	McKay
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)	McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)
McLeod (Northwest Territories)	Mendès
Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound)	Moore
Morrissey	Mulcair
Nantel	Nater
Nault	Nicholson
Nuttall	O'Connell
Oliphant	Oliver
O'Toole	Ouellette
Paradis	Paul-Hus
Paupé	Peterson
Plamondon	Poilievre
Poissant	Quach
Raït	Ramsey
Rankin	Rayes
Reid	Rempel
Richards	Rioux
Ritz	Romanado
Rota	Ruimy
Rusnak	Saganash
Sahota	Saini
Samson	Sangha
Sansoucy	Saroya
Scarpaleggia	Scheer
Schiefke	Schmale
Schulte	Sgro
Shanahan	Shields
Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)	Sidhu (Brampton South)
Sikand	Sopuck
Sorenson	Stanton

Private Members' Business

Ste-Marie
Strahl
Sweet
Tan
Thériault
Trost
Van Loan
Vandenbeld
Vecchio
Virani
Warawa
Waugh
Weir
Wong
Zimmer — 227

Stetski
Stubbs
Tabbara
Tassi
Tilson
Van Kesteren
Vandal
Vaughan
Viersen
Wagantall
Warkentin
Webber
Whalen
Yurdiga

● (1830)

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

(Division No. 137)

YEAS

Members

Angus
Aubin
Beaulieu
Blaikie
Boudrias
Boutin-Sweet
Caron
Christopherson
Davies
Dubé
Dusseault
Fortin
Gill
Hughes
Jolibois
Kwan
MacGregor
Masse (Windsor West)
May (Saenich—Gulf Islands)
Mulcair
Pauzé
Quach
Rankin
Sansoucy
Stetski
Weir — 51

Ashton
Barsalou-Duval
Benson
Blaney (North Island—Powell River)
Boulerice
Cannings
Choquette
Cullen
Donnelly
Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)
Duvall
Garrison
Hardcastle
Johns
Julian
Laverdière
Marcil
May (Cambridge)
Moore
Nantel
Plamondon
Ramsey
Saganash
Ste-Marie
Thériault

NAYS

Members

Aldag
Alleslev
Bains
Bibeau
Brison
Carr
Chagger
Chan
Cormier
DeCoursey
Dhillon
Duclos
Fergus
Fisher
Fraser (West Nova)
Freeland
Fuhr
Goldsmith-Jones
Gould
Grewal
Harvey
Housefather
Joly
Lamoureux
Lebouthillier
MacAulay (Cardigan)
McCallum
McKenna
Mihychuk
Soeurs)
Monsef
Murray
O'Regan
Petipas Taylor
Picard
Ratansi
Rodriguez
Serré
Simms
Sorbara
Wilson-Raybould
Young — 81

Alghabra
Amos
Bennett
Boissonnault
Caesar-Chavannes
Casey (Charlottetown)
Champagne
Chong
Dabrusin
Dhaliwal
Dubourg
Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Finnigan
Fragiskatos
Fraser (Central Nova)
Fry
Garneau
Goodale
Graham
Hajdu
Hehr
Hutchings
Jones
LeBlanc
Leslie
MacKinnon (Gatineau)
McCrimmon
Mendicino
Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-
Morneau
Nassif
Peschisolido
Philpott
Qualtrough
Robillard
Sarai
Sheehan
Sohi
Trudeau
Wrzesnewskyj

Aboultaif
Albrecht
Alghabra
Allison
Amos
Anderson
Arseneault
Ayoub
Bagnell
Barlow
Beech
Bergen
Berthold
Bibeau
Blair
Boissonnault
Boucher
Bratina
Brison
Caesar-Chavannes
Carr
Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)
Chagger
Chan
Chong
Clement
Cormier
Damoff
Deltell
Dhillon
Dreeschen
Dubourg
Duguid
Dzerowicz
Eglinski
El-Khoury
Eyking
Falk
Fergus
Finley
Fisher

NAYS

Members

Albas
Aldag
Alleslev
Ambrose
Anandasangaree
Arnold
Arya
Badawey
Bains
Baylis
Bennett
Bernier
Bezan
Bittle
Block
Bossio
Brassard
Breton
Brown
Calkins
Carrie
Casey (Charlottetown)
Champagne
Chen
Clarke
Cooper
Dabrusin
DeCoursey
Dhaliwal
Di Iorio
Drouin
Duclos
Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Easter
Ehsassi
Ellis
Eyolfson
Fast
Fillmore
Finnigan
Fonseca

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried. Accordingly, this bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Finance.

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

* * *

[English]

TAX AVOIDANCE

The House resumed from October 21 consideration of the motion.

The Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on Motion No. 42 under private members' business in the name of the member for Joliette.

Private Members' Business

Fragiskatos	Fraser (West Nova)
Fraser (Central Nova)	Freeland
Fry	Fuhr
Gallant	Garneau
Généreux	Genuis
Gerretsen	Gladu
Godin	Goldsmith-Jones
Goodale	Gould
Gourde	Graham
Grewal	Hajdu
Harder	Hardie
Harvey	Hehr
Hoback	Holland
Housefather	Hussen
Hutchings	Iacono
Joly	Jones
Jordan	Jowhari
Kang	Kelly
Kent	Khalid
Khera	Kitchen
Kmiec	Lake
Lametti	Lamoureux
Lapointe	Lauson (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)	Lebel
LeBlanc	Lebouthillier
Lefebvre	Leitch
Lemieux	Leslie
Levitt	Liepert
Lightbound	Lobb
Lockhart	Long
Longfield	Ludwig
MacAulay (Cardigan)	MacKenzie
MacKinnon (Gatineau)	Maguire
Maloney	Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)
McCallum	McCauley (Edmonton West)
McColeman	McCrimmon
McDonald	McGuinty
McKay	McKenna
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)	McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)
McLeod (Northwest Territories)	Mendès
Mendicino	Mihychuk
Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound)	Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Sœurs)
Monsef	Morneau
Morrissey	Murray
Nassif	Nater
Nault	Nicholson
Nuttall	O'Connell
Oliphant	Oliver
O'Regan	O'Toole
Ouellette	Paradis
Paul-Hus	Peschisolido
Peterson	Petitpas Taylor
Philpott	Picard
Poillievre	Poissant
Qualtrough	Raiit
Ratansi	Rayes
Reid	Rempel
Richards	Rioux
Ritz	Robillard
Rodriguez	Romanado
Rota	Rudd
Ruimy	Rusnak
Sahota	Saini
Samson	Sangha
Sarai	Saroya
Scarpaleggia	Scheer
Schiefke	Schmale
Schulte	Serré
Sgro	Shanahan
Sheehan	Shields
Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)	Sidhu (Brampton South)
Sikand	Simms
Sohi	Sopuck
Sorbara	Sorenson
Stanton	Strahl
Stubbs	Sweet
Tabbara	Tan
Tassi	Tilson
Trost	Trudeau
Van Kesteren	Van Loan
Vandal	Vandenbeld
Vaughan	Vecchio
Viersen	Virani

Wagantall	Warawa
Warkentin	Waugh
Webber	Whalen
Wilson-Raybould	Wong
Wrzesnewskyj	Young
Yurdiga	Zimmer — 260

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion defeated.

* * *

● (1835)

[Translation]

ABANDONED VESSELS

The House resumed from October 24 consideration of the motion.

The Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on Motion No. 40, as amended, under private members' business, in the name of the hon. member for South Shore—St. Margarets.

● (1840)

[English]

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

(Division No. 138)

YEAS

Members

Abouttaif	Albas
Albrecht	Aldag
Alghabra	Alleslev
Allison	Ambrose
Amos	Anandasangaree
Anderson	Angus
Arnold	Arseneault
Arya	Ashton
Aubin	Ayoub
Badawey	Bagnell
Bains	Barlow
Barsalou-Duval	Baylis
Beaulieu	Beech
Bennett	Benson
Bergen	Bernier
Berthold	Bezan
Bibeau	Bittle
Blaikie	Blair
Blaney (North Island—Powell River)	Block
Boissonnault	Bossio
Boucher	Boudrias
Boulerice	Boutin-Sweet
Brassard	Bratina
Breton	Brison
Brown	Caesar-Chavannes
Calkins	Cannings
Caron	Carr
Carrie	Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)
Casey (Charlottetown)	Chagger
Champagne	Chan
Chen	Chong
Choquette	Christopherson
Clarke	Clement
Cooper	Cormier
Cullen	Dabrusin
Damoff	Davies
DeCoursey	Deltell
Dhaliwal	Dhillon
Di Iorio	Donnelly
Dreeshen	Drouin
Dubé	Dubourg

Private Members' Business

Duclos
 Duncan (Etobicoke North)
 Dusseault
 Dzerowicz
 Eglinski
 El-Khoury
 Eyking
 Falk
 Fergus
 Finley
 Fisher
 Fortin
 Fraser (West Nova)
 Freeland
 Fuhr
 Garneau
 Généreux
 Gerretsen
 Gladu
 Goldsmith-Jones
 Gould
 Graham
 Hajdu
 Harder
 Harvey
 Hoback
 Housefather
 Hussen
 Iacono
 Jolibois
 Jones
 Jowhari
 Kang
 Kent
 Khera
 Kmiec
 Lake
 Lamoureux
 Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
 Laverdière
 LeBlanc
 Lefebvre
 Lemieux
 Levitt
 Lighthound
 Lockhart
 Longfield
 MacAulay (Cardigan)
 MacKenzie
 Maguire
 Marci
 Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)
 May (Cambridge)
 May (Saanic—Gulf Islands)
 McCauley (Edmonton West)
 McCrimmon
 McGuinty
 McKenna
 McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)
 Mendès
 Miychuk
 Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Sœurs)
 Monsef
 Moore
 Morrissey
 Murray
 Nassif
 Nault
 Nuttall
 Oliphant
 O'Regan
 Ouelllette
 Paul-Hus
 Peschisolido
 Petipas Taylor
 Picard
 Poilievre
 Quach
 Raitt
 Rankin
 Rayes
 Rempel
 Rioux
 Robillard

Duguid
 Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)
 Duvall
 Easter
 Ehsassi
 Ellis
 Eyolfson
 Fast
 Fillmore
 Finnigan
 Fonseca
 Fragiskatos
 Fraser (Central Nova)
 Fry
 Gallant
 Garrison
 Genuis
 Gill
 Godin
 Goodale
 Gourde
 Grewal
 Hardcastle
 Hardie
 Hehr
 Holland
 Hughes
 Hutchings
 Johns
 Joly
 Jordan
 Julian
 Kelly
 Khalid
 Kitchen
 Kwan
 Lametti
 Lapointe
 Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)
 Lebel
 Lebouthillier
 Leitch
 Leslie
 Liepert
 Lobb
 Long
 Ludwig
 MacGregor
 MacKinnon (Gatineau)
 Maloney
 Masse (Windsor West)
 McCallum
 McColeman
 McDonald
 McKay
 McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
 McLeod (Northwest Territories)
 Mendicino
 Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound)
 Morneau
 Mulcair
 Nantel
 Nater
 Nicholson
 O'Connell
 Oliver
 O'Toole
 Paradis
 Pausé
 Peterson
 Philpott
 Plamondon
 Poissant
 Qualtrough
 Ramsey
 Ratansi
 Reid
 Richards
 Ritz
 Rodrigue

Romanado
 Rudd
 Rusnak
 Sahota
 Samson
 Sansoucy
 Saroya
 Scheer
 Schmale
 Serré
 Shanahan
 Shields
 Sidhu (Brampton South)
 Simms
 Sopuck
 Sorenson
 Ste-Marie
 Strahl
 Sweet
 Tan
 Thériault
 Trost
 Van Kesteren
 Vandal
 Vaughan
 Viersen
 Wagantall
 Warkentin
 Webber
 Whalen
 Wong
 Young
 Zimmer — 311

Rota
 Ruimy
 Saganash
 Saini
 Sangha
 Sarai
 Scarpaleggia
 Schiefke
 Schulte
 Sgro
 Sheehan
 Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)
 Sikand
 Sohi
 Sorbara
 Stanton
 Stetski
 Stubbs
 Tabbara
 Tassi
 Tilson
 Trudeau
 Van Loan
 Vandenbeld
 Vecchio
 Virani
 Warawa
 Waugh
 Weir
 Wilson-Raybould
 Wrzesnewskyj
 Yurdiga

Nil

PAIRED

The Speaker: I declare the motion as amended carried.

* * *

[*Translation*]

GENETIC NON-DISCRIMINATION ACT

The House resumed from October 25 consideration of the motion that Bill S-201, An Act to prohibit and prevent genetic discrimination, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred division at second reading of Bill S-201 under private members' business.

● (1850)

[*English*]

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

(*Division No. 139*)

YEAS

Members

Aboutaif	Albas
Albrecht	Aldag
Alghabra	Alleslev
Allison	Ambrose
Amos	Anandasangaree
Anderson	Angus
Arnold	Arseneault
Arya	Ashton
Aubin	Ayoub
Badawey	Bagnell
Bains	Barlow
Barsalou-Duval	Baylis

Private Members' Business

● (1855)

IMMIGRATION TO ATLANTIC CANADA

The House resumed from September 23, consideration of the motion, and of the amendment.

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as vice-chair of the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration, and as the NDP critic for citizenship, immigration, and refugees, I rise to speak in support of Motion M-39, with its proposed amendment. If the amendment and the motion pass, and I expect that they will, I look forward to studying the issue at committee.

Motion M-39 is requesting that the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration take on a broad study of immigration to Atlantic Canada that would include the following: the challenge of a regional population that is both aging and shrinking; how to increase the retention of current residents and newcomers; and how to increase immigration to the region. It would also examine the pilot initiatives of the Atlantic growth strategy.

I want to note that the scope of the motion is about more than just sending people to Atlantic Canada. Rather, it is a call for the committee to examine how to increase the economic and social well-being of Atlantic Canada. It is about building the region up so that more people not only go there but stay there and thrive. That means that the study needs to take a broad view. It requires a holistic approach and comprehensive solutions.

When I saw the motion, I thought about a story that was reported in the media this summer. It is a story about a Syrian chocolatier. In August, the media spoke to Assam Hadhad and his family. Mr. Hadhad was a successful chocolatier in Damascus, Syria, where he employed 30 people in his factory and shipped his chocolates all over the Middle East. As a result of the ongoing civil war in Syria, his factory was destroyed in a bombing. After that, he and his family fled to Lebanon and have since successfully made their way to Antigonish, Nova Scotia.

The small community of Antigonish welcomed the Hadhad family with open arms. Not only did they help the family resettle in Canada, they helped Mr. Hadhad go back to doing what he loves: making chocolate. Volunteers helped him build a tiny shed and turn it into the current one-person factory named the Peace by Chocolate company. Mr. Hadhad's chocolates are now being sold at local markets and through special orders, and he hopes to eventually be able to expand and hire staff from the community.

In a truly pay-it-forward moment, after receiving the help he and his family received, Mr. Hadhad was donating his profits to the victims of the Fort McMurray fire. This is what we call a successful resettlement story. It is inspirational, it is heartwarming, and there is no question that Mr. Hadhad is contributing to the social and economic well-being of Atlantic Canada.

From a purely immigration numbers standpoint, the most recent figures show that Atlantic Canada is not receiving an equitable share of the immense benefits immigration provides to Canada as a whole.

In 2014, only about 3% of new permanent residents resided in the Atlantic region. That is just over 8,000 people. As a share of the national population, the Atlantic region makes up over 6.5% of the Canadian population. As I touched on a moment ago, the solution is

not to simply increase the number. We need a broad-based strategy not to just bring people to Atlantic Canada but to give them a reason to stay and thrive there.

As the motion sets out, Atlantic Canada is currently feeling the effects of both an aging population and a shrinking population, due mainly to youth out-migration from Atlantic Canada to other parts of the country.

On the issue of the aging population, while nationally just over 16% of Canadians were over the age of 65 in 2015, in the Atlantic region, these proportions were elevated, ranging from 18% to 19% in each Atlantic province.

In addition to this, Atlantic Canada is also struggling with youth out-migration. From 2009 to 2014, net out-migration of young Canadians aged 15-29 ranged from a low of 3,900 from Prince Edward Island to a high of nearly 10,000 from New Brunswick.

When a region is dealing with an elevated population of those entering retirement, on top of dealing with the significant out-migration of youth, who are supposed to replace them in the labour force, it puts an additional strain on the economy of the region.

To understand how to create the circumstances for newcomers to stay and thrive, it requires understanding why young Atlantic Canadians are not staying and what can be done to change that for everyone.

● (1900)

As my colleague, the member for Churchill—Keewatinook Aski has heard across this country on her campaign #GenYAsksY, precarious work and the high cost of education are two of the biggest issues impacting young Canadians as they attempt to build their lives. As we might expect, these issues are more acute in the Atlantic region.

One thing to note is that the region has been heavily reliant on precarious seasonal workers for a long time. In 2015, while nationally just over 13% of Canadians were employed in temporary positions, Atlantic provinces ranged from over 16.5% to nearly 23%. With such elevated numbers in temporary work, one has to examine if that is helping or hampering the social and economic well-being of Atlantic Canada in the long-term.

Regarding the elevated levels of precarious, seasonal, and temporary work in the region, the Liberal government has sent some very mixed messages. In February 2016, the government quietly exempted the region's seafood processors, allowing them to bring in unlimited temporary foreign workers for at least this year.

While I expect immigration can certainly be part of the solution in improving the economy of the region and making it sustainable, the approach of how that is done matters.

Private Members' Business

The question is, are temporary foreign workers the solution, or do we want to see permanent residents numbers go up in the region? As well, if people are good enough to work, are they not good enough to stay for the long-term? To move backwards by lifting restrictions on temporary foreign workers is not likely going to help create good, long-term jobs in the region for young people and newcomers alike.

Yesterday, at the immigration and citizenship committee, Mr. Alex LeBlanc, the executive director of the New Brunswick Multicultural Council, raised the question of family reunification. He noted that family reunification should be considered as part of the population retention strategy.

The question of the quota system on family reunification was raised. On retention of youth, worth noting is that with the significant exception of Newfoundland, Atlantic Canada is home to some of the highest tuition fees in the country, with Nova Scotia trailing only behind Ontario for its annual undergraduate fees.

At committee, I intend to take a broad-based approach to this motion and at the heart of the motion, we need to examine how the government could work to improve the economic and social conditions in the Atlantic region.

In addition to increasing levels of immigration to the region and retaining youth, any successful strategy will need to examine how we can better provide opportunities for other demographics that are often systemically ignored to succeed, such as aboriginal Canadians and disabled Canadians.

The government needs to be ready to match any immigration initiative with appropriate programs, funding, and strategies to provide newcomers with real opportunities to succeed. Newcomers and young people need real access to skills training that will allow them not only to fill today's jobs but create tomorrow's opportunities.

We have much to do. This motion is welcomed. We need to examine it with a wide view, a holistic approach, so that we can address these issues, not for the short-term but for the long-term.

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour for me to speak today to this motion that has been brought forward by my friend and colleague from Fundy Royal. This has such an enormous impact on my riding of Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe, as well as neighbouring ridings in Atlantic Canada.

I want to commend the member for introducing Motion No. 39 to the House as it specifically addresses the crucial question of immigration and, more importantly, the retention of newcomers. This is something I personally feel deserves much more attention, thought, and careful study, especially if we want to better understand why newcomers choose to leave our beautiful region.

[*Translation*]

Canada is first and foremost a land of immigrants. We all, at some point in time, came from somewhere else, and we all brought with us our own cultural and linguistic baggage. As members of the many different groups and nations in our country, we then worked together to forge connections and share our knowledge and experience in the service of creating a new, vibrant, and typically Canadian identity.

Nowadays, we recognize that our Canadian identity is shaped by that diversity of peoples, cultures, and languages. We take genuine pride in affirming the Canadian mosaic. That is why I feel we have to keep moving in that direction, maintain our traditions, and work even harder to attract more immigrants.

• (1905)

[*English*]

This is why I fully support this motion. I sincerely hope that we seek to provide the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration the clear mandate to take a closer look at our immigration situation in order to help our region, and indeed Atlantic Canada as a whole, as we face some serious demographic challenges with which we are currently at risk.

I firmly believe that the information that we are able to gather through such studies and analyses of data would also serve to further the interests of many other regions throughout Canada that are currently facing very similar demographic challenges.

[*Translation*]

As we all know, Canada is facing one of the worst demographic crises of all time. Everywhere we go, we hear the same thing: Canada's population is aging at an alarming rate, to the point where we are no longer able to support our labour market needs.

Indeed, between 1956 and 2006, the median age of the Canadian population rose from 27.2 to 38.8 years, an increase of more than 10 years over a span of just 50 years. Also, by 2056, the median age is expected to reach 46.9 years, or 20 years more than it was in 1956. That is worrisome.

Obviously, the impact of this problem is easily seen in the labour shortages that we are experiencing in many sectors of the economy, but it is worth noting that this population decline is also creating serious problems from a tax perspective. Not only does our aging population mean an increase in transfer payments to the provinces for health and education, but this population decline also reduces our tax base, since fewer people are contributing and paying income and consumption taxes.

This means that we will have fewer resources that we can then invest in social programs and infrastructure. Canadians will be the ones who suffer as a result.

It goes without saying that back home, in Atlantic Canada, the situation is even more serious. For example, in my province, New Brunswick, the fertility rate is less than 2%. The exodus of our people keeps growing before our eyes. Thousands of New Brunswickers leave our province every year.

According to Michael Haan, Canada Research Chair in Population and Social Policy at the University of New Brunswick, in recent years Atlantic Canada has gone through one of the most significant demographic shifts of any region in Canada. Again, the facts are alarming.

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That is why we must absolutely look to immigration to offset this low growth. In fact, for the past few years, migratory increase in Atlantic Canada has been the main source of demographic growth in our region, largely surpassing natural increase.

[*English*]

This is partly because, with the exception of a few urban areas, we live in a part of the country that is predominantly rural, so the impact of our aging population on our way of life is even greater.

In fact, in 2014, for the first time in the recorded history of our province, the number of deaths outnumbered the number of births in our province. We now have the second-lowest fertility rate in Canada, a fertility rate that will only continue to drop because of our aging population.

This is simply unacceptable, because we all know that an aging, shrinking population could be absolutely devastating to an economy. The math is simple. Fewer people working means less income tax, which results in a reduction of resources available to fund key essential public service programs and infrastructure, the development of which is also an important tool in building our economy.

• (1910)

[*Translation*]

Of course, it is also important to mention that back home, immigration must definitely take into account the language component, because our community has a very large francophone population. Obviously, maintaining our demographic weight in our province is important to us as francophones, otherwise the risk of our language being assimilated and of our culture and institutions being lost becomes too great.

Further analysis of the situation by the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration would allow us to identify the key factors that explain why francophone newcomers have a hard time settling in our region. This is essential information if we want to understand the situation and then develop tangible solutions for improving it.

In my opinion, it is essential that we focus our efforts on attracting francophone immigrants to our region. We must also do what it takes to help them flourish and succeed in our communities. Their contribution is very important for our region from an economic standpoint, but also from a cultural standpoint, because these people greatly enrich our heritage and push us to broaden our horizons.

The government of Canada recognizes that francophone immigration to Canada is vitally important, especially in regions where French is already the minority language.

Consequently, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada has set a goal, namely to have francophones represent 4% of the total number of economic immigrants who settle outside Quebec by 2018. This was the impetus for the department to establish, for example, the *mobilité francophone* component of the international mobility program, whereby skilled francophone workers are exempted from a labour market impact assessment in order to facilitate their entry into Canada and their transition in our communities.

It will now be easier for skilled francophone workers to come to Canada, initially on a temporary basis, but with the possibility of working and remaining in Canada under the express entry system.

[*English*]

While we often hear certain misconceptions about immigration in Atlantic Canada regarding newcomers to our region, it is important to remember that immigrants are not here to take our jobs. In fact, they give much more than they take. They give by sharing their unique experiences with all of us, by filling identified skills gaps in our region, by investing their capital, and by contributing to enhancing our Canadian identity.

I strongly believe that, and on this the data are crystal clear, Atlantic Canada absolutely needs growth. The motion is an important and a necessary first step to improving and understanding the needs of immigration growth and retention in our area. By allowing the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration to study the immigration landscape in Atlantic Canada in greater depth, all ridings in our region will be in a much better position to map out our economic future by developing a progressive immigration strategy that will help address our lack of growth.

[*Translation*]

I believe that members will agree that we will succeed together, and that by working collaboratively we will build a future for our beautiful region and overcome the many challenges we have.

Hon. Michelle Rempel (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I agree that we need to increase the number of francophone immigrants in our regions.

[*English*]

My maiden name is Godin. We trace our Acadian roots to the region. I also share the concern that the member opposite just raised. This would be an excellent component of the study, should it in fact go to committee. I will not pain members anymore with my French, which my grandfather would be deeply ashamed of, at this point in time tonight.

I respect my colleague opposite for moving the motion. I am a little curious as to what happened in the first hour of debate. I was not here, and I was not able to listen to it. I understand the parliamentary secretary moved a significant amendment to the motion, which narrows the motion quite a bit. It narrows it down to looking at the Atlantic immigration pilot initiative.

One of the attractive components of the motion, in its first form, was that it had a very broad scope. The issue of strategies for immigration to the region is very important in looking at the long-term economic success of the region. I am curious as to why the parliamentary secretary, who has a government appointment, would significantly narrow the scope to looking at an existing government initiative.

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This is an important question to raise, given we had a debate on the Standing Orders where there was an exchange between that parliamentary secretary and another member of the House on the role of parliamentary secretaries in committees. I feel it is necessary to raise this issue.

The Liberal platform said, “We will also change the rules so that Ministers and Parliamentary Secretaries no longer have a vote on committees.” It is interesting to talk about how that works in practical reality. What we have, with the movement of the amendment, is a parliamentary secretary essentially dictating what will happen at a committee. There is an incongruity between that and what the Liberal platform said on more freedom in committee studies.

I have looked through the debate to see if there was any sort of push-back from the member opposite. After the parliamentary secretary's speech, I understand the member opposite simply said “I do consent to this amendment” without any sort of rationale for why. Therefore, I am just curious. I am not sure why the member opposite would accept an amendment from a government member to restrict the scope of the motion to this level, especially if we are looking at new and innovative approaches to attract immigration to the region.

On committees, *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* says:

The idea that committees are “masters of their proceedings” or “masters of their procedures” is frequently evoked in committee debates or the House. The concept refers to the freedom committees normally have to organize their work as they see fit and the option they have of defining, on their own, certain rules of procedure that facilitate their proceedings.

I understand, of course, that the House of Commons has a role in referring items for study to committee. However, I wonder why the member opposite would take advice from a government member, when the party platform is that a parliamentary secretary would not necessarily dictate the role of committees. I also wonder why she would have allowed the parliamentary secretary to do that, which significantly narrows the scope of the motion, which, in theory, as it was originally adopted, could have put that in place. It is a little curious.

I find a second thing curious. The member opposite could really carve a niche out for herself in the area of standing up for her constituents. In speeches from across the House, we have heard that immigration is a key concern in the region. I think we all acknowledge that. I am not sure why the member, as an Atlantic Canadian member, would accept an amendment from a member from downtown Toronto, who is a parliamentary secretary.

●(1915)

It just seems a little weird to me. I think that the member had a fantastic motion going into the House. I think there is probably still some merit to it. It just seems odd and I felt compelled to point out to the House that a parliamentary secretary from downtown Toronto was telling a government committee what to do on a member from Atlantic Canada's motion about Atlantic Canada, when it was pretty good to begin with. I will just put that out there.

Nonetheless, we move forward.

One of the concerns I have with regard to immigration in Atlantic Canada is the government's recent decision to arbitrarily put in place

additional low-skilled temporary foreign workers to companies in the area. We know that the unemployment rate in the region is very high. In certain parts of the region it is very high. In fact, certainly, that is some pain my constituents are feeling right now, as well. We have similarly high rates of unemployment in Alberta.

One of the challenges I know we faced in government was that we often had demands from certain industries in the region to have more temporary foreign workers come to fill those jobs. I will be perfectly honest. I think the temporary foreign worker program needs a serious overhaul. This is something that our government crashed into when we saw the abuses of these programs really come to light in 2014, and I am talking specifically about the low-skilled worker area.

Many of the people who come to Canada through the low-skilled worker program are, frankly, exploited. To the companies asking for them in an area of high unemployment, there are broader questions to ask, including, “Are there skills that are lacking from people in the region that we could be training them for to take these jobs?”, or a very difficult and taboo question to ask, which is, “Why do people not want to take these jobs?”

That is a question that I found myself having to answer when a lot of people in Alberta were coming to ask about low-skilled workers or additional temporary foreign workers coming into the province for these types of jobs.

I really do not feel that, as a country, we should be allowing businesses that cannot find Canadian labour to base their entire business model and profit structure on the backs of temporary foreign workers. Even when we think about the name itself, it is offensive: temporary foreign worker. It almost devalues the contribution of those people to our country. They often, I think, experience great challenges coming here.

I was really surprised that the government, as its first immigration initiative to Atlantic Canada, would increase temporary foreign workers in a region with high unemployment to an industry that I do not think has made the case that their business model is not predicated on the availability of low-skilled workers. I think that is a problem. It is not just for Atlantic Canada, but other areas of the country where that might be the case, because if we are seeing wage growth in other areas of the economy but wage stagnation in industries that severely and heavily rely on temporary foreign workers, then that is a government intervention mechanism that is not in the best interests of Canadian workers writ large, and frankly, not in the best interests of the people coming to Canada through that program as well.

Again, I just find it puzzling that a member who has shown some passion—and I respect her for bringing this forward because I think she is going to be able, should it pass, to go to committee and make some meaningful contributions—should restrict the scope of the motion with an amendment from a parliamentary secretary from downtown Toronto on an immigration motion about Atlantic Canada. She allowed it to be restricted to initiatives that are essentially already under way. It is just a little weird. I hope she will speak to this. I hope she will say why she would accept a government member's motion on committee business.

However, should this pass, I certainly hope that the government members on the committee will provide the general public with a rationale as to why they would expand the exploitative temporary foreign worker program in Atlantic Canada, rather than looking at ways to create jobs and economic growth in the long term.

• (1920)

[*Translation*]

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House to talk about immigration to Canada and, more specifically, to Atlantic Canada. I am doing so because the Atlantic provinces are so beautiful. Yvon Godin has been a very important mentor to me in my political career. I speak with him often these days. He is teaching me a great deal about the official languages portfolio, since I am now the NDP critic on that file.

As members know, Yvon Godin is the former member for Acadie—Bathurst. He fought hard for the well-being of his Acadian community, the Atlantic provinces in general, and francophones in Canada. I am therefore pleased to rise in the House today to speak to Motion No. 39, which deals with immigration to Atlantic Canada. This motion was moved by my Liberal counterpart from the riding of Fundy Royal in New Brunswick. I mention where this motion came from because New Brunswick is the only officially bilingual province in Canada. That is very important and I will explain why in my speech.

I support this motion because the NDP supports all initiatives that promote the socioeconomic well-being of the Atlantic provinces, a region that, quite frankly, has been hard hit in recent years, particularly by the Harper government's bad public policies.

Motion No. 39 instructs the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration to undertake a study on immigration to Atlantic Canada. The committee must consider, among other things, the challenges associated with an aging population and shrinking population base. It must also consider possible recommendations on how to increase immigration to the region. It is also being asked to report its findings to the House within one year of the adoption of the motion.

My colleague who just spoke is a member of the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration, where she does excellent work. Like her, I support this recommendation. The NDP is in favour of a study on how to help the Atlantic provinces take full advantage of the benefits of immigration to Canada.

Increasing immigration to the Atlantic provinces is part of the solution, but it is not the only solution. We should take a comprehensive, holistic approach so we can address all the issues

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related to demographics, the economy, and social inequalities in the Atlantic provinces.

We are in favour of a study of the best ways to reduce inter-regional disparities in Canadian provinces, thereby fostering sustainable development in Canada.

Here are some figures. According to Statistics Canada, Canada's population grew by 0.9% from 2014 to 2015, although during the same period, the Atlantic provinces' population shrunk by 0.1% to 0.2%. In other words, their population is not continuing to flourish and grow. Naturally, the francophone population in Atlantic Canada is following the same pattern. We therefore need to use every available means to improve that situation.

In 2014, Canada welcomed about 260,000 new permanent residents. As for the Atlantic provinces, they welcomed only 8,000, which represents about 3% of those new permanent residents.

In 2015, the Atlantic provinces had the highest proportion of the population aged 65 and over in the country. With an aging population comes a smaller workforce, which could cause numerous challenges for the Atlantic region. That is why it is so important to have a closer look at this issue, and this study is a first step.

I mentioned my colleague Yvon Godin earlier. He worked very hard on behalf of the Canadian francophonie and the Atlantic provinces.

• (1925)

Yvon Godin also fought for immigration to ensure that we kept a significant threshold of francophone immigration across Canada where there are official language minority communities.

New Brunswick is an important example where the francophone population represents roughly 40% of the population, while 60% are anglophones. As I was saying, it is the only officially bilingual province and it is important to maintain this high francophone ratio. That is why immigration is essential.

To that I would like to say that currently at the Standing Committee on Official Languages, we are studying immigration in official language minority communities. However, we do not have a lot of time for our study. We are studying this and seeing how we might improve the situation. I will be pleased to share the results of our study with the members of the committee. Those results might inform their upcoming study.

We have a target for francophone immigration to official language minority communities across Canada. That target is 4.4% of francophone immigration to official language minority communities outside Quebec by 2013. We are nowhere near that, and for that reason we are conducting studies in order to improve the situation in New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and the other Atlantic provinces, for example.

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Some members mentioned the return of the Mobilité francophone program, which, unfortunately, was abolished by the Conservatives. I want to acknowledge this Liberal initiative. Collegiality seldom happens in the House, but it is important to recognize good work. The return of Mobilité francophone is a good example. Congratulations to the Liberals for bringing it back. The Conservatives made a mistake when they abolished it. This does not solve everything, but it is a good step forward that will improve the situation of francophone minority communities. Improvements are necessary, as I mentioned.

Furthermore, one of the annual reports of the Commissioner of Official Languages indicated that immigration needs to be understood as a tool for the growth and development of official language minority communities.

Immigration should therefore be considered a tool for growth and not a problem or something difficult. The problem that we have with francophone immigration to official language minority communities is that we often forget that francophone immigrants need to become productive members of society, that the organizations must be run by and for official language minority communities. The services must be offered by and for francophone communities, otherwise it is very difficult to build the ties needed for the community to flourish.

I do not have much time left, but I would like to mention that efforts to promote immigration are also under way in my riding, which, by the way, is not in the Atlantic region. We are welcoming many newcomers and enriching the greater Drummond area with many communities from various countries.

Recently, we welcomed a number of Syrian families. We are very proud to have participated in this effort. We are working hard to integrate them into our community, to help them find jobs, to send their children to school, and to help them to grow, so that they, in return, can help grow our community. We must not forget that immigration benefits us all. It is what helped us grow as a nation. Canada is a country of immigrants, and we need to continue to enrich our culture and our communities through immigration to the Atlantic provinces and other areas of Canada.

• (1930)

[English]

Mr. Sean Fraser (Central Nova, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to the issue of immigration in Atlantic Canada. This could very possibly be the most significant issue impacting the Atlantic region, not just in this Parliament but potentially for an entire generation.

I would like to take some time to thank the hon. member for Fundy Royal for her leadership on this issue within our caucus, in the House, and in her community as well.

Over the course of my submission, I hope to touch on why immigration is so important to Atlantic Canada. I will give a few examples on how immigration could transform the Atlantic region and then explain the key opportunities that currently exist to capitalize on the initiative and the study laid out in Motion No. 39.

The beginning point in this analysis for me is that Atlantic Canadians right now, myself included, are living in a house of cards of sorts. This is largely due to the demographic problem facing our

region today. Nova Scotia, for example, has the highest proportion of seniors of any province in Canada. Having many seniors in our area can be a wonderful thing, but at the same time we are seeing a serious out-migration of youth and an overall decline in parts of the Atlantic region. This causes problems. As our population ages, the cost of health care increases and certain social benefits that seniors are entitled to become due. When we do not have a pipeline of young families and workers, we not only lose the tax revenue to cover the costs for these seniors, but we have a significant decrease in productivity as well.

The cost of inaction on this file is too great to ignore. If we do nothing, the Ivany report has suggested that by 2030 we could lose up to 100,000 workers just in Nova Scotia. This will see our schools close and our hospital services shut down. We need to act swiftly.

As far as I am aware, there are only two ways that we can boost the population of a region. This first is to increase fertility rates. The second is taking on an immigration plan. With great respect to the ambitious young people who may wish to replenish the population through their efforts to boost fertility, I would suggest that immigration would be a more effective way to achieve that important end.

I mentioned the Ivany report previously. This report lays out a path for future growth in Nova Scotia although it applies equally to Atlantic Canada. It identified immigration as a potential game changer. There are certain economic and social boosts that we can expect to see if we put together a robust and well-thought-out immigration plan that this study will help us achieve. On the economic side, there are a number of reasons why this is the right thing to do.

Increasing immigration to Atlantic Canada will allow us to fill gaps in the labour force. I am working with a well-respected manufacturing employer in Pictou County in my riding. This company has an employee with a very specific set of skills. He is an industrial mechanic for certain kinds of equipment at its shop. He is dealing with an administrative hassle that is causing him to apply repeatedly for temporary work permits. He is a wonderful guy and he is the exact kind of person we should be bringing in, not only so we can welcome more people to our region but so we can support the needs of that employer who employs about 100 Canadians.

Similarly, in the seafood processing industry, the jobs that we were talking about for temporary workers do not just support the seafood processing plant, but they support the local fishermen in my communities along the Northumberland Strait and the eastern shore as well.

In addition to meeting the shortage in labour supply, immigrants are often entrepreneurs. There is a doctor in my home community who has invested significant personal savings to invest in a local business. He wants to further invest, but he needs access to capital. Without permanent residency status or citizenship in Canada, he is unable to access the kind of capital that he needs to open a new restaurant in my community. Again, he is an upstanding citizen who plans to be here for life. We should be welcoming him and encouraging him to invest so he can employ more people in our region.

Immigrants and refugees also provide new markets. When we are dealing with people who are coming from another place, we are often dealing with people who need to buy everything from pillowcases and toothbrushes to fill their home, to the hardware and the lumber they need to build their home. These people make purchases from local shops that support entrepreneurs on the local scene as well.

In addition, immigrants can provide a significant boost to trade and tourism. When we bring in people from around the world, they often have relationships with businesses in another part of the world that they can do business with and that will help bring in foreign investment and capital into our region.

• (1935)

If we make a plan that brings in immigrants in significant numbers to Atlantic Canada, we should expect to see that friends and family members of our newcomers will come visit as well and give a boost to the tourism industry, which is already a very important strategic economic industry in my home province of Nova Scotia and across the Atlantic region.

In my experience, we have also seen with the immigration efforts we have taken on, a real social boost to our communities. We have seen a new vibrancy that is a new experience for many of us who have spent our lifetimes in Atlantic Canada. In the town of New Glasgow the multicultural association not only provides a forum for newcomers to connect with one another but showcases everything they have to offer to the community. They are hosting festivals that I love to attend. It gives us an opportunity to meet vendors who prepare ethnic foods at our local farmers' markets, and it is a wonderful thing for the community at large.

It also allows us to recruit professionals, such as doctors. The idea that we are facing a shortage of rural family practitioners, at the same time as we are capping the number of foreign-trained doctors who can come and practise in Nova Scotia, is quite confusing to me.

Right now, there are certain key opportunities that I see in the Atlantic region that we need to capitalize on. If I look at our post-secondary institutions in Nova Scotia, we have 10 universities and the Nova Scotia Community College, which puts us at close to over 20 post-secondary education campuses in total. I see institutions that are attracting foreign students who fall in love with the region, who would love to stay, and who have a tremendous education and could become entrepreneurs in our communities. We make it very difficult for them to become permanent residents and citizens. This is an opportunity we must capitalize on for the sake of the future of our region.

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I also see that there is a shift in attitude. We have had some great historical successes, like the Dutch farmers who came in the mid-20th century, including the family of the hon. member for Sydney—Victoria, who have made a real difference to primary industry in Atlantic Canada.

We have also had tremendous success, and I will point to the example my friend from Vancouver East made reference to. My friends from Antigonish, the Hadhad family, opened a chocolate shop, a small shed turned chocolate factory in Antigonish. However, it is not just the Hadhad family. Other new members to our community from this initiative are working for local construction companies, are performing with local theatre troupes in their first year they have spent in Nova Scotia. It is a tremendous thing because I know small communities across Atlantic Canada are sharing that similar experience.

This shift in attitude is something that is very heartwarming from my perspective, because historically I think certain small communities have a bit of a reputation in Atlantic Canada for labelling people who have not spent three generations there as “come from aways”. Now we have adopted an attitude where we are encouraging people to come from away. It is a wonderful thing, because over the past few years people have become acutely aware of the need to boost immigration. They recognize the demographic problem that we are all facing. We are seeing it in our own families, when our parents are having increased costs for health care, when our brothers and sisters and cousins are moving away for work because they cannot find it at home. People feel this in their personal lives.

I, personally, had to spend a few years moving out to Alberta to find work, like so many other people I went to school with. I have five sisters, each of whom have spent some time out of province. One is going to be an accountant in Halifax, and the only other one who stayed in the province has a husband who travels back and forth to the Middle East. Bringing more people in is not only going to create opportunities for them to come back but create opportunities for the newcomers to flourish as well.

I am going to be supporting the motion. I urge all other members of the House to do the same. Immigration is essential to the future of our region's economy and, quite frankly, our success. The cost of inaction is too great to ignore, and we will ignore it at our own peril.

The Atlantic growth strategy put forward by the government is an excellent first step that would see 6,000 new immigrants and their families in the region over the next three years, but we need to embark on this study to ensure we do it in the right way. We need to ensure that we create a plan to retain these immigrants once they call Atlantic Canada home.

Once again, I ask for the support of all members of the House for the sake of the future of the region that I care about most, Atlantic Canada. Please support the motion and undertake an initiative to promote immigration to Atlantic Canada.

Private Members' Business

• (1940)

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

Mr. Speaker, I would like to speak if I may for just a few minutes, only because I truly believe that what the member is proposing would be fantastic for the Atlantic region.

I was a provincial MLA for many years in Manitoba. We had a very similar problem, and I attribute the success of Manitoba's immigration policy to former prime minister Jean Chrétien. He and then premier Gary Filmon entered into an agreement on the provincial nominee program. When the standing committee on immigration looks at what works in immigration, the best immigration policy is driven by families. I know this because I have been dealing with it for over 25 years on a personal level. It is driven by allowing immigrants to become a part of the community. If we tie them into families and into employment, it does make a profound difference.

I attribute Manitoba's success in growth to immigration. In fact, Manitoba's population would have declined if it were not for immigration. The last 10 years is an excellent example of that. That one program and initiative that Jean Chrétien and Gary Filmon agreed to turned the tide for the province of Manitoba from an immigration point of view.

We know that it can in fact be done. I do applaud the member and the Atlantic caucus members, who I know have done a phenomenal effort in lobbying for this, not only inside but outside the chamber as well.

• (1945)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Resuming debate, we'll go to the hon. member for Fundy Royal for her right of reply, to conclude this debate.

Mrs. Alaina Lockhart (Fundy Royal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleagues for their thoughtful perspectives and overwhelming support for the efforts to increase immigration in Atlantic Canada. This debate in the House of Commons has drawn attention to this critical call for action, as Atlantic Canadians look for ways to achieve a more prosperous future, a future that allows for the repatriation of our youth, economic growth, and sustainability of communities throughout the region. Immigration will play a role in the outcome of all of these factors.

I would also like to thank the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship for his friendly amendment to Motion No. 39, which recognizes the challenges associated with the retention of newcomers to Atlantic Canada. I am pleased with his amendment and, to respond to my hon. colleague from Calgary Nose Hill, it would broaden the scope of the study for the committee. I also want to thank her for her comments today and her extensive work on this file. I think the study of retention is incredibly important and would add to the study of the Atlantic growth strategy. The member may not be familiar with the strategy, which was conceived by the 32 MPs from Atlantic Canada and supported by the government. It is essential that Parliament see the effect of this strategy.

By studying factors that increase the retention rates of newcomers, the committee would not only contribute to the success of the government's Atlantic Canada immigration pilot, a component of the Atlantic growth strategy, but would also provide a point of reference for best practices. The practices can then be shared across Canada, knowing that national demographic projections show that all regions in Canada will be impacted by an aging population. Atlantic Canada is facing that impact first.

I believe that best retention practices will include much broader actions in government policy. Increased retention will only happen when communities, employers, and individuals take steps to ensure that newcomer families will not only be settled into their work life, but also be involved in their communities. Extra efforts need to be made in rural areas to help newcomers develop support systems, which happen a little more naturally in urban areas with larger immigrant communities.

[Translation]

In the course of this debate, my colleagues have raised concerns about protecting the French language. I agree that we need to pay special attention to francophone immigrants who settle in the Atlantic provinces, particularly in my province, New Brunswick, which is Canada's only bilingual province.

New Brunswick's official languages commissioner says that Ottawa and the Government of New Brunswick must maintain the proportions of francophone and Acadian communities. She says that immigration is the only way to grow Canada's population and that New Brunswick's francophone population is no exception.

[English]

During the course of this debate, I have also heard concerns from my colleagues about the temporary foreign worker program and the provincial nominee program, with the suggestion that this pilot was introduced without consultation. This government has consulted and listened to Canadians, and it certainly has consulted with the Atlantic provinces. I am confident that the government will deliver based on the feedback received, and I look forward to the announcement of immigration levels on November 1.

I am also proud that the government's immigration pilot program was announced in July and was developed with the premiers of Atlantic Canada. It is designed to work in concert with the existing programs that are already contributing to the economic and demographic stability of the Atlantic region.

I was fortunate enough to be part of the Minister of Immigration's consultations with industry. I also know he has met with the premiers and economic advisers. All have confirmed that we need to grow the workforce in a targeted way that supports long-term sustainability. The growth of the economy will require more aggressive means than the provincial nominee program and the use of temporary foreign workers.

Historically, Canada has prospered when immigration was part of the plan for economic development. Studying the best ways to attract and retain immigrants in Atlantic Canada will benefit the entire country.

I am pleased to have brought this debate to the House of Commons, and to have provided the opportunity for parliamentarians to make a significant difference in the lives of my constituents of Fundy Royal, of Atlantic Canadians, and of all Canadians. When Atlantic Canada does better, all of Canada does better. To that end, I ask my colleagues of the House to support Motion No. 39.

• (1950)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The question is on the amendment. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the amendment?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Amendment agreed to)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): 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 Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): All those in favour of the motion, as amended, please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): In my opinion the yeas have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Pursuant to Standing Order 93, the recorded division stands deferred until Wednesday, November 2, 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.

* * *

[English]

INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am rising again as I have so many other times in the chamber to talk about a border situation that is very important for this nation. Along the corridor that I represent in Windsor West, approximately 30% to 35% of the nation's trade with America takes place. Over \$1 billion per day, often up to 30,000 trucks, or 10,000 vehicles traverse that border daily.

Adjournment Proceedings

We have been trying to get a new border crossing for some time. In fact, in the year 2000 when I was then a city councillor, I proposed and established a community movement with others to create a new border crossing. It was described by some at the time as a pipe dream. If we fast forward over several years to where we are today, we finally have the potential for a new border crossing from Windsor to Detroit, which once again would provide modern, new infrastructure.

The government had to be dragged kicking and screaming to finally get a border solution, which it inherited from the Conservatives but the process is breaking down. The Windsor-Detroit border authority was basically put in a situation of having to build a new border crossing for our community and country, something that has been advocated not only for the community, to get international trucks off the city streets, but also for our economy, as we have a number of different suppliers involved, including those making just-in-time deliveries, and everything one could imagine from automotive to agriculture exports. In fact, 12% of the GTA's overall economy is dependent on the border crossing in Windsor, and even up to 8% to 10% of Montreal's.

We have a significant economic footprint that would basically grind to a halt if we do not fix the border crossings in Windsor. We are dependent upon the nearly 90-year-old infrastructure with the Ambassador Bridge. We also have a Windsor-Detroit tunnel and a more modern ferry service, but it is not as robust as necessary to service everything. It does an excellent job for chemicals and hazardous materials, but it cannot accommodate mass volume; hence, a border process has been in place.

However, we know that in the past the Liberals have succumbed to lobbying and the wishes of a few at the expense of the community. One of those concerns is the ownership of the Ambassador Bridge, which is in private American hands right now. A billionaire owns that bridge and basically controls the economic levers for Canada in many senses. Because it is private property, it was not until we had the International Bridges and Tunnels Act that we had a process in place to inspect the bridge properly and, as a result, enforcement powers over it.

When are we going to get this new border crossing completed? The road has been completed and the request for proposals was supposed to be out to build this new bridge. Everything has been done. Because of the government's lack of planning, we are doing all the work necessary. Why are there continuing delays in putting the RFP out and to the border crossing being built by 2020? Why is the government not meeting that mandate?

• (1955)

[Translation]

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to answer my colleague.

I would like to begin by saying that the government recognizes the importance of the Windsor-Detroit corridor and is firmly committed to completing the Gordie Howe international bridge as quickly as possible.

Adjournment Proceedings

As the member said, the Windsor-Detroit trade corridor is one of the busiest commercial land crossings on the Canada-U.S. border, and one of the busiest in North America. More than a quarter of our two countries' surface trade activity depends on this famed corridor.

The Government of Canada has made major progress on this file. The first phase of the tendering process, the request for qualification, was launched in July 2015 and completed in January 2016.

The process resulted in the preselection of three teams for the second phase of the tendering process, the request for proposals. Preparations to launch the request for proposals are under way. The Government of Canada expects to officially launch the process soon, and it is likely to take about 18 months.

At the end of this process, a public-private partnerships contract, or P3, will be reached with the selected private partner. Upon completion of the contract, the private partner must provide detailed information about the project, including the construction schedule and anticipated opening date.

Major infrastructure projects like the Gordie Howe international bridge require extensive preparatory work before construction can begin.

During that time, however, we are hardly twiddling our thumbs. In fact, while the procurement process continues, it may reassure my colleague to know that the Government of Canada is moving ahead in a number of other areas. For instance, nearly \$60 million is being invested to prepare the plaza site in the Brighton Beach industrial area. This includes constructing the perimeter access road and relocating utilities, as well as backfilling, grading, and drainage operations. That work began last summer and is moving ahead at a very good pace.

On the Canadian side, nearly all of the properties required in Windsor have been procured, which means we can move quickly in preparing the P3 concessionaire site.

In addition, we are working to acquire all necessary properties on the other side of the bridge, in Detroit. Under the direction of the Michigan Department of Transportation, offers to purchase have been made to procure the many properties needed in the Delray area, where the bridge and border inspection plaza will be located. The demolition of the acquired buildings has already begun.

As I mentioned, the Government of Canada recognizes the importance of infrastructure, and is committed to investing over \$120 billion over the next 10 years for the benefit of all Canadians.

● (2000)

[*English*]

Mr. Brian Masse: Mr. Speaker, I know that the work is taking place on the Canadian side. I was on city council when we assembled the land that is now being used for the actual border crossing.

On the Delray side, the Michigan side, we have a number of processes in place that have been passed for a number of years. It is called "condemnation". The process there has been slowed, because the current government has fallen to the lobbying, for the

Ambassador Bridge, by a private American billionaire who has been active in slowing the project down.

The deadline for the government was 2020. Is it going to make the 2020 deadline? What are the excuses if it is not?

The government dispatched someone from the Windsor-Detroit Bridge Authority to meet about selling the Ambassador Bridge to us. Is the government going to purchase the Ambassador Bridge? How is it going to go about doing a P3 if it does not even know whether there is going to be one crossing or two crossings in the public sector?

I would like to know whether the 2020 deadline is still on. Why are the Liberals actually negotiating with a private American billionaire?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate my colleague's enthusiasm.

The 2020 deadline was chosen arbitrarily by the previous government. We are not going to throw a date around like that. We are going to be responsible about this.

The selected company will be the one to give us a date. When we know what company we will be dealing with, we will have more details and we will be able to move forward.

I want to assure my colleague that this project is just as important to the Government of Canada as it is to him. We are moving forward as quickly as possible, but in a responsible manner that takes into account the best interests of Canadians.

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this evening, I was hoping to speak to the Minister of Immigration, but I see his parliamentary secretary will be representing him. I am therefore very pleased to speak to the member for Parkdale—High Park, and I thank him for being here this evening.

I would follow up with him on the arrival of refugee families. Various communities in my riding have been awaiting their arrival since January 2016. I would like to remind the minister that, in my riding of Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, community groups responded to the government's call for assistance and mobilized to properly prepare for the arrival of refugee families.

Sponsoring committees were set up in Pont-Rouge, Saint-Ubalde, Saint-Basile, Donnacona, Portneuf, and Cap-Santé. Many generous people gave of their precious time and worked long and hard to raise a significant amount of money in order to be able to absorb the cost of housing the refugee families for a year. That was a government requirement.

In one case, people rented a house in February and made the necessary arrangements so that the home would be ready when a young family arrived. At the time, that family had a 20-week-old baby. By now, that baby will be needing a whole new wardrobe.

These people worked extremely hard to collect money and, unfortunately, have had to give these items to other families in the community and purchase new ones. It is unfortunate because the sponsorship groups are impacted by this government's inaction, as shown in this example.

This government has been in power for more than one year. During the last election campaign, it had a sense of urgency with respect to bringing a large number of refugees to Canada. We remember little Aylan, whose photo made headlines around the world. The NDP and the Liberals pounced on it as though it were a good news story. It was so urgent that it is no longer on the government's to-do list. The government failed the community groups that were mobilized. This government abandoned the honest people in our regions after the October 2015 election. That is another broken promise.

Last spring, I asked the Minister of Immigration many times, in writing and also during statements and question period in the House, why he did not show any empathy and why he was not keeping his promise to ensure that refugee families were brought to Canada. Sponsors had been anxiously waiting for them to arrive, not just in my riding, but across Quebec and Canada.

The response to the many inquiries by my office to that of the Minister of Immigration is always the same: we are working on a plan to try to continue bringing more refugees to Canada, but we do not have any arrival dates; things are proceeding, but given the nature of the file, everything is confidential.

The minister even criticized Canadians for being too generous.

Therefore, I am asking the government to expedite the process and to give a clear answer: will the refugees be brought in, yes or no? If yes, when?

It is unacceptable that we are given that kind of answer and that Canadians are being blamed for their generosity.

● (2005)

Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first, I want to thank the hon. member for Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier for his question and his support for this truly national plan.

As the hon. member said, there has been non-stop processing of files of government-sponsored and privately sponsored Syrian refugees. The refugees began arriving in early March and others are due to arrive in the weeks and months to come.

Once an application is fully approved, in other words, the applicant has cleared a medical exam and a security check, a visa is issued and the government-sponsored or privately sponsored refugee can come to Canada. That is how it works.

Last spring, the minister promised that every effort would be made to process by year end or early next year all the applications for privately sponsored refugees that were filed on or before March 21, 2016. The government has made every effort to keep that promise.

Throughout most of May and June, extra staff joined employees and partner organizations that are already working in the Middle East to process applications of privately sponsored Syrian refugees.

Adjournment Proceedings

After this blitz period, mission staff in the Middle East continued to process private sponsorship applications and finalize cases.

Again, every effort is being made to finalize the processing of privately sponsored Syrian refugee applications filed on or before March 31, by the end of 2016 or early 2017. This also applies to my colleague's riding.

To meet this commitment, and in light of the Syrian crisis, privately sponsored Syrian refugee applications were processed first. There are other refugee populations that the respondents would like to help and those applications need to be processed as well.

The processing can also depend on a number of factors, including the volume of applications, the security situation in the region, and the rate at which requirements such as security and medical screening can be met.

I imagine that the hon. members across the way know full well that these requirements are very important and need to be met.

The public response to the Syrian refugee crisis has been extremely generous. My colleague talked about that. Between November 4, 2015, and September 25, 2016, 11, 695 privately sponsored refugees were resettled in Canada. The government has not seen such massive support since the Indochinese refugee resettlement at the end of the 1970s.

With so many people joining refugee sponsorship groups or helping to welcome government-sponsored refugees, it was a truly national effort.

I would like to thank my colleague opposite for supporting this national effort. Once again, I thank the member for his question.

● (2010)

Mr. Joël Godin: Mr. Speaker, as an aside, my esteemed colleague's French is very good. I congratulate him and very much appreciate that he is speaking French. We are proud to live in a bilingual country here in Canada.

Speaking of comprehensive criteria and application packages, I have here a list of the various committees and municipalities. I have one in particular in which all the criteria were met: criminal, medical, and security. From what I understood from his response, this means that we should have an answer very soon. I therefore invite the minister to go ahead and let the committee know in the coming days.

My hon. colleague mentioned how honourably Canadians responded to this crisis. We must encourage Canadians' humanitarian qualities. We must support them. I find it unacceptable that the minister has said that it is because of the generosity of Canadians that his department is swamped. Tonight I learned that he has assigned additional staff to deal with this. That is good. Now, when will be able to respond to our generous—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Adjournment Proceedings

Mr. Arif Virani: In answer to his question, I can tell my colleague opposite that, once the security, health and testing criteria have been met, there is still another step involving the country itself. For example, if the person is in Lebanon, Jordan, or Turkey, the country has to issue that individual an exit permit or visa. These additional requirements sometimes cause longer delays. That being said, we are here to help members from every party and their constituents.

We thank Canadians and my colleague's constituents for their generosity. We are going to try to resolve this issue as soon as possible.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The hon. member for Brantford—Brant not being present to raise the matter for which adjournment notice has been given, the notice is deemed withdrawn.

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 8:13 p.m.)

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