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Friday, November 18, 2016

Speaker: The Honourable Geoff Regan

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Friday, November 18, 2016

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

● (1005)

[*English*]

CANADIAN HUMAN RIGHTS ACT

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill C-16, An Act to amend the Canadian Human Rights Act and the Criminal Code, as reported without amendment from the committee.

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

Hon. John McCallum (for the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada) moved that the bill be concurred in.

The Deputy Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

An hon. members: On division.

(Motion agreed to)

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Hon. John McCallum (for the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada) moved that Bill C-16, an act to amend the Canadian Human Rights Act and the Criminal Code, be read the third time and passed.

Mr. Sean Casey (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I request consent to split my time with the member for St. Catharines.

I am rising to take the opportunity to speak about Bill C-16. I would like to use some of my time to respond—

The Deputy Speaker: This being the first round of interventions at third reading of the bill, unanimous consent is required to split time in this first round by each of the recognized parties.

Does the parliamentary secretary have the unanimous consent of the House to split his time in this round?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Sean Casey: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleagues for that.

I would like to use some of my time to respond to a persistent criticism of the bill. That is that it is redundant, unnecessary, and merely symbolic. Members raised this issue during second reading debate. They have argued that the bill is not necessary, because our federal discrimination law already provides trans people with enough protection. I acknowledge the perspectives of my fellow parliamentarians, but I believe that these concerns can be answered and that the bill is indeed necessary.

It was pointed out that under the current Canadian Human Rights Act, commonly called the CHRA, trans people may bring discrimination complaints using the ground of sex.

It is true that the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal has interpreted the existing ground of sex to cover some complaints brought by trans individuals alleging discrimination, but a person must be quite familiar with the case law and the workings of the CHRA system to know that this protection is even available. Canadians should be able to turn to our laws and see their rights and obligations spelled out clearly. We cannot expect trans people who feel they have been discriminated against to become experts in statutory interpretation just to advocate for their basic rights.

The CHRA system was originally designed to be a user-friendly, inexpensive, and accessible system. We can further improve access to justice for Canadians by ensuring that rights and obligations are spelled out clearly in the CHRA.

What is more, employers and service providers must also be aware of their obligations under the law. They too should be able to look at the CHRA and understand what is required of them. They should be able to understand what kinds of workplace accommodations they must provide to their employees. This area of the law is just emerging. Bill C-16 would serve the important function of clarifying and codifying it.

These are practical results, not mere symbolism. When similar amendments were made in provincial human rights codes, human rights agencies received inquiries from the public creating new opportunities to inform people about their rights and obligations.

Ontario's Human Rights Legal Support Centre reported an increase in inquiries about gender identity and expression, and there are similar reports from other provinces. After gender identity and expression were added to the Ontario Human Rights Code, the Ontario Human Rights Commission reported a growing awareness that discriminating on these grounds is against the law. Commissions have confirmed that explicitly listing these grounds supports their mandate to inform the public of their rights and obligations.

We have also seen legal education respond to amendments such as these. Bulletins, newsletters, and textbooks are sent out and updated to account for statutory amendments. Training sessions and conferences are held to inform legal professionals and others of the new provisions.

That has been the experience elsewhere. We should expect the same when this bill is enacted. These are some of the tangible effects we hope to achieve with the bill. They are results, and parliamentarians have the ability and the responsibility to set them in motion.

I turn now to another reason for the bill: it would amend the Criminal Code to respond to the risk of violence and harm faced by trans individuals on an all too frequent basis.

For a better sense of these risks, I would refer the House to the Trans Pulse project, a research study of social determinants of health among trans people in the province of Ontario. Data for the Trans Pulse project came from focus groups conducted in three Ontario cities in 2006, with 85 trans community members and four family members, and from a survey in 2009-10 of 433 trans Ontarians age 16 and over.

According to this research, trans individuals are the targets of specifically directed violence. Twenty per cent had been physically or sexually assaulted for being trans, and another 34% had been verbally threatened or harassed but not assaulted. Many do not report these assaults to the police.

Let me now turn to the proposed Criminal Code amendments that are intended to address these risks and harms. First let us consider the aggravated sentencing provision that enables judges to properly recognize and denounce crimes motivated by bias, prejudice, or hate. This is found in section 718.2 of the code.

● (1010)

One of the important purposes of the aggravated sentencing provision is the condemnation of hate crimes. It is about recognizing that some people may be more vulnerable to crime simply because they are identifiable as members of a particular group. That can be because of race, religion, colour, or ethnic origin, to name just a few of the listed grounds. Bill C-16 would add explicit protection for members of the trans community.

We can see, again, that Bill C-16 is more than just a symbolic gesture. Adding the ground of gender identity or expression to the Criminal Code would explicitly condemn this type of hate crime. It would also clearly signal to police and prosecutors that they must be aware of the particular vulnerability of trans individuals.

Bill C-16 would also add gender identity or expression to the hate propaganda offences in the Criminal Code. This is by no means redundant. This amendment would fill a gap in the law. In the criminal context, clarity and certainty is of great importance. Criminal offences are interpreted narrowly. The hate propaganda offences currently protect groups identifiable on the ground of sex and other grounds, but there is no mention of gender identity or expression. We cannot assume that these offences would be interpreted to cover gender identity or expression without the amendment of Bill C-16.

Finally, some members have expressed the view that the terms "gender identity" and "gender expression" are too vague and open-ended. It has been suggested that the addition of these grounds would lead to a flood of litigation.

I do not think this concern is warranted. Most provinces and territories now have explicit protection for trans and gender-diverse people in their anti-discrimination statutes. Ontario, Quebec, Alberta, British Columbia, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland and Labrador, and Prince Edward Island all have gender identity and gender expression as prohibited grounds in their human rights codes. The codes in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and the Northwest Territories have the ground of gender identity. In fact, the Northwest Territories has had the ground of gender identity in its act for more than a decade. There has not been a flood of litigation in these provinces and territories.

I have also heard the suggestion that a definition should be added. Most of the prohibited grounds of discrimination in the CHRA do not have definitions. Commissions, tribunals, and courts elaborate the meaning of the grounds in a reasonable way. They clarify through the application of real-life examples, allowing the law to respond in line with its purpose. This does not mean that grounds are indeterminate. It does not mean that people can claim protection on a whim or for frivolous reasons. There are real limits to what any ground can mean, informed by the important purpose of the legislation and the social context in which it is being enacted.

It is time for Parliament to ensure that our laws provide clear and explicit protection where it is now much needed. I urge members to vote in favour of this bill.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I was very supportive of Bill C-16 going to committee, because I wanted to hear some of the answers to difficult questions asked during the debate. I am very disappointed, in fact more than disappointed, that witnesses were not allowed at committee and that this has been rammed back to the House.

Would the member please answer this difficult question? There are many people in this country who do not believe that a transgendered lifestyle is God's plan or that it is medically beneficial, so if we pass this legislation, would that then affect their ability to tell their children not to speak about those ideas in a public place?

● (1015)

Mr. Sean Casey: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Sarnia—Lambton for that question and also congratulate her on her recent honour at the Parliamentarian of the Year awards.

There were a couple questions there. One was with respect to the decision of the committee to not take witnesses, and the other was on the potential restriction or alleged restriction on private speech.

With respect to the first one, witnesses at committee, this bill, Bill C-16, is a piece of government legislation that has been brought in in this Parliament, but it is certainly not the first time that issues of protection from discrimination for our trans community have been debated in this place. This bill actually went through the House of Commons in the last Parliament. It has been the subject of extensive debate, and we have heard from numerous witnesses at various times.

The committees, as the hon. member would know, are masters of their own destiny. There was a vote taken at committee on witnesses, and that was indeed the decision of the committee.

With respect to restrictions on free speech, she need not be concerned about that. There is an amendment to the Criminal Code such that unless discussions venture into the hate propaganda portions of the Criminal Code, inter-family discussions will not, in any way, be affected.

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, just on the last question from the member for Sarnia—Lambton, I know she is quite sincere about her question, but we have had on the Hill in the last four years three full sets of hearings, one here in the House and two in the Senate. The transcripts of those hearings and the more than 35 witnesses are available to all members. If I were asking a question of her, which I am not, I would be asking how this is any different than protections for gender. Does that mean families cannot talk about gender? Does this mean that families cannot talk about race? This is no different than any of the other protections that are currently in the human rights code.

My question for the parliamentary secretary is this. Given that it has been a long road to get here to what is now going to be the third time, and I trust this bill will be passed by Parliament, what arrangements have been made, or what talks have been held by the government with the other House about expeditious passage of this bill? Since the Senate has become a bit of a black box for the rest of us, I want to know whether the member has been able to make any progress in talks with senators.

Mr. Sean Casey: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke for really being the driving force behind the protection of the trans community from discrimination. He was indeed the person who drove this issue in the last Parliament, and deserves full credit for the fact that we are at this stage now. I also want to thank him for providing a better answer to the questions from the member for Sarnia—Lambton than I did.

With respect to the plan going forward, I cannot share with the member at this stage specifically what conversations have been had and what arrangements have been made. Because of the new world order in the other place, there will indeed be discussions to ensure passage. Those discussions have started and will be continuing, and I believe that is going to become standard operating procedure in the current configuration of the Senate.

Mr. Chris Bittle (St. Catharines, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak to Bill C-16, which in my view is another key piece of equality protection legislation tabled by the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada.

This bill, along with other legislation currently before the House, will finally bring balance and protection to the LBGT2 community.

I have heard many members say they support this bill and are anxious to see it pass. I share their desire to see the protections that Bill C-16 would add to the Canadian Human Rights Act and the Canadian Criminal Code, and become part of Canadian law in the near future.

However, during the second reading debate and before the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights, I also heard a number of questions and concerns. I appreciate the spirit of seriousness and sincerity in which members have expressed their views and those of their constituents. Many of these concerns can be allayed if we have a clear picture of the bill's purpose and scope. It is important to focus our attention on the real subject matter of this bill.

The Canadian Human Rights Act applies to the federal sector, namely to the federal government and its role as employer and service provider, and to the federally regulated private sector, including crown corporations, telecommunications companies, the postal service, chartered banks, and similar industries.

The proposed amendments seek to promote equal opportunity of trans and gender-diverse people in employment and access to goods and services. Therefore, if the grounds of gender identity and expression were added, this would mean that a trans person working for the federal government or one of those federally regulated employers that I mentioned could not be passed over for a job or a promotion simply because he or she is trans. If a trans person applies for a passport, he or she would receive the same level of respectful service as any other Canadian would expect. It would be clearly unacceptable to harass a trans person because of his or her gender identity, turning his or her workplace into a hostile or poisoned environment for reasons that have nothing to do with his or her skills or ability to do his or her job.

These are not special rights. We should all be able to find employment without irrelevant characteristics hindering us. All of us should be recognized for our contributions to our workplace and be able to work in a harassment-free environment. All of us should be able to access the same level of federal service and to receive those services in a respectful manner. Those are the kinds of provisions that we are adding to the CHRA. These are the types of essential protections that the trans community has been asking for. We know from the statistics that were cited during second reading, and we heard from the hon. parliamentary secretary, that these protections are sorely needed given the difficulties that trans people face in finding employment and accessing services. It is clear that too many trans people are being deprived of that opportunity to contribute and flourish in our society. This bill is an important step forward for greater societal acceptance and inclusion. This is not just important to trans people but for each and every Canadian. The same human rights afforded to us should be enjoyed by all. When we exclude, marginalize, or discriminate against one facet of society, we are doing damage to all of our society. We as a nation succeed when we speak and are recognized with one voice. That is why this legislation is essential. Discrimination is a matter of concern for all of us.

Some members have also expressed their view that the bill will limit freedom of religion and weakens protections for freedom of religion. However, it is important to remember that the CHRA already includes religion as a prohibited ground of discrimination. Federally regulated employers and services cannot discriminate against individuals based on religious beliefs. Employers can, however, require their managers and employees to treat each other with respect and dignity so as to foster a harassment-free workplace on any of the grounds listed in the act.

The equality provision of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms also prohibits religious discrimination by governments. Section 2(a) of the charter constitutionally enshrines the fundamental freedom of conscience and religion. Its purpose is to prevent government interference with profoundly held personal beliefs. This bill, which is focused on preventing discrimination in employment and the provision of services by federally regulated entities, respects freedom of religion as a guarantee in the charter, and in no way seeks to interfere with an individual's religious belief or practice.

● (1020)

Other members have expressed concern with potential impacts of the bill on their freedom of speech and freedom to openly discuss and debate policy issues. Still others are concerned about limiting their ability to teach their children about religious beliefs.

As explained in the Statement of Potential Charter Impacts that the minister tabled during the second reading of debate, the amendments to the hate propaganda provisions respect freedom of thought, belief, opinion, and expression in a free, democratic society. The criminal provisions against hate propaganda impose a very narrow limit on expression. Hate propaganda targets extreme and dangerous speech that advocates genocide against, willfuly promotes hatred against, or incites hatred in a public place likely to cause a breach of peace against vulnerable people.

The most commonly prosecuted of these three offences is willfully promoting hate against an identifiable group. Critically important is the term “willfully”, which has been defined by the Supreme Court of Canada to mean intentionally and not recklessly. The Supreme Court also interpreted the word “hatred” to mean only the intense form of dislike. It is not enough that the expression is distasteful.

In addition, the offence of willfully promoting hatred does not apply to private conversations. There are also statutory defences, such as the defence of truth, and the defence of good-faith expression of a religious opinion. Finally, the consent of the appropriate provincial attorney general is required before any prosecution of this crime can begin.

With this in mind, let us remember that trans people are particularly vulnerable to harassment and violence, thus the need for society's protection against expression that seeks to dehumanize them and thereby creates conditions for their victimization.

I hope that I have addressed and allayed a number of these concerns. I would like to close by returning to the reasons I think this bill is important and why I think all members should be voting for it.

Diversity and inclusion are values that are important to all of us as Canadians. Canadians expect their laws to reflect these values, yet many trans people are not yet able to fully participate in society. This bill is an important step forward to their greater societal acceptance and inclusion. By adding the grounds of gender identity or expression to the CHRA, we will protect that freedom to live openly in one's deeply felt gender, and this will include freedom to present oneself as a person of that gender.

Transgender and other gender-diverse persons are among the most vulnerable members of society. The amendments to the Criminal Code send a clear message that hate propaganda and hate crimes against trans people are unacceptable. It is time for Parliament to ensure that our laws provide clear and explicit protection where it is now much needed.

As many will recall, the previous Parliament examined a similar bill but was not able to enact it before dissolution. In fact, this House has been considering versions of this bill for many years. It is time now for Parliament to act. Now is the time to ensure that our laws provide clear and explicit protection where it is needed the most.

I am proud of this legislation, which would ensure all Canadians are free to be themselves without fear of discrimination, hate propaganda, and hate crime. As Canadians, we should all feel safe to be ourselves.

● (1025)

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for St. Catharines for an excellent speech. He did a great job in allaying a lot of the questions that I was bringing to the House.

As the chair of the status of women committee, I have seen that implementing legislation to prevent violence against women has not totally been successful in eradicating the issue. I feel the same would be true here, although this is a step in a good direction.

I wonder if the member could comment on other initiatives that his government will take to try to make sure that, in addition to no discrimination, we can really do something concrete to prevent this violence against transgender people.

Mr. Chris Bittle: Mr. Speaker, the member is right. Legislation is only one step forward. Societal change does not happen with a vote in Parliament. There is more work to be done.

I am very proud of the fact that the Prime Minister has appointed a special adviser from this Parliament. The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage will be his special adviser on LGBTQ initiatives.

This is a government that will move forward not only on discrimination against the LGBTQ community, but gender-based violence, which I know the hon. Minister of Status of Women has been fighting hard against. I look forward to seeing her report in the near future, and I look forward to hearing from the Prime Minister's special adviser with his recommendations in the near future as well.

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Mr. Speaker, like many today, I feel that we are making history as parliamentarians. I acknowledge the very important work of my colleague, the member for Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke in driving this agenda, as have other New Democrats before him.

While we are certainly moving forward in terms of much-needed legislation, the question of implementation, which has come up already, is a critical one. This is particularly necessary in marginalized communities, in rural and remote communities, and in indigenous communities, like the ones I represent. Unfortunately, we know that recently the government cut funding to HIV/AIDS programs, and it is certainly not there to support critical programming in marginalized communities.

My question for the member across is, while today is so important, will his government continue implementing and putting forward resources so that trans people across the country, not just in urban centres, but in urban centres and beyond, have the support necessary to make this law a reality?

● (1030)

Mr. Chris Bittle: Mr. Speaker, I saw this first-hand. I was chair of a community health centre in a volunteer position before being elected to this place. One of the decisions of our health centre, Quest Community Health Centre, was to make it a centre of excellence for the LGBT community and for trans persons.

Therefore, I appreciate the difficulty, and there is still a great deal more work to be done. I especially look forward to working with the Prime Minister's special advisor on LBGTQ2 issues, and look forward to seeing recommendations going forward.

Ms. Dianne L. Watts (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the speech by my colleague across the way and thank him for his work on this file.

He talked in generalities about the different initiatives that would be undertaken. I wonder if he could elaborate more specifically on what that would look like going forward.

Mr. Chris Bittle: Mr. Speaker, we are in the initial stages. The Prime Minister has committed to being proactive on all forms of discrimination, including discrimination against the trans community. This is the first stage of what our government is doing.

We have also seen, as I mentioned in the last couple of answers, the appointment of the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage as a special advisor to the Prime Minister on LBGTQ2 initiatives.

I look forward to seeing recommendations, so that there can be concrete steps moving forward, and we can advance acceptance and fight discrimination.

* * *

PRIVILEGE

MINISTER OF INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am rising to provide further comment on the question of privilege raised by the member for Essex concerning the government's treaty tabling policy. As I have previously stated, the matter raised refers to government policy and does not concern parliamentary procedure.

The treaty tabling policy that the member has referenced relates to governmental and departmental activities. As such, I submit that the issue does not fall under the purview of the House and is beyond the jurisdiction of the Speaker.

Furthermore, rulings made by the House consistently support this notion. Speaker Bosley, in his May 15, 1985 ruling, said, “I think it has been recognized many times in the House that a complaint about the actions or inactions of government departments cannot constitute a question of parliamentary privilege.”

Mr. Speaker, in his ruling on February 7, 2013, your predecessor stated, “It is beyond the purview of the Chair to intervene in departmental matters or to get involved in government processes, no matter how frustrating they may appear to be to the member.”

He further echoed this in his ruling of May 2, 2014, in response to a point of order regarding the very matter that is before us today. In that ruling, the Speaker referred to the treaty tabling policy and said, “It is clear to me that the policy in question belongs to the government and not the House. It is equally clear that it is not within the Speaker's authority to adjudicate on government policies or processes, and this includes determining whether the government is in compliance with its own policies.”

The member for Essex contends that her ability to properly discharge her parliamentary functions was impeded by the tabling timeline of CETA. The member opposite should know that in the acting legislation to implement the terms of the treaty, Parliament has no formal role in treaty processes. The tabling of the treaty helps members to prepare for debate on the enabling legislation. Therefore, I submit that the tabling of the treaty before the bill was introduced in no way affects the ability of the member to fully discharge her duties in scrutinizing the bill.

I would note that the bill was introduced on October 31 and has yet to be called for debate at second reading. Moreover, a technical briefing was provided to the member on November 2, and the text of the treaty itself has been publicly available online since February of this year. Furthermore, the committee, of which the member for Essex is a member, was briefed about CETA last March.

The government's policy on tabling of treaties provides that enabling legislation wait 21 days following the tabling of a treaty. Section 6.3 of the tabling of treaties policy provides for exceptions. An exception for CETA was granted.

We have seen exemptions granted by the government in the past. Under the previous government in the last Parliament, five exemptions were made for the amendments to the International Convention against Doping in Sport.

I would like to draw the attention of members of the House to the fact that in the previous Parliament, the NDP voted in favour of a free trade agreement between Canada and the Republic of Korea in 2014, which was also subject to an exemption. The Canada-Korea Free Trade Agreement was signed on September 22, 2014, and the enabling legislation was introduced in the House the next day.

I submit that the matter raised by the member for Essex does not constitute a legitimate question of privilege. On the contrary, the tabling of the treaty in advance of the introduction of Bill C-30 will only serve to assist the member in fully scrutinizing the bill and exercising her parliamentary duties.

● (1035)

The Deputy Speaker: I thank the hon. parliamentary secretary for his intervention on this question. We will get back to the House, I am sure, in the days following.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Calgary Nose Hill.

* * *

[*English*]

CANADIAN HUMAN RIGHTS ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-16, An Act to amend the Canadian Human Rights Act and the Criminal Code, be read the third time and passed.

Hon. Michelle Rempel (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what often unifies our weakest moments, the moments when we inflict damage upon others, the moments that linger in our minds as regret long after they have happened, the moments that we later need to ask forgiveness for or make recompense for, is a failure to seek to grant compassion to others.

Few of us seek to be uncompassionate, yet, in our fragility, we often are. This is because compassion is a difficult thing. Compassion requires work. Compassion requires self-reflection. Compassion requires selflessness. Compassion requires humility. Compassion requires departure from dogmas that often define who we are. Compassion requires courage. Compassion requires empathy across cultural grounds, across religious views, across political ideology, and across the sins of others.

This is why most religious texts and teaching often weave consistent compassion as a thread through their teachings. This is because it is compassion that, in our worst moments, saves us.

Our charge as legislators is to seek and then to define a just and well-considered but ultimately compassionate course of action when a charge of inequality is levelled.

On our first charge, that of understanding, Bill C-16 seeks to amend the Canadian Human Rights Act by adding gender identity and gender expression to the list of prohibited grounds for discrimination.

It also seeks to amend the Criminal Code, to extend the protection against hate propaganda set out in that act to any section of the public that is distinguished by gender identity or expression, and to clearly set out the evidence that an offence motivated by bias, prejudice, or hate on gender identity or expression constitutes an aggravating circumstance that a court must take into consideration when it imposes a sentence.

In short, the bill seeks to provide remedy for the inequality and discrimination that the trans community faces in Canada.

The bill, in various forms, has been debated in this House for years now. That said, it has only been in the last few years that the issue of equality for transgendered Canadians has become ingrained in the awareness of the Canadian public writ large.

I remember the first time that someone explained what gender identity and gender expression meant. I remember it clearly. It was right after I was elected in 2011. I remember being shocked at myself for not understanding this, given the level of severity that it means for me, as a legislator, not to get that. I think it is probably worth having that discussion here today to remind people.

“Sex refers to biological differences: chromosomes, hormonal profiles, internal and external sex organs.” I am quoting from a paper from an Australian university.

> Gender describes the characteristics that a society or culture delineates as masculine or feminine. So while your sex as male or female is a biological fact that is the same in any culture, what that sex means in terms of your gender role...in society can be quite different cross culturally. These 'gender roles' have an impact on the health of an individual. In sociological terms 'gender role' refers to the characteristics and behaviours that different cultures attribute to the sexes.

It is very important for us to understand this, because our understanding of gender roles and our notion of gender is in fact fluid.

I look at myself today. I am standing in the House of Commons. I am a cisgendered woman. Only a few decades ago, if I had stood here in pants advocating for my community, as a divorced woman, as a woman without children, I think about how I would have been perceived, and what my gender role would have been decades ago. I would not have had the right to stand here. Our rights are so precious, and they are so fragile, and if we legislators cannot acknowledge when inequality exists, and if we cannot rectify that, then we are doing something wrong.

● (1040)

My rights as a woman and my equality were won by those who came before me, who challenged the norms assigned to my gender by society, and who still challenge those norms today and ensure that those challenges are remedied by reflection in law: the right to vote, discrimination based on gender, sexual harassment, equal pay for equal work. There is so much more work to be done, yet I am so far ahead of where members in the trans community in Canada are.

The reality is that many people who do not conform to the gender roles associated with the sex they were assigned at birth. This is not a defect. This is not an illness. This is an expression of our uniqueness and of our humanity against what others in our society may pressure us to conform to be, and nobody in Canada or in the world should face discrimination for living his or her personal truth. As legislators, we need to understand and acknowledge that great discrimination does in fact occur because of this.

When I last spoke to this bill in 2013, I noted that the trans community in Canada had on frequent occasions experienced elevated levels of sexual violence committed against members of that community, frequent workplace discrimination and job loss based on gender, lack of clarity on health care provisions and sometimes access to health care, lack of clarity on processes related to obtaining identification documents, bullying in places of employment and educational institutions, discrimination in accessing housing accommodation, and numerous other incidents of discrimination. Most important, they lived every day with the consequences of these acts of non-compassion, of false assumptions that simply by virtue of their state they were sexually promiscuous or, more ludicrously, that they were criminal. In this, the trans community experiences very high rates of levels of both depression and suicide.

Since I made this argument in 2013, very frankly and very simply put, little progress has been made on righting many of these injustices. All we can do is ask for forgiveness and then act.

This weekend will mark the Transgender Day of Remembrance, so it is fitting to recount the following.

Suicide rates among the transgendered community are incredibly high. As published by Egale Canada, in 2010, 47% of trans youth in Ontario had thought about suicide and 19% had attempted suicide in the preceding year. The Trans Murder Monitoring Project, a worldwide initiative to uncover the atrocities committed against transgendered people worldwide, found that from January 2008 to April 2016, over 2,000 members of the trans community were tragically murdered, and those are only ones that were reported. The most frequent ways these innocent lives were taken were by shootings, stabbings, beatings, strangulations, and stonings. This report also shows that 576 of these transgendered people were killed and brutally murdered in the streets. These lives were lost because of intolerance, of bigotry, and of hate.

This is not something that just happens overseas or somewhere else, or something that we can turn a blind eye to in Canada. There are many instances of this in Canada. January Marie Lapuz of New Westminster, B.C. is just one of the examples of transgendered violence that we have come to know in Canada. January was a 26 year old who was considered an involved local activist, and whom people in her community called a bright light and a shining star. She was murdered in 2012. Stories like this are all too common for those in the transgendered community.

A recent study in 2014 found that in Ontario alone, 96% of the community had heard that trans people were not normal. Shockingly, the study also found that 76% of trans Ontarians worried that they would die young. They also found that members of the trans community had actively avoided public spaces out of fear. The project also found that two-thirds of trans Ontarians had avoided public spaces as they fear harassment, being perceived as trans, or being outed as trans. It is an irrefutable fact, one that we cannot ignore and one that we should not even be debating in this place, that the trans community faces challenges and barriers that most of us do not.

● (1045)

In 2013, after a review of the bill, I concluded the bill would only amount to symbolic action for the trans community. I was wrong. In the last three years, I have watched this community face bigotry, more discrimination, and becoming a flashpoint for fights that we should no longer be having in Canada.

It is for that reason that I believe it is time that Parliament passes the bill. It is clear to me, after watching provincial governments, employers, court cases, and the trans community itself struggling to rectify these injustices, that action cannot be taken to right these injustices without the bill passing.

Before it does, I want to talk about bathrooms. It is an unfortunate fact that in Canada rape occurs. Men go into women's bathrooms and rape them. That is a fact. That is why there are panic buttons in many bathrooms in university campuses across Canada. That is why we have laws to harshly and strongly punish the perpetrators of sexual violence. That is why we educate people on the effects of violence to try to deter them from doing so. That is why we have police. However, here is a horrifying statistic.

Jody Herman of UCLA's Williams Institute found in her study, conducted between 2008-09, that members of the transgendered community tended to be incredibly at risk in public restrooms. In her study, about 70% of the sample of transgendered people reported experiencing being denied access to restrooms, being harassed while using restrooms, and experiencing forms of physical assault. Additionally, this study showed that nearly 10% of the respondents reported to being physically assaulted in public restrooms.

Therefore, while some like to blame and insinuate that transgendered people are the predators in washrooms, research indicates that they instead are vulnerable in these public spaces. Making a value judgment that because people are trans they are likely to prey upon people in bathrooms is wrong.

The argument the bill would impede religious freedom is also wrong. Religious freedom cannot be discriminated on in Canada. We already have laws to that effect. Moreover, I believe that when we talk about compassion and about righting injustices, that is the reason most of us have faith to begin with. It is the act of charity and compassion that comes through religious belief and the belief in a higher good that sets us apart. The ability for us as Canadians to worship in that regard, to express that freedom, and live that truth should also be reflected in our laws.

I have also heard an argument against the bill that it will prevent parents from educating their children. The irony is that right now it is parents who educate our children on gender norms as it is. It is often our parents who reinforce what our role in society is to be based on our gender.

I do not see that changing, but the bill will open up the fact that we can be compassionate and we can look at how people can best contribute to our society by living out who they want to be. I cannot imagine a more beautiful expression of Canadian pluralism than that, of Canada becoming a place where we embrace uniqueness and diversity and also respect the rights of people to express their faith.

I also believe very firmly that the bill fits squarely in line with the principles of my political party. In our guiding principles it says:

> The Conservative Party of Canada is founded on and will be guided by in its policy formation the following principles....A belief in the balance between fiscal accountability, progressive social policy and individual rights and responsibilities.... The goal of building a national coalition of people who share these beliefs...The goal of developing this coalition, embracing our differences and respecting our traditions, yet honouring a concept of Canada as the greater sum of strong parts....A belief in the value and dignity of all human life....A belief in the equality of all Canadians.

This is why I am part of the Conservative Party of Canada and this is why I firmly believe in the capacity of our party to show Canadians that we are compassionate, that we do believe in equality and support it through legislation.

● (1050)

The white elephant in the room is that the bill will challenge deeply entrenched norms on how we need to behave. We should not fear that. We should embrace the fact that Canada is such a free and true nation that we value equality over dogma.

I want to thank the member for Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke for taking time to educate me and many other people in here, in a very quiet and patient way. I also want to commend my colleagues who may have different views on the bill, but who seek to be compassionate and reflect their views in respectful debate.

I especially want to thank the trans activists who have lived through this discrimination, through the upheaval of transition, through the upheaval of guilt or confusion over knowing their truth is something different than what society pressures them to be. While they have lived through that, they have had to sit through years of committee meetings, while their sexual behaviours have been questioned. They have stood up against intolerance and in doing so, they have sustained Canada's pluralism.

They deserve our thanks, and they also deserve an apology for when we have failed them in the past.

It is always a rare day when a Conservative member quotes a former NDP member, but I will do it today. I followed a speech by my former colleague, Megan Leslie, on this in 2013. I had the grave misfortune of following a Megan Leslie speech. She closed by saying this:

> I was at a community event and a young person came up to me. I do not really remember it. I do not remember if this person was a young man or a young woman, blond or brunette, but this person came up to me, took my hand and opened it, put something in my hand and closed it up. Then they left.
>
> I opened my hand and there was a tiny little note.
>
> It said: Thanks for giving...[an eff] about trans people.
>
> I think that is why we are here.

Megan was right. That is why we are here. We are also here because I believe in the capacity of my colleagues across party lines to be compassionate, to be strong, to stand up for Canada, and to stand for what is good, what is just, and what is beautiful.

● (1055)

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Toronto—Danforth, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from across the way for what was a wonderful and impassioned discussion about the bill, about why it is so important, and to go through her journey about the bill.

The member has set out very clearly why it was so important that we have this legislation. What can the member suggest as ways we can reach out to people who are less comfortable, to try to bring them in, and to build that comfort?

The member has been through that journey, and there is a lot to learn about the next steps even after this legislation goes through.

Hon. Michelle Rempel: Mr. Speaker, in some ways, I really do not feel like that is a question I am qualified to answer. I am not a transgendered person. In a lot of ways, I would look to the transgendered community, recognizing the fact that this a burden to place on it, but to seek its advice on how best to communicate these issues and some of the challenges, process, and policy that impede the community's equality.

I would also simply suggest that we all seek to understand, with an open heart, without judgment, and without dogma, and build relationships rather than seek to discriminate.

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I really do want to thank the member for Calgary Nose Hill for her very insightful, passionate speech. She and I have had a lot of dialogue on this issue since we were both first elected. I have seen her come a long way in her understanding. It is quite admirable to see her talk about her journey before the rest of us in the House.

For me, what is different this time, and this is the third time the House has been here at this point, is the fact that partisanship has now been swept away. We are really talking about each member's understanding of this issue and his or her feelings on this issue. We certainly have, as the member for Calgary Nose Hill pointed out, a very large contingent in the Conservative caucus who will now be supporting this bill, along with the Liberals and the NDP. That is a sign of progress.

I want to emphasize something the member for Calgary Nose Hill mentioned and draw attention to it again. One of the ways we have made this progress is by trans people approaching their members of Parliament, talking to them about their lived experience, and asking for that representation. I want to ask the member for Calgary Nose Hill about her experience, meeting transgendered people and talking to them personally about their experiences.

Hon. Michelle Rempel: Mr. Speaker, I have been really blessed by the fact that I have had members of the trans community reach out to me and spend a lot of time with me, explaining in detail, simply humanizing the journey that they have gone through and where legislative gaps and policy fail them.

A fantastic trans woman in Calgary came into my office, after I was first elected in 2012. I will be honest. I had no idea what I was talking about, but sitting there with an open mind and open heart and somebody who is willing to look past a political stripe and seeking to educate was probably the most meaningful interaction we can have as a parliamentarian writ large. I thank her for that. I thank the many members who have continued to reach out to me who have been patient with my misunderstanding, or understanding.

However, I also want to comment briefly on how it is all right for positions to change and to be fluid over time, and that it does not necessarily mean that we are reneging on our principles or that we are changing the culture or values of a political party.

I ask members to indulge me. In May of this year, our party in Vancouver had a very respectful and positive discussion about removing the definition of "marriage" out of our party's policy declaration and, rightly so, many members of the LGBT community in Canada said, "Well, it's 10 years later. Way to catch up, guys."

I think it is very powerful when, in the context of a political party, we can change a viewpoint such that people who might vote on party lines or might look to a political party to set the tone for what is acceptable in Canada can move that to a place where, now, all of our major political parties in Canada support this simply on principle.

I do not want to make this partisan but more to acknowledge that over time views can change. It happens on both sides of the aisle. I think that is very positive, and I want to thank activists writ large on any issue for their persistence in doing so.

● (1100)

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member will have about four and a half minutes remaining in the time for questions and comments when the House next returns to debate on the question.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*English*]

NUNAVUT LAND USE PLAN

Hon. Hunter Tootoo (Nunavut, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, the government's goal of generating a sustainable economy while protecting the environment is also the goal of the most recent draft Nunavut land use plan. The government's continued collaboration with the Nunavut Planning Commission on this draft will help fulfill the government's mandate to strengthen the relationship with indigenous people and honour its obligation under the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement.

Last April, the planning partners, including Canada, were informed of and agreed upon an extended January 13 deadline to submit their final written input on this draft. However, not all federal departments have made their submission a priority. Full engagement from these departments will ensure a complete and sufficient land use plan that works for all those involved. With the deadline fast approaching, I strongly encourage the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs to take the lead and ensure input from all federal departments is submitted before the January 13 deadline.

* * *

AMICI

Mr. William Amos (Pontiac, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate the 50th anniversary of Amici, a Canadian charity that sends kids from low-income families to overnight summer camps.

Established in 1966 by staff members at Kilcoo Camp, a magical place that nourished my growth from boy to man, Amici has provided children with over 1,500 unforgettable summer experiences. Along with its 40 partner camps, Amici shares a common belief in the life-changing power of summer camp, a belief that less privileged kids deserve a summer experience to help them develop their character, tenacity, and resilience in an iconic Canadian wilderness setting.

When I think of summer camp, I see the smiles of lifelong friends. I feel the triumph over conquered fears. I recall learning who I am and who I aspire to be. Leadership and self-confidence are earned and developed over time, and Amici commits to sending a child to camp for as long as they are old enough to attend. Many Amici campers are then hired on as counsellors.

My thanks to Amici for 50 years of life-changing experience, "Rip, ram, razzle, scram".

STUDENTS OF EDMONTON MANNING

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I went to school last week, more than one school in fact. I met with students at seven schools in my riding: St. John Bosco School, Overlanders School, Homesteader School, Belvedere School, John D. Bracco School, Sifton School, and St. Elizabeth Seton School. They were different schools and different grades, but the students had one thing in common. They wanted to learn about Parliament and the role of an MP. They want to be engaged citizens of the country. They cannot wait to be old enough to vote.

I was impressed by their enthusiasm and their thirst for knowledge. I told them that when I came back to Ottawa I would tell my colleagues in the House of Commons about my experiences, and that the students of Edmonton Manning are the best in the country. Promise made, promise kept.

* * *

[*Translation*]

EMPLOYEES OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

Mr. David de Burgh Graham (Laurentides—Labelle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to acknowledge the work of the people who keep this institution running. Without them, we would not be able to do our work as parliamentarians.

Their work sometimes goes unnoticed. They pick up the trash, do housekeeping, move our furniture, get rooms ready, deliver and manage our mail. The Parliamentary Protective Service and the House of Commons Corporate Security Office protect us. We have pages, guides, analysts, clerks, the Hansard team, translators, interpreters, the maintenance team, carpenters, and financial services and materials management people. We have locksmiths, photographers and multimedia services, drivers, caterers, and food service staff, and probably many other members of teams we are not even aware of. I take my hat off to our many assistants here and in our ridings.

There are 338 MPs and 105 senators, but more than 4,000 people work here. Without them, Parliament would simply cease to operate.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you and your team.

* * *

[*English*]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last Tuesday over 1,700 young Canadian scientists sent an open letter to the Prime Minister expressing their concern that recent government decisions have not been based on science. The letter stated:

> Hundreds of scholars have decried weak Canadian environmental assessments and regulatory reviews and cautioned about the risks involved in large-scale energy projects. Environmental and health tragedies (e.g. Calgary floods; Mount Polley dam, asbestos) show that incompletely evaluated or mitigated risks have real consequences for Canadians, our environment, and the legacy we leave future generations.

These scientists have obviously lost faith in the government's ability or commitment to make transparent decisions informed by the best available evidence. They simply ask that the government act on science, that it assess cumulative impacts, and that it prevent conflict of interest through full public disclosure. They, and all other young Canadians, will have to live with the consequences of this government's decisions.

* * *

● (1105)

HANDSWORTH SECONDARY SCHOOL

Mr. Jonathan Wilkinson (North Vancouver, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last week I was welcomed to Handsworth Secondary School in North Vancouver, where I had the opportunity to talk to Grade 11 social studies students about the issue of climate change. As MPs, we all know that one of our greatest responsibilities is to work to ensure a secure future for our children and Canada's youth. As I stood in front of 200 students at Handsworth, in the high school that is attended by my two teenaged daughters, this responsibility felt very real. Through my discussions with these students, it was clear to me that the issue of climate change is of critical importance to students. The concern they feel for their future was evident in their questions, their comments, and the ideas they brought forward as to what we can and should be doing to address climate change.

I would like to thank the students of Handsworth for reminding me that our young people are very much engaged, are eager to be part of taking on the challenges posed by climate change, and are looking to us for leadership and action.

* * *

HALIBURTON—KAWARTHA LAKES—BROCK

Mr. Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it has been a very exciting few weeks my riding.

Today, I am proud to recognize and congratulate a number of constituents and organizations, doing some outstanding work. Rhonda Barnet, from Steelworks Design Inc. in Cavan Monaghan, was elected chair of the Canadian Association of Manufacturers and Exporters, and she is the first female chair of the organization. Woodville's James Barker Band is continuing its success with a number of engagements, including a contract with Universal Music Canada. Lindsay's All Flaws In Progress was nominated for video of the year, produced by Josh Wood, at this year's Covenant Awards. Lindsay's The Strumbellas, fresh off gold and platinum records, is performing in front of huge crowds on its current world tour. Cavan's Emma McCamus earned a basketball scholarship to Central Connecticut University. The Cannington Figure Skating Club is now officially debt-free thanks to the hard work of its volunteers. Lastly, the Pinestone Resort and Conference Centre in Haliburton is hosting the Canadian national pond hockey tournament again this year.

Please join me in congratulating these fantastic people and organizations.

LOUIS RIEL DAY

Mr. Mike Bossio (Hastings—Lennox and Addington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, earlier this week, in celebration of Louis Riel Day, I had the privilege of attending the very first raising of the Métis flag on Parliament Hill.

Louis Riel was elected to this place three times but was never able to take his seat. Like Louis Riel himself, the raising of the Métis flag here on Parliament Hill is a powerful symbol of Métis history, strength of spirit, and cultural pride. He was a defender of the fundamental values that Canadians hold dear, including equality and social justice. All Canadians, whether they are Métis or not, can be proud of what Louis Riel accomplished.

Our government is committed to reconciliation with the Métis people, and we are coming together in partnership with the Métis nation, and the provinces and territories, to work with the Métis people on how they want to exercise their rights and advance long-term reconciliation.

* * *

BURLINGTON VETERANS COMMEMORATIONS

Ms. Karina Gould (Burlington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last week I had the opportunity to participate in Burlington's commemorations to honour our veterans.

Today, I would like to thank the members in my community who made this week special for those who have served. I want to thank the Burlington legion, the Burl/Oak Naval Veterans, and some of the amazing individuals who give generously to honour our veterans: Kristin Courtney, who organizes a veterans luncheon every year in Halton; Bill Reid the "Singing Veteran", who shares his songs of war with the commuters at Burlington GO stations, and who for almost three decades has provided services at retirement homes for the veterans who are not able to attend the official events; and the Grade 12 drama students at M.M. Robinson High School, who each year write and direct a play on Remembrance Day, and who deserved a standing ovation as their story was heart-wrenching, honest, and passionate, and truly honoured the veterans who were present.

We must take a moment every day to think of our Canadian men and women who have served and who are currently serving. Our veterans serve our country with bravery, honour, and dignity. I want to thank them for protecting the values we cherish and making our world a safer place.

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● (1110)

FRED KING

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to pay homage to one of our own. Fred King of Kaleden, B.C. was a former World War II veteran and a retired member of Parliament.

Fred was a kind, caring man who gave back greatly to his community in many different ways that extended well beyond his time in Ottawa. From his time spent as a member of Parliament, Fred was a voice for farmers and agriculture. He also travelled much of Europe to ensure better collaboration between Canada and our NATO allies. He worked quietly to secure passage of persecuted religious minorities from Communist dictatorships. In his riding he was most proud of the work he performed securing federally owned lands that could be used for Okanagan College's Penticton campus. Fred was a strong believer and supporter in our youth, and the importance of upgrading skills and education.

What I most admired about Fred was his sincere willingness to always help others, many who were complete strangers, never asking anything in return, only a desire to try and bring happiness and help to those who were in need. It is a privilege to consider Fred both a mentor of mine and a friend, and to recognize his contributions and service for the betterment of others.

Fred now joins the love of his life, Audrey, who passed away a few years ago. May they both rest in peace.

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CAMBRIDGE SANTA CLAUS PARADE

Mr. Bryan May (Cambridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday was the one-year anniversary of my swearing in as the member of Parliament for Cambridge and North Dumfries, and I am proud to stand here today representing the fine people of my riding. I am humbled and honoured by their support and the support of my family, Kristin, James, and Kennedy May.

This weekend, the people of Cambridge will line the sidewalks of Hespeler Road for the 44th annual Santa Claus parade. Every year, whether it is raining or snowing, and regardless of how cold it is, my constituents come out by the thousands to watch this extraordinary showcase of the schools, community organizations, businesses, and non-profits that make our community so great.

As I have the good fortune of having my office located on the parade route, I am proud to offer some holiday warmth for my constituents in the form of hot chocolate and candy canes.

This Saturday, I encourage all my constituents to come out to the Cambridge Santa Claus parade for some family fun and to stop by my office for some quick warmth. I will see them there.

* * *

HOUSING

Ms. Kate Young (London West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the weather begins to chill, all Canadians should have a place to call home that is safe, warm, and affordable.

Last week I had the great pleasure of announcing 281 new affordable housing units in London and the surrounding area. One of the several facilities, including 77 Tecumseh Ave. West, located in London West, received $1.85 million for affordable housing units. Three of these facilities are designated for residents with mental health challenges. I had the privilege of taking a tour of this incredible facility with local representatives from all levels of government.

Our plan includes the doubling of current funding under the investment and affordable housing initiative, supporting affordable housing for seniors, and building and renovating shelters and transition houses for victims of family violence. Our government is developing a comprehensive national housing strategy that will chart the course for better housing, socio-economic, and environmental outcomes.

I will continue to deliver for the people of London West, and this government will continue to deliver on our campaign promises for the betterment of all Canadians.

* * *

MOVEMBER

Mr. Robert Kitchen (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC): Mr. Speaker, here is a quote from Theodor Geisel, a.k.a. Dr. Seuss: "Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better. It's not."

This month is Movember, which highlights men's health by raising funds and educating Canadians about prostate cancer. It is predicted that by 2030, there will be 1.7 million men living with prostate cancer, but if it is detected early, the chance of survival beyond five years is 98%.

My father passed away from prostate cancer, but because he took the early steps to visit his doctors and get checked, his time with us was prolonged by an incredible 15 years.

Throughout the Movember campaign, mo bros and mo sisters have funded over 1,200 health projects. What started with 30 moustaches in 2003 has now expanded to five million. I encourage anyone who can grow a moustache to do so and also to become physically active whenever possible.

Finally, here is a quote from *The Lorax*, one, two, three, sport a moustache like me.

* * *

● (1115)

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Ken Hardie (Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lib.): Mr Speaker, many of us are concerned by what looks like a spike in the number and severity of incidents targeting Canadian minorities with messages of exclusion, fear, and hate. Perhaps there have not been many. Perhaps recent events have amplified our sensitivity, but one is too many, and on this issue, it is never a bad time to be sensitive.

If those responsible feel somehow emboldened or encouraged by recent developments, we need to disabuse them of those notions. Nobody gets to do that, not in the Canada I have grown up in. By the way, that is a Canadian value, in case somebody was looking for one.

Speaking of examples, the hon. member for Edmonton Centre is as good as it gets. As the Prime Minister's new special adviser on LGBTQ2 issues, he is a passionate standard bearer for the Canadian values of respect and equality. Every vulnerable community will be encouraged and made stronger by his efforts, more so as we in this place endorse them.

HOUSING

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we are so fortunate to live in Canada, where we aspire to be a nation that takes care of each other.

In Courtenay—Alberni, access to affordable housing has become an urgent and desperate matter. The situation is critical. People are living in unsafe derelict boats, in the bush, and on the streets.

In Port Alberni, a small city of only 17,000 people, more than half the residents can barely afford their rent, while the homeless shelter has only 12 beds. That shelter had to turn away more than 1,000 people last year, because it simply did not have room.

We are blessed to have compassionate organizations such as the Port Alberni Shelter Society, the Comox Valley Coalition to End Homelessness, Dawn to Dawn, and the Oceanside Task Force on Homelessness.

These organizations need urgent resources from Ottawa to help lift people out of homelessness and restore the dignity and compassion they deserve.

* * *

RACISM AND ANTI-SEMITISM

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today the people of Ottawa stand united against the twin evils of racism and anti-Semitism. Over the last several days, a criminal has targeted peaceful Jews, Muslims, and Christians from the black community with hateful vandalism. We hope the police catch and the courts punish the perpetrators to the fullest extent of the law.

Prime Minister Laurier said, "Canada is free and freedom is its nationality".

Our people are free to be who they are, free to believe what they want, free to worship how they choose, and free to do it all without fear. Racist vandalism is an attack on that freedom and on every Canadian. We stand in solidarity with its victims and renew our commitment to our freedom and the equality of all of our people.

* * *

[*Translation*]

BULLYING

Mr. Michel Picard (Montarville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, bullying and cyber-bullying are serious issues for many Canadian families and communities. According to a recent study, more than 40% of youth reported being a victim of cyber-bullying, and more than 60% have witnessed cyber-bullying.

In this Bullying Awareness Week, I encourage Canadians to get more informed on this issue, as well as the devastating consequences it may have on its victims, and the resources available to help Canadians combat it.

I especially encourage parents and teachers to visit the website www.getcybersafe.gc.ca to get informed on how to recognize and prevent cyber-bullying. I also invite everyone to discover BullyText, an interactive tool offered by the RCMP that aims to encourage conversation among youth about these questions.

On a brighter note, more than 70% of Canadian youth who have witnessed cyber-bullying said they intervened. Let us follow their example at school, at work, at home, and in all spheres of life, and let us put an end to bullying.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[*English*]

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after the Liberals waved the white flag of surrender on NAFTA that they are now trying their very best to backpedal on, the parliamentary secretary to the trade minister said, "Don't worry. There will only be small tweaks". If the Liberals' small tweaks are anything like their small deficits, we are all in big trouble.

Canada needs NAFTA. Why are the Liberals so eager to sell out Canada?

● (1120)

Mr. David Lametti (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the only flag we are waving is the red and white Canadian flag. We are going to defend Canadians' interests across the board on every matter of trade and investment in order to help Canada, in order to help Canadian jobs.

NAFTA is an important, positive piece of that picture. We know that. We know the numbers. We will work to show our American partners that these numbers are valid for them as well, that the agreement is positive for them as well.

It is a 20-year-old agreement. It is normal to make changes to an agreement over time, especially to tweak it.

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if the Liberals were going to do what was in the best interests of Canadians, they would not have so foolishly and naively opened the doors to renegotiating NAFTA, but now that they have, and given what the parliamentary secretary just said, will the government tell Canadians exactly what is on the table? Will it be farmers who will be sold out? Will it be the auto sector that is going to be rejected? What is on the table? What are the Liberals going to sell out?

Mr. David Lametti (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we will not take lessons from anybody as it regards trade. Our record on trade is impeccable. Yet again, the Prime Minister and the Minister of International Trade are out bringing home the bacon and making sure we can ship bacon and other pork products to other countries in the world, as we are working on with Argentina, as was announced.

We brought home COOL. We got CETA across the finish line. We opened up China to canola markets. We opened up China and Mexico to beef markets. Our record on trade within 12 months is far superior to anything the previous government produced.

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, here is a lesson for that member. Every one of those agreements was what the previous Conservative government started and finished, and the Liberals could barely get that done when we handed it to them on a silver platter.

TPP is another agreement that sectors are very concerned about. Are the Liberals going to take the same approach to TPP they have taken to NAFTA and say, "Maybe we'll renegotiate. Maybe we'll do something, or maybe we won't"? Or will the Prime Minister at APEC be persistent, consistent, and advocate for TPP for Canada?

Mr. David Lametti (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our position on NAFTA has been clear from the outset.

That treaty was negotiated in secret by the previous government. We committed during the election to consult Canadians. We are consulting Canadians. I have been to all 10 provinces and am now working in the territories, listening to Canadians. The trade committee is doing the same thing.

When we are in a position to understand whether that treaty is a good treaty for Canada, we will make a determination at that point.

* * *

[*Translation*]

FINANCE

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the parliamentary budget officer is a friend to all Canadians because, unlike the government, he tells Canadians the truth.

In his report released yesterday, the parliamentary budget officer said on page 3 that we "may wish to confirm that the additional spending proposed in these supplementary estimates has corresponding performance targets."

That is rather polite language, but in more political terms it means that Canadians want the truth.

When will the government regain control of public spending?

Mr. François-Philippe Champagne (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise in the House today. The hon. member for Louis-Saint-Laurent has been providing figures all week. Allow me to set the record straight for Canadians.

Over the past 12 months, the government has created 139,600 jobs in Canada thanks to its investment in Canadian families and the middle class, for our young people and for our seniors.

Even though the Conservative Party voted against every measure we have taken to help Canadian families and young people across the country, we continued and will continue to implement this plan. It is precisely the figure—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Louis-Saint-Laurent.

* * *

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we will have an opportunity to come back to this matter.

With regard to free trade between Canada, the United States, and Mexico, the Prime Minister acted like a real amateur, to say the least. All international observers agree. Mexico has always been in the crosshairs of Mr. Trump, who has never mentioned Canada. The United States has a trade imbalance with Mexico, not Canada. Never before have we seen a state leader show his hand. Great job.

When will the government realize that the Prime Minister acted like an amateur and has put Canadian jobs in jeopardy?

● (1125)

Mr. David Lametti (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we did not tip our hand. We have an agreement, NAFTA, which has been very beneficial for Canada and for the United States. We recognize that. Canada is the top export destination for 35 U.S. states. NAFTA is very important for both countries and we will discuss it, in good faith, with the U.S. government in order to make any necessary improvements.

* * *

INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canadians have every reason to feel betrayed by the Liberals. During the election campaign, the Liberals said that they would run small deficits to fund public infrastructure. Now those deficits are growing, and the Liberals want to line their Bay Street friends' pockets with tolls and user fees from these infrastructure projects.

What is more, the Liberals just repurposed $15 billion that was earmarked for cities like Rimouski and Jonquière to attract capital from the private sector, which will prefer to invest in Toronto and Montreal.

Once again, why did the Liberals keep their plan to charge Canadians tolls and user fees a secret during the election campaign?

[*English*]

Hon. Amarjeet Sohi (Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we were elected on a platform to invest more than $120 billion in infrastructure over the next decade. We increased that commitment from $120 billion to $180 billion under the fiscal update. Only 8% of that is actually being used under the bank to build more infrastructure for Canadian communities from coast to coast to coast.

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal platform said that the infrastructure bank would "provide low-cost financing for new infrastructure projects". It did not say that it would provide high-cost financing so Liberals' Bay Street friends could line their pockets. It did not say that Liberals would take $15 billion from communities like mine, in North Island—Powell River, to create this privatization bank that would do nothing for small communities. Surprise, surprise, it did not mention tolls or user fees. Why were the Liberals not honest with Canadians?

Hon. Amarjeet Sohi (Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am surprised the member opposite would not understand our infrastructure plan. We are investing more than $180 billion into infrastructure that goes far beyond our initial commitment.

The member is absolutely right that the role of the bank is to provide low-cost loans to municipalities so they can do more infrastructure with less cost to them.

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HEALTH

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, 7% to 9% is not low cost.

Over the last two decades, more than 10,000 Canadians have died from opioids and an untold number now suffer from addictions. Will the government agree to take action by creating a national task force and repeal Bill C-2 to remove unnecessary barriers to opening new harm reduction facilities? Will the Liberal government immediately declare the opioid crisis a national public health emergency? Action is needed now to help save lives.

Ms. Kamal Khera (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are in a national public health crisis in Canada. The growing number of overdoses and deaths caused by opioids is a complex emergency.

Building on our five-point action plan to address opioid misuse, today and tomorrow, the Minister of Health is co-hosting a conference and summit on opioids to bring together experts, patient groups, governments, and regulators to discuss the current crisis and identify actions moving forward.

We will continue to work with law enforcement and all our partners to bring forward compassionate and collaborative solutions to address the immediate crisis alongside its root causes.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Mr. Speaker, too many Canadians have died and too many lives are in danger because of opioid addiction.

Over the past two decades, more than 10,000 Canadians have died from opioid use and an untold number of people now suffer from addictions. The consensus is clear: we need effective leadership and coordination at the federal level to reduce the number of overdoses in Canada.

Is the minister ready to show leadership and declare a national public health emergency?

● (1130)

[*English*]

Ms. Kamal Khera (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said previously, we are in a national public health crisis in Canada. The growing number of overdoses that are caused by opioid is a complex emergency.

Building on our five-point action plan to address the opioid crisis misuse, today and tomorrow, the Minister of Health is co-hosting a summit on opioids to bring together experts, patient groups, regulators, and governments to discuss the current crisis and to identify actions moving forward.

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[*Translation*]

SOFTWOOD LUMBER

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, allow me to explain to the government the great Liberal paradox when it comes to softwood lumber.

Softwood lumber is literally wood that is soft. The government is incapable of negotiating with the Americans because it too is soft. The Liberal paradox is that by being soft the Liberal government is making things hard for everyone.

Thousands of Canadian jobs hang in the balance. When will the government get to work defending our regions, our workers, and our families?

Mr. David Lametti (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we got to work right out of the gate.

We are working with our U.S. counterparts, with U.S. Trade Representative Froman. We are working with our producers and workers across the country. We are in constant contact with them, and we are working hard on negotiating an agreement that is acceptable for Canada. We will have an agreement, but it will have to be a good agreement.

[*English*]

Mr. Mel Arnold (North Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC): Mr. Speaker, 40% of B.C.'s regional economies and hundreds of small businesses across Canada depend upon the forest industry.

Last March, the trade minister committed to having a structure for a softwood lumber agreement in place in 100 days. Two hundred and fifty-two days later, there is still no deal.

Will the minister ever get an agreement respecting our forest industry or will the Prime Minister finally appoint a new minister who will?

Mr. David Lametti (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said in French a moment ago, we have been hard at work on this file from the beginning. We do have a framework within which we are working with our American partners. That was elaborated by our minister and her counterpart, U.S. Trade Representative Michael Froman.

We are consulting Canadians across the country, in the industry, every province, workers, small companies, large companies. We understand the importance of the issue. We are going to negotiate an agreement, and we are going to negotiate a good agreement.

* * *

[*Translation*]

DAIRY INDUSTRY

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal government reminds us every chance it gets of just how little respect it has for Canadian farmers. There was not a single reference to agriculture in the throne speech. The Liberals have done absolutely nothing about the diafiltered milk issue, and now a completely botched transition program is failing dairy farmers.

All farmers will be affected by the importation of European products, but only a fraction of them will be eligible for the program the Liberals have introduced. It is unacceptable.

Where is this blatant lack of respect for Canadian dairy farmers coming from?

Mr. Jean-Claude Poissant (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am appalled to hear this kind of question from the member who is leading the campaign started by one of his colleagues to do away with supply management.

We have created a $350-million investment fund to support the sector in response to the new agreement. That money will help dairy producers and processors adapt to new market conditions and help them make strategic investments. Farmers are investing, and we will contribute to those investments. We met with industry representatives, and we created a program based on the comments we received.

* * *

[*English*]

INFRASTRUCTURE

Ms. Dianne L. Watts (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, experts from the Conference Board of Canada, the Bank of Montreal, the TD Bank, the parliamentary budget officer, and the Department of Finance have all said there are no signs of economic growth.

Zero new full-time jobs have been created since the Liberals took office. Less than 1% of infrastructure projects have started construction. The Liberals promised Canadians that deficits would create jobs and grow the economy. Clearly, their plan is not working.

Would the minister explain to Canadians why he has failed to create one single job from his infrastructure announcements?

● (1135)

Hon. Amarjeet Sohi (Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again, let me take the opportunity to tell the House and Canadians that since taking office, our government has approved more than 980 projects throughout the country, with the combined value of more than $12 billion, from coast to coast to coast.

In fact, one project is in the member's own city, helping design the long-term LRT plan, which will help her city to advance so it can take on the opportunities to build more infrastructure when we announce our long-term plan for Canadians.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the infrastructure bank is much like the Liberal ministers' fundraising cocktails: reserved for a select group of Liberal friends.

The government must be really out of touch with reality and the regions if it intends to set up a bank that will finance only projects worth at least $100 million. That means nothing will flow to smaller towns and cities.

Which of the 40 government MPs from Quebec will stand up for the interests of Quebec's regions?

[*English*]

Hon. Amarjeet Sohi (Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me share this again. Since taking over, we have approved more than $1.5 billion for projects in Quebec. In fact, the Minister of Finance announced $2 billion for small communities. This is unheard of in recent Canadian history. We are delivering on behalf of Canadians throughout the country, big cities, small cities, as well as rural communities.

Let me quote what the president of FCM had to say about our infrastructure plan. He said, "These unprecedented infrastructure investments—

The Deputy Speaker: I am sorry to interrupt. Unfortunately there is not quite enough time to fit that in.

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

* * *

EMPLOYMENT

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, young Canadians work hard to put themselves through school so they can get a great paying job, buy a house and perhaps raise a family. However, they are being told by the Minister of Finance that they should get used to more precarious work.

The Liberals cancelled the small business tax cuts. Increasing payroll and carbon taxes will make it harder for young workers to get their first job. Even if they are lucky enough to start working and to save what is left after they pay their student loans and these Liberal tax hikes, fewer now qualify for a mortgage.

Will the government explain why it is making life harder for young Canadians?

Hon. MaryAnn Mihychuk (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member's question gives me an opportunity to indicate how seriously we are working to address the challenges being faced by young people in Canada, unprecedented changes occurring in Canada and all first world countries, in fact, the whole world.

We not only doubled the number of work opportunities in the summer, but we will be rolling out an intensive and comprehensive program, called "work integrated learning", in co-operation with the business community.

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PENSIONS

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, not only have the Liberals left women behind with their new CPP legislation, but seniors everywhere are still waiting for the Liberals to deliver on their promise of a new seniors price index.

Here we are in November and the Liberals have failed to come through with their promise of a better way to index old age security and guaranteed income supplement benefits. Seniors are struggling to make ends meet with the high cost of living.

If the Liberals cannot keep this promise, could the minister tell us what other promises to our seniors he is prepared to break?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am delighted that my hon. colleague has given us an opportunity to talk about how, once in power, the Canadian government quickly took action by implementing important measures to help our seniors, particularly those who are less fortunate.

We increased the guaranteed income supplement, which helped 900,000 Canadian seniors. We made massive investments in housing, which is helping 200,000 less fortunate Canadians. We will continue to work very hard to meet the needs and expectations of seniors in Canada.

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● (1140)

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last month, a UN committee voted in favour of complete nuclear disarmament. Unfortunately, Canada did not support that initiative. While other countries are moving forward and working hard on this file, this government is dragging its feet.

Will Canada show some leadership, support the efforts being made toward nuclear disarmament, and participate in the negotiation process that will begin next year?

[*English*]

Ms. Pam Goldsmith-Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the minister is entirely dedicated to nuclear disarmament. Our goal is to convince countries that have nuclear weapons to be at the table as part of an effective disarmament process. Canada succeeded at this recently when we led a United Nations resolution supported by 177 states, including those with nuclear weapons.

Our resolution has a goal to stop the production of materials used to make nuclear weapons. This is the realistic, pragmatic approach our minister is taking, and it is a major accomplishment.

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THE ENVIRONMENT

Hon. Michelle Rempel (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, climate change policy should tangibly reduce greenhouse gas emissions without punishing the Canadian economy. The problem with the Liberals' approach is that we know they have no evidence to show it is actually going to work, that it is actually going to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. However, we do know that it is going to cost the Canadian economy and cost Canadian families.

Under our former government, we actually saw greenhouse gas emissions decrease, while the economy grew. I have a very simple question. What price elasticity assumptions did the government use in modelling its carbon tax?

Mr. Jonathan Wilkinson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to creating a cleaner, more innovative economy that reduces emissions and protects the environment, while creating well-paying jobs for Canadians. Setting a benchmark price on carbon pollution is one component of a broad approach to addressing climate change—something that the previous government did nothing to address—while providing certainty and predictability to businesses.

After a decade of inaction on the part of the previous government, we are about taking firm action to address greenhouse gas emissions, while creating good middle-class jobs for Canadians.

Hon. Michelle Rempel (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will take that as code for "I have no idea."

Let us go with something simpler. Right now, the Liberals are putting uncertainty into the regulatory process for natural resources. They are not doing anything for Canadians who are out of work in Alberta. They are not standing up for the development of new pipelines. They are putting a carbon tax in place that is going to do nothing for greenhouse gas emissions. I could go on and on.

If they cannot answer that questions, why do they not have the courage to call it for what it is: national energy program 2.0?

Mr. Jonathan Wilkinson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I suggest the hon. member listen to some of the voices of Canadian industry, companies like Suncor, Enbridge, and Shell, who are in support of a carbon price as part of an overall economic strategy, and a strategy to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Let me quote the Desjardins Group CEO, who said:

> Desjardins Group supports the Federal Government's decision.... Desjardins believes that the time has come for all sectors of the economy to include climate change considerations into their strategic plans, to take advantage of business opportunities, to reduce risks and to meet the needs of Canadians.

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my friend, Lawrence Morris, is a retired senior, who lives in Fort Assiniboine on a very limited income. A carbon tax will significantly increase his costs for groceries, his costs for his heat bill, and his costs for gasoline, to the point that he may not be able to stay in his home. This is a reality for many rural seniors across Canada. Why are the Liberals pushing a carbon tax on rural Canadians and forcing seniors like Mr. Morris out of their homes?

Mr. Jonathan Wilkinson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, unlike the Conservatives, we are focused on supporting middle-class families at every stage of their lives. Not only did the Conservatives vote against the Paris agreement when it comes to addressing climate change, but they also voted against reducing taxes for nine million Canadians. They voted against a child benefit that helps nine out of 10 Canadian families and will raise 300,000 Canadian children out of poverty. They voted against enhancements to student loans, which will help 250,000 Canadian students.

Our government is focused on both protecting the environment and growing the economy in a sustainable way.

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TAXATION

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, whenever we point out that this carbon tax will hurt Canada's poor, they stand up and quote powerful millionaire and billionaire CEOs to defend their policy. The 800,000 Canadians who rely on the food bank in order to nourish their children every day do not take any comfort in quotes from millionaire CEOs. In fact, food bank use is up. Over 300,000 kids are relying on food banks for their nutrition.

Why is the Liberal government so determined to raise food prices by increasing taxes on the people who deliver our food?

● (1145)

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, following my earlier colleague's comments on the fact that we are working very hard to grow the economy and to grow the middle class, and working very hard to decrease poverty among our children and seniors, I would be curious to know why our Conservative friends have been opposing, systematically, all measures working in favour of the middle class and toward lowering poverty in Canada.

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INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the United Nations committee on discrimination against women has just expressed serious concerns with the inquiry into the murdered and missing indigenous women and girls. It says that the inquiry is not taking a human rights approach, that it does not have the mandate to look into policing, or look into unresolved cases.

These concerns echo exactly what we have heard from the families of missing and murdered mothers, daughters, and sisters. Will the government finally respond to these concerns, and will the government finally listen to the voices of families?

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to clarify the fact that the commission does indeed have the mandate to look into policing; does indeed have a broad mandate for them to do exactly what the families have asked for, which is to deal with the issue of the causes, and also making sure that the families will be supported, particularly with the new liaison units set up by the Minister of Justice to do just that.

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[*Translation*]

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Minister of Canadian Heritage announced her intention to modernize the rules governing how the government provides bilingual services across Canada. That is good news. We applaud her for that.

However, the Liberal government seems to want to draw out the consultation process and will not finalize the new regulations until 2019. Really?

Will the Liberal government commit not to shelve the consultation report and to introduce a real bill that will ensure that these rules will continue to be strictly enforced over the long term?

Hon. Scott Brison (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to announce that the government will conduct a comprehensive review of the regulations governing the delivery of services to Canadians in order to ensure that minority anglophone and francophone communities are well served.

[*English*]

While the review is under way, the offices that had been slated to become unilingual under the current regulations will be subject to a moratorium. They will continue to provide services in both official languages until we introduce new and improved, modernized regulations to replace the current regulations.

This is a priority for our government, to—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Darrell Samson (Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in my riding and across Canada, Canadians are concerned about the application of the official languages regulations on communicating with and providing services to the public and the loss of services provided in their language. These services are very important for the development of francophone and anglophone minorities across Canada. These groups are the cultural and economic pillars of their communities.

Can the President of the Treasury Board inform the House of the work that has been done and the measures implemented to ensure its success?

Hon. Scott Brison (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook. Our government is committed to ensuring that services to Canadians are provided in the official language of their choice. Our government will be undertaking a complete review of the regulations on services to the public in both official languages.

[*English*]

During this review, offices currently subject to becoming unilingual, 257 of them, will continue to be bilingual. Our government is committed to improving and strengthening bilingual services for all Canadians.

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NATURAL RESOURCES

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, thousands of Albertans are out of work and have been for over a year, and not one additional full-time job has been created in Canada under the Liberals in that time.

Meanwhile, the U.S. president-elect said that he will approve Keystone XL within 100 days of taking office, but our Minister of Natural Resources says it is not a priority.

With the U.S. ramping up and pursuing energy independence, time is of the essence. When will the Prime Minister prioritize Canadian jobs and get this deal done, before it is too late?

● (1150)

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have been very clear that jobs are a priority for our government.

As the parliamentary secretary mentioned earlier today, we have created 139,600 jobs. These jobs are across the country, including in Alberta. To highlight some examples with respect to jobs, we supported the relocation of Bell Helicopter, which created 1,000 jobs in Quebec. GM Canada expanded its engineering and software development. Again, these help young people to find meaningful employment—a thousand jobs for them as well.

These are good jobs across the country.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in 2014, nine out of 10 new jobs created in all of Canada were created in Alberta. Today, Alberta's job losses are the highest in nearly 22 years.

Pipelines are lifelines for Alberta, and for hundreds of thousands of energy workers across the country. Canada's world-leading oil and gas is at risk. The biggest customer, the U.S., has become the biggest competitor. Canada must diversify export markets now. The more delays, the less competitive that Canada becomes.

When will the minister stop the roadblocks and fight for Canadian energy jobs?

Hon. Jim Carr (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am a bit confused by the member's question, because this will now be the fourth time this week that I have said that the government is actually very confident in the Keystone XL pipeline.

We supported the application in the first place. All of the approvals north of the border are in place, and if the company decides to pursue the application, the government will support it. That is for the fourth time this week.

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FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Niagara Falls, CPC): Mr. Speaker, UN peacekeeping missions are among the most dangerous deployments in the world. For example, 106 UN peacekeepers have already died in the UN Mali operation.

Despite the dangers to our troops, the Liberals are still keeping Canadians in the dark about where they intend to deploy Canadian troops on the planned peacekeeping mission.

Can the minister be transparent with Canadians and tell us how this is in our national interest? Will it be a combat mission? How long will our troops be deployed? Canadians deserve to know this.

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our re-engagement with peace operations is part of our broader commitment to re-energize Canadian leadership on key international issues and multilateral institutions.

There have been multiple fact-finding trips, and the minister has had productive discussions with counterparts, with NGOs, and with organizations involved with peace support.

We are building our understanding of the situation on the ground. We are investigating how we can contribute with a whole-of-government approach. No decision has been made on those future contributions, but we will share when it has.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what the parliamentary secretary just said is not very reassuring: she is consulting.

With respect to the mission in Iraq, when the Prime Minister was a member of the opposition, he stated that he could not support any mission unless he was given the reasons for it. We are still waiting to hear the reasons justifying the mission in Africa. The government is improvising and saying just about anything.

When will the Liberals finally be transparent and explain where our soldiers will be deployed, what the mission objectives will be, and, above all, what the conditions will be?

[*English*]

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we take very seriously the plans to employ members of the Canadian Forces around the world. Having been a member for 31 years, I can say that is indeed the case.

I am very content. I am happy with the way that the government is progressing on this particular issue. We are doing our homework. We are talking to our allies. We are planning on the ground.

No decision has been made. We will make that decision based on that whole-of-government approach so we can make a success of this mission.

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HEALTH

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, ANKORS is an HIV/AIDS outreach and support society in my riding of South Okanagan—West Kootenay.

For many years, ANKORS has been providing prevention and harm-reduction services to at-risk populations, in 24 communities in the B.C. interior. However, they have just been informed that their federal funding will not be renewed. This will devastate HIV/AIDS outreach services in the B.C. interior.

Will the Minister of Health reverse these cuts and ensure that the people in the Okanagan and Kootenays have access to these vital services?

● (1155)

Ms. Kamal Khera (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, HIV and hep C are serious but preventable diseases, and our government is committed to addressing them, with community-based organizations being central to this.

The funding we provide is a remaining steady at $26.4 million annually. While 124 organizations were successful in the application process, some were not.

The Minister of Health has asked the Public Health Agency of Canada to assist these impacted organizations by working with them to extend transitional funding for another year.

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THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, dangerous debris from a cargo ship is washing up on the west coast, posing serious threats to our sensitive ecosystems.

It has been almost a week since this began, and there is still no real action by the federal government. We know its response to the Bella Bella diesel spill has been shamefully inadequate.

Will the federal government take immediate action to help with this cleanup, and will it support community groups like Surfrider and local first nations to prevent any further environmental damage from this debris?

Ms. Kate Young (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government remains committed to improving marine safety in Canada and ensuring the protection of our marine environment. This incident underlines the need for change, and that is why the minister announced a plan to enhance marine safety in a meaningful way. Furthermore, the minister is looking at the matter of compensation. We will take the necessary action on the findings of the department's compliance inspection and the Transportation Safety Board's investigation to enhance marine safety in Canada.

Oral Questions

HEALTH

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, hundreds of Canadians are dying every single month from illicit opioids flooding our borders. These drugs are so powerful that a small amount, the size of a grain of salt, can kill a person. Last month, a nine-month-old was hospitalized after being exposed to carfentanil, an illegal opioid 100 times stronger than fentanyl, yet the health minister is only consulting now.

When will the minister acknowledge that China is the primary source of the problem and start cracking down on these illicit drug shipments?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Michel Picard (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government is very concerned about the increase in opioid abuse and the growing number of overdoses in Canada. In 2014-15, the Canada Border Services Agency carried out over 8,000 seizures for a total value of about $400 million. The agency is currently looking at ways to improve its ability to detect and intercept illegal drugs.

We grieve alongside Canadians who have lost loved ones to fentanyl, and we are working very hard to put a stop to the scourge of this devastating drug.

[*English*]

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the health minister refused any organizations, such as CPMs, centres for pain management, attending her opioids summit. The Liberals have stated that doctors who prescribe opioids are a primary cause of this crisis, yet they are not invited to help find a solution that works for their patients. That is because these organizations have a different view and perspective than the government.

How can the health minister claim to be consulting on the opioids crisis when she will not even talk to pain management doctors on the ground, who she blames for being a source of the problem?

Ms. Kamal Khera (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said, we are in a national public health crisis in Canada. The growing number of overdoses and deaths caused by opioids is a complex emergency.

Today and tomorrow the Minister of Health is co-hosting a conference and summit on opioids to bring groups like the Canadian Medical Association, the College of Family Physicians of Canada, the national and provincial colleges of physicians and surgeons, and the Canadian Pain Society to discuss the current crisis and to identify a path forward. Stakeholders and members of the public who are unable to attend due to the space restrictions are invited to view the conference by following the live webcast.

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AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Mr. Martin Shields (Bow River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Alberta and Saskatchewan ranchers are reeling from a single case of bovine tuberculosis. The CFIA is quarantining and starting to test herds. Ranchers are being told they cannot sell their animals until all herds are tested, which can take many months. These producers do not have shelter or feed for these animals for the winter. The CFIA is forcing ranchers to hold their animals until they are all tested and TB-free.

Will the Liberals compensate ranchers for the feeding and housing of these quarantined animals over the winter?

● (1200)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Claude Poissant (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, every time a reportable disease is suspected or confirmed, the objective is to minimize the impact on our producers while respecting Canada's domestic and international obligations.

Proper and prudent controls are essential to protecting the health of Canadian livestock. The Canadian Food Inspection Agency, the CFIA, has assigned more employees to help with the investigation, which will include on-farm testing. CFIA labs are also getting ready to analyze other samples for testing purposes.

The CFIA will provide compensation for all animals that it orders destroyed because of tuberculosis.

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[*English*]

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Peter Fonseca (Mississauga East—Cooksville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship. In my riding of Mississauga East—Cooksville, people will find a riding that is very diverse and multicultural. Over the course of the year, I have heard my constituents express many frustrations with the problems in the immigration system that were inherited after 10 years under the Conservative government.

Can the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship update this House on recent improvements this government is making to the immigration system?

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let us begin to count the ways we are cleaning up the big fat mess left by the Conservatives in the area of immigration.

We have let in more than 33,000 Syrian refugees. We have reinstated the principle that a Canadian is a Canadian is a Canadian. We have reinstated refugee health care. We have made it much easier for international students to become permanent residents. We have set up a pilot immigration program in Atlantic Canada. We are in the process of making it much faster for spouses to be reunited. We have made it three times faster to get—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I recently toured the Central East Correctional Centre in Lindsay. This provincial maximum-security institution is being used as a so-called temporary holding facility for federal immigration detainees. Officers are dealing with challenges that are beyond their scope—language barriers, dietary complications, a lack of proper holding areas—with very little support from CBSA. The Liberals must ensure that these detainees are transferred to a federal detention centre that is properly equipped to manage their needs.

When will the public safety minister take action?

Mr. Michel Picard (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am sorry that I missed part of the question, but generally speaking, Correctional Services is undertaking consultations with its partners to make sure that when we have someone in detention, it is mainly for security reasons and purposes. This is looked at as the last resort possible, and we are working on alternative solutions to ease it.

* * *

[*Translation*]

SMALL BUSINESS

Mrs. Eva Nassif (Vimy, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this week is Global Entrepreneurship Week, an opportunity to celebrate all Canadian entrepreneurs from coast to coast to coast who work so hard.

In my riding, Vimy, hundreds of entrepreneurs contribute to our local economy. From Namtek to Bo Bébé, these small businesses create high-quality jobs to support the middle class and create training opportunities for our young people. Canada's small business owners are the cornerstone of our economy and need to be supported.

Can the Minister of Small Business and Tourism tell the House how the government is supporting Canadian entrepreneurs?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for this excellent question.

More than 300 events are planned across the country to mark this year's Global Entrepreneurship Week and to celebrate Canada's entrepreneurs, the people who drive our economy today and will continue to do so in the future. Our government is proud to support them.

I recently announced a $50-million investment in women-led start-up tech firms through the BDC.

* * *

[*English*]

CANADIAN HERITAGE

Hon. Peter Van Loan (York—Simcoe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a report from the front on the Liberal war on history: the latest casualty is the village of Almonte.

The Mississippi Valley Textile Museum put together its proposal for Canada 150 based on a mill founded in 1867, whose history traced Canada's. The project blended history, education, community, and culture. It was denied. Why? It is because the Liberals changed the rules after they applied, and Canadian history is no longer an appropriate theme for the 150th anniversary of Confederation.

Why is the government blocking this worthy project? Why this Liberal war on history?

● (1205)

Mr. Randy Boissonnault (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his question. If by "the Liberal war on history" he means bringing indigenous people back into their historical context, referring to LGBTQ2 members, making sure that we have rich relationships with multicultural communities, and making sure that we fully value official bilingualism, then our government is resetting the record on history.

We are going to celebrate Canada 150 with four themes. This is what we will do as a government. We value history in this government.

* * *

[*Translation*]

HEALTH

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, again, the federal government is making decisions for us by interfering in Quebec's jurisdiction when it comes to the choice of anti-drug programs funded by Quebec.

It is up to Quebec to find the health professionals that know what our needs are in the area of addiction programs. There are 10,000 public servants at Health Canada, and none of them provides care to Quebec.

Will the minister respect Quebec's choice and transfer our taxes to those in Quebec who are best equipped to manage them?

[*English*]

Ms. Kamal Khera (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are committed to a broader approach to drug policy that is comprehensive, compassionate, collaborative, and evidence-based and that balances regulation and enforcement with support for prevention, treatment, and harm reduction.

The Minister of Health is aware of the concerns of Quebec and is committed to working with it on this issue. She has asked her officials to reach out to the provinces to discuss this further.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, after moving forward with Stephen Harper's cuts to health transfers against the unanimous will of the National Assembly, and after imposing the NDP's conditions on allocating funding from our taxes against the unanimous will of the National Assembly, the minister decided, from on high, to take it one step further by giving herself the right to make decisions on our behalf.

Never has a government done so much to undermine Quebec's ability to provide quality care.

When will the federal government let health professionals work in peace?

[*English*]

Ms. Kamal Khera (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I indicated, our government is committed to a comprehensive public health approach to substance misuse based on prevention, treatment, enforcement, and harm reduction. The Minister of Health is aware of the concerns of Quebec and is absolutely committed to working with it on this issue. She has asked her officials to reach out to the provinces, and she will be discussing this matter further with the province.

* * *

[*Translation*]

DAIRY INDUSTRY

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Quebec produces more than 60% of Canada's fine cheeses.

Our cheese producers will be hit the hardest by imports of more than 17,000 tonnes of subsidized European cheese. It will be our producers who pay the price for this unprecedented competition. Our cheese producers have been abandoned by Ottawa, because $25 million a year for four years divided among all the provinces is an insult to an industry that we have every reason to be proud of.

Will the minister listen to cheese producers and the Government of Quebec and propose a real assistance package?

Mr. Jean-Claude Poissant (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada's dairy producers were pleased with our announcement.

The minister and I met with producers and processors across the country. When the program was developed, we considered the comments made by producers and processors across Canada during our consultations. We are also investing in the dairy industry in order for current and future generations of dairy producers and processors to remain viable in the long term.

* * *

[*English*]

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Hon. Hunter Tootoo (Nunavut, Ind.):

[*Member spoke in Inuktitut*]

[*English*]

Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs. As I mentioned in my statement, the submission for the draft Nunavut land use plan is fast approaching. The minister has received a letter from the Nunavut Association of Municipalities requesting assistance to ensure that all 25 communities can participate and provide effective and meaningful input into a territorial land use plan.

Will the minister commit to working with the Nunavut Association of Municipalities so that all Nunavut communities are heard and their views considered for this very important plan?

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is essential for Nunavummiut voices to be heard through the engagement process for the draft Nunavut land use plan. This week my department met with the planning commission and reiterated our commitment to supporting their engagement process.

With respect to the specific proposal mentioned by the member, my officials have recently received the proposal and are currently reviewing it.

● (1210)

The Deputy Speaker: That will conclude question period for today. I see the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade rising on a point of order.

* * *

POINTS OF ORDER

ORAL QUESTIONS

Mr. David Lametti (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on my third answer to the question posed by the House leader on the other side, I inadvertently substituted NAFTA for TPP. The context of the question was clear. I was referring to the TPP, but I wanted to apologize to the hon. member and to the House and correct the record formally.

The Deputy Speaker: The House appreciates the prompt clarification.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Mr. Speaker, earlier, during question period, my esteemed colleague, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, tried to contradict the statistics I provided with some of his own. I therefore seek the consent of the House to table a document from the Office of the Parliamentary Budget Officer entitled "Labour Market Assessment 2016", which was published on October 27, 2016.

On page 1 of the report, the parliamentary budget officer states there was a drop in the number of full-time jobs in the public sector. On page 4, we learn that this is consistent with the "decline in full-time employment during this period", or 2016. On page 7—

The Deputy Speaker: Order. I believe that this is turning into debate or an additional question period. It is not a point of order.

Does the hon. member for Louis-Saint-Laurent have the unanimous consent of the House to table this document?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Deputy Speaker: There is no unanimous consent.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[*English*]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8) I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to 20 petitions.

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

TRANSPORT, INFRASTRUCTURE AND COMMUNITIES

Hon. Judy A. Sgro (Humber River—Black Creek, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour today to present, in both official languages, the seventh report of the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities in relation to the study of supplementary estimates B, 2016-17.

HEALTH

Mr. John Oliver (Oakville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the fourth report of the Standing Committee on Health, entitled "Interim Report and Recommendations on the Opioid Crisis in Canada".

All committee members were deeply moved by the testimony we heard from our witnesses and we were seized with the urgency to bring our recommendations forward to help shape a national strategy in dealing with this crisis. While we had some disagreement with respect to the recommendations, all members worked diligently to release the report today so we could help shape the national conference on opioid usage in Canada, which is being held by the Minister of Health in Ottawa today.

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague, the hon. member for Oakville, and all health committee members for their hard work on this emergency study on the opioid crisis currently being faced by our country. I think I speak for all my colleagues when I say we got through it with very few hiccups.

I would, however, like to make a quick mention of the rushed process in putting the report together. It was a challenge but, again, we got through it.

My Conservative colleagues and I feel the report does not effectively address the severity of the ongoing crisis. Nor does it acknowledge the main sources of these illicit drugs, which is China. We feel the report only highlights band-aid solutions to manage the crisis and does not actually look at ways to facilitate prevention. Really important is the quick integration of patients into treatment programs, which we think is essential.

The report also neglects to protect Canadians communities which, ultimately, should be the primary responsibility of the government. Therefore, my colleagues and I strongly believe that removing consultations and safeguards is an abdication from this responsibility. I am happy we were able to get our dissenting opinions in with the committee's report, even with the one-day timeline.

Again, I want to thank the member and all my colleagues on committee.

* * *

● (1215)

PETITIONS

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Sven Spengemann (Mississauga—Lakeshore, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present my first petition in the House of Commons on behalf of the men's group of the Compass food bank in my riding of Mississauga—Lakeshore. This group represents, and is active in representing, low-income Canadians, their financial concerns, challenges, and hardships.

Drawing on statistics from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and noting that the majority of low-income families in Canada are supported by only a single breadwinner, the petitioners call upon Parliament to offer short-term relief measures, pathways to the middle class, as well as initiatives and programs.

PORNOGRAPHY

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present petitions signed by Canadians from across Canada.

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

As such, these petitioners call on the House of Commons to adopt Motion No. 47.

[*Translation*]

POVERTY

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this week, Food Banks Canada published a report that showed that, in March alone, nearly one million people received food from a food bank and one-third of them were children.

This report recommends that the government adopt a poverty reduction strategy before October 1, 2017. It is possible to meet that deadline, which is why, today, I am very proud to again submit petitions from Canadians who support Bill C-245, an act concerning the development of a national poverty reduction strategy in Canada.

By voting in favour of this bill on November 30, we can meet that deadline and follow the recommendations that have been made by those working on the ground and people who are directly affected by poverty.

[*English*]

ELECTORAL REFORM

Mr. Marc Serré (Nickel Belt, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to present a petition that was submitted to me by Ms. Judy Sumner of Val Caron in my riding of Nickel Belt.

The petition calls for the House of Commons to continue to undertake public consultation on electoral reform across Canada. I hereby present this to the government for a response.

PALLIATIVE CARE

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to present an e-petition with thousands of signatures from my riding of Sarnia—Lambton on the subject of palliative care.

The petitioners state that the 2011 report from the Parliamentary Committee on Palliative and Compassionate Care outlined the importance of quality palliative care.

In light of the fact that upwards of 70% of Canadians do not have access to quality palliative care, the petitioners call upon the Minister of Health to help ensure that all Canadians have access to quality palliative care by endorsing palliative care options such as those contained within Bill C-277, which incidentally is coming to second reading next week.

[*Translation*]

GENETICALLY MODIFIED FOODS

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House once again to present dozens of petitions signed by many people who are outraged that GMO labelling is not yet mandatory. People in my riding and Canadians in general have been calling for mandatory GMO labelling for a long time.

My colleague from Sherbrooke introduced a bill about this to ensure that everyone can choose what they eat. If they do not want to eat genetically modified salmon, for example, they can make an informed choice.

● (1220)

[*English*]

ADOPTION

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith (Beaches—East York, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present e-petition 119.

Hundreds of Canadians have called on our government to reverse unfair changes to adoption rules made by the previous administration and to ensure that children adopted outside of Canada are treated equally, regardless of whether they are granted citizenship through the direct route or the naturalization process.

I want to give a special thanks to my constituents Kat Lanteigne and Graeme Ball for their tireless advocacy on this issue.

SENIORS

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today, representing an amazing, vibrant part of my riding, which is my seniors community, to present this petition.

The petitioners call on Parliament to appoint a minister for seniors and to develop a national strategy for seniors.

PORNOGRAPHY

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a second petition signed by Canadians from my wonderful province of Saskatchewan.

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

As such, the petitioners call on the House of Commons to adopt Motion No. 47.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the following questions will be answered today: Nos. 522, 524 and 534.

[*Text*]

Question No. 522—**Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy**:

> With regard to the government's claims that the new Canada Child Benefit will lift 60 000 Quebec children out of poverty: (*a*) what specific methods and projections did the government use to make that claim; (*b*) how many children in Quebec were living in poverty as of (i) January 1, 2014, (ii) January 1, 2015, (iii) January 1, 2016; (*c*) using the government's studies and projection methods, how many children will there be living in poverty in Quebec as of (i) January 1, 2017, (ii) January 1, 2018, (iii) January 1, 2019?

Mr. Terry Duguid (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with regard to the government's claims that the new Canada child benefit will lift 60 000 Quebec children out of poverty, and question (a) specifically, the Canada child benefit, CCB, poverty reduction impacts were estimated through an ESDC micro-simulation model. The model is static in nature, which means that it does not take behavioural responses to policy changes into account. The impacts are estimated by employing a counterfactual method of calculating the effects of a change of policy on a family's after-tax income. In short, this signifies that a family's income can be compared under two scenarios (that is, scenario 1 under the existing child benefit system, and scenario 2, under a proposed child benefit system such as the CCB) to determine whether a family whose income would be below a given threshold under scenario 1 would no longer be in that situation under scenario 2. The poverty reduction impact is estimated as the difference between these two scenarios in the number of children below the low-income cut-offs, LICO. Using this approach, it was estimated that nearly 60,000 children would be lifted above the LICO in Quebec as a result of the CCB.

This estimate was produced with an ESDC micro-simulation model that was benchmarked to the child low-income population as it is known through Statistics Canada's published data (the "Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics" is used as the foundational database for the ESDC model). At the time that the estimate was produced, the "Canadian Income Survey", Canada's official source of income data, reported a total number of 163,000 children living below the LICO in 2013. An assumption was made that the number of low-income children would remain unchanged beyond 2013. The system of child benefits that existed in 2013 was therefore chosen as the baseline child benefit system for purposes of the counterfactual analysis.

After doing this, it was estimated that the CCB would result in 60,000 children being lifted above the LICO.

With regard to (b), low income is measured by comparing a family or individual's income for an entire year to a pre-set threshold such as the LICO for that year. Therefore, it is not possible to tell how many individuals or children are in poverty on a specific day.

The latest low-income statistics available from Statistics Canada are for the year 2014, which reported there were 105,000 children in Quebec below the LICO in 2014. Statistics for 2015 and 2016 are not yet available.

With regard to (c), as mentioned in the answer to question (b), low income is not measured as a specific point in time situation, but rather over an entire year.

Under the assumptions and methodology laid out in answer to question (a), that is, a starting point of 163,000 children below the LICO, reflective of the most recent data available at the time the estimate was performed, ESDC has estimated the number of children below the after-tax LICO to be 103,000 for 2017. The actual number of children in low income for that year will be known when the 2017 "Canadian Income Survey" will be released by Statistics Canada, which may not be until 2019. (For reference, the "Canadian Income Survey, 2014", was released in July 2016.)

There is significant volatility in the figures of low-income children published by Statistics Canada from one year to the next. Estimates for 2017 are provided because it is the first full year of implementation of the CCB. However, the further in the future that estimates are made, the higher the uncertainty that is associated with these estimates becomes, and estimates beyond 2017 would not be sufficiently reliable at this point.

Question No. 524—**Mr. Matt Jeneroux**:

> With regard to refurnishing the Prime Minister's residences at Harrington Lake and at Rideau Cottage: what is the value, or estimated value, as well as a description of any piece of furniture acquired since November 4, 2015, for (i) Harrington Lake, (ii) Rideau Cottage?

Mr. Randy Boissonnault (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the NCC does not attribute the cost of any furniture acquisition to any of the official residences, since all furnishings, acquired or existing for the official residences, are considered part of the NCC's crown collection or general service asset inventory. Therefore, there are no costs associated with any furnishing changes or purchases related specifically to the Harrington Lake property or to Rideau Cottage.

Question No. 534—**Mrs. Kelly Block**:

> With regard to individuals working on a contract basis, or for a contractor, including local and third-country cooperants and advisors, who have access to the grounds or buildings of Canadian embassies, consulates, or high commissions, as of October 5, 2016, and broken down by location: (*a*) how many such individuals have access to the grounds or buildings of Canadian embassies, consulates or high commissions; and (*b*) how many such individuals in (*a*) (i) have a valid security clearance, (ii) do not have a valid security clearance?

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with regard to part (a), the number of contractors working at the 179 Canadian embassies, consulates, or high commissions as of October 5, 2016 is 3,068.

With regard to part (b) (i), the number of these contractors having a security clearance allowing them to work in secure zones of Canadian missions is 1,439.

With regard to part (b) (ii), 1,629 contractors without a security clearance are allowed access only in the public zones of the grounds or building of Canadian embassies, consulates, or high commissions, as of October 5, 2016.

The safety and security of departmental, embassy, and mission staff and of assets are a top priority. Thorough security protocols and measures are in place at every embassy, consulate, and high commission, tailored to both their respective public and secure zones. These zones require different levels of security clearances and thus have rigorous and appropriate safety and security protocols in place.

* * *

[*English*]

QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if Questions Nos. 520, 521, 523, 525 to 529 could be made orders for return, these returns would be tabled immediately.

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[*Text*]

Question No. 520—**Mr. Charlie Angus**:

With respect to First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada and Assembly of First Nations v Attorney General of Canada (representing the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada), Canadian Human Rights Tribunal File No. T1340/7008: (*a*) what are the total legal costs incurred by the government in this matter since January 25, 2016; (*b*) of the 382 million dollars announced for Jordan's Principle, (i) who was consulted, (ii) what was the process of consultation, (iii) what is the annual breakdown of this funding, (iv) what is the total breakdown of the allocation of these funds; (*c*) what is the date on which the budget investments in the child welfare system were initially developed; (*d*) with respect to adjustment to funding formulae regarding remoteness in the child welfare system, (i) will Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) develop a strategy that takes into account such things, (ii) if so, when will such a strategy will be implemented; (*e*) with respect to consultation during this legal process, (i) what is the list of the First Nations, First Nations Child and Family Services (FNCFS) Agencies, provincial and territorial authorities, partners, experts or any other persons that INAC has consulted with since January 26, 2016, in response to the findings in the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal's January 26, 2016, decision, (ii) what is INAC's consultation plan moving forward, (iii) what are the agendas for any consultations INAC has had with First Nations, FNCFS Agencies, provincial and territorial authorities, partners, experts or any other persons INAC has consulted with since January 26, 2016, (iv) what are the summaries of discussions for any consultations INAC has had with First Nations, FNCFS Agencies, provincial and territorial authorities, partners, experts or any other persons INAC has consulted with since January 26, 2016; (*f*) with respect to the allocation of immediate relief funding in Ontario, what are the the details of all correspondence between INAC and the Government of Ontario on this topic; (*g*) with respect to the definition of prevention services in Ontario that was raised in the ruling, (i) will INAC reimburse costs for travel to access physician-prescribed special needs services and assessments, special needs rehabilitative and support services and respite care, and support for families in crisis under the 1965 Memorandum of Agreement Respecting Welfare Programs for Indians, (ii) what are the details of any requests INAC has received for reimbursement of costs for travel to access physician-prescribed special needs services and assessments, special needs rehabilitative and support services and respite care, and support for families in crisis in Ontario; (*h*) with respect to the infrastructure needs in Ontario that were identified by the ruling, (i) does INAC have an interim strategy to deal with infrastructure needs of FNCFS Agencies in Ontario outside of the 1965 Memorandum of Agreement Respecting Welfare Programs for Indians, (ii) if INAC has such an interim strategy, what are the details of that strategy, (iii) if INAC does not have an interim strategy, has anything been done to develop such a strategy; (*i*) with respect to eligibility in Ontario, (i) will INAC address access to services for First Nations children in Ontario who are "entitled to be registered" under the Indian Act, (ii) if INAC will address such access to services, when will such access be addressed; (*j*) with respect to consultation on Jordan's Principle, (i) what is the list of First Nations, FNCFS Agencies, provincial and territorial authorities, partners, experts or any other persons INAC has consulted with since January 26, 2016, in response to the findings in the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal's January 26, 2016, decision, along with INAC's consultation plan moving forward, (ii) what were the agendas for any consultations INAC has had with First Nations, FNCFS Agencies, provincial and territorial authorities, partners, experts or any other persons INAC has consulted with since January 26, 2016, (iii) what are the summaries of discussions for any consultations INAC has had with First Nations, FNCFS Agencies, provincial and territorial authorities, partners, experts or any other persons INAC has consulted with since January 26, 2016; and (*k*) with respect to the Canadian Incidence Study, (i) is funding being provided for the Aboriginal component of the Study, including whether that component of the Study will include data collection specific to remote and northern First Nations, (ii) if funding is being provided, when will the Study be in the field, (iii) what are the details of methodology used for data collection with regard to the Aboriginal component of the Study and with regard to remote and northern First Nations?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 521—**Hon. Pierre Poilievre**:

With regard to the government's response to petition No. 388, addressed to the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development, specifically in response to question three, wherein the government states it would preferably use the Central Experimental Farm for two future-planned studies: (*a*) what is the objective of each study; (*b*) based on research conducted by the government, is it possible to determine if each study be concluded by the end of 2022; (*c*) which characteristics of this specific plot of the Central Experimental Farm are required for these studies, broken down by type; (*d*) has the government considered whether these studies can be completed on another plot of the Central Experimental Farm, and if so, what was its conclusion; (*e*) what similar lands or facilities exist that could accommodate these studies; (*f*) to-date what costs have been incurred in preparing these studies; and (*g*) has the cost of cancelling these studies been considered, and if so, what would they be?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 523—**Mr. Larry Miller**:

With regard to moving expenses for individuals working on a contract basis, broken down by government department and agency, since November 4, 2015: (*a*) how many individuals working on a contract basis have had their moving or temporary accommodation expenses paid for by the government; (*b*) how much was paid, broken down by expense type; (*c*) how many individuals working on a contract basis for a Minister's office have had their moving or temporary accommodation expenses paid for by the government; and (*d*) for each case referred to in (*c*), (i) how much was paid, (ii) what is the specific breakdown of expenses paid?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 525—**Mr. Matt Jeneroux**:

With regard to cyber attacks, broken down by month, and by department, agency, and crown corporation, since January 1, 2016: (*a*) how many cyber attacks have occurred, either against a department, agency or crown corporation or on one of their servers or networks; (*b*) how many of the attacks referred to in (*a*) resulted in government information being stolen; (*c*) how many of the attacks referred to in (*b*) resulted in classified government information being stolen; (*d*) how many of the attacks referred to in (*a*) resulted in individuals' personal information being stolen; (*e*) for each of the attacks referred to in (*d*), how many individuals' personal information was stolen; (*f*) were the individuals from whom information was stolen informed of the theft, and, if so, how were they informed; and (*g*) for each case where individuals' information was stolen, was the Privacy Commissioner notified?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 526—**Mr. Matt Jeneroux**:

With regard to official government social media accounts, including ministerial accounts, broken down by department and agency, and broken down by social media account: (*a*) what social media platforms does the government currently use; (*b*) what is each account's name, handle, or other identifier, broken down by platform; and (*c*) which accounts' contents are managed by (i) departmental officials, (ii) ministerial exempt staff, (iii) both?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 527—**Mr. Jim Eglinski**:

With regard to government employees and their security clearance, broken down by government department and agency, since January 1, 2016: (*a*) how many employees have had their security clearance cancelled or revoked, excluding retiring employees or term employees whose term ended; (*b*) how many of the employees in (*a*) were terminated after having their security clearance cancelled or revoked; (*c*) what is the breakdown of reasons or rationale as to why employees had their security clearance cancelled or revoked; and (*d*) for each reason or rationale, how many employees had their security clearance cancelled or revoked?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 528—**Mr. Jim Eglinski**:

With regard to contracts granted by any government department or agency to the law firm Cox & Palmer or to the marketing firm m5 (or group m5) since November 4, 2015: (*a*) what are the vendors' names; (*b*) what are the contracts' reference and file numbers; (*c*) what are the dates of the contracts; (*d*) what are the descriptions of the services provided; (*e*) what are the delivery dates; (*f*) what are the original contracts' values; and (*g*) what are the final contracts' values if different from the original contracts' values?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 529—**Mr. Gérard Deltell**:

With regard to contracts granted by the Privy Council, since November 4, 2015, to Delivery Associates Limited, its principals, or its partners: (*a*) what are the vendors' names; (*b*) what are the contracts' reference and file numbers; (*c*) what are the dates of the contracts; (*d*) what are the descriptions of the services provided; (*e*) what are the delivery dates; (*f*) what are the original contracts' values; (*g*) what are the final contracts' values if different from the original contracts' values; and (*h*) what are the details of the information, recommendations, or advice provided to the government as a result of such contracts?

(Return tabled)

[*English*]

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

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

CANADIAN HUMAN RIGHTS ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-16, An Act to amend the Canadian Human Rights Act and the Criminal Code, be read the third time and passed.

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, before I begin, I would like the unanimous consent of the House to split my time with the member for Saskatoon West.

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Mr. Speaker, as I join this third reading debate on Bill C-16 today, I want to take this opportunity to mark the Trans Day of Remembrance, which will be taking place this Sunday, November 20. This year marks the 17th annual Trans Day of Remembrance, which memorializes trans people who have been murdered over the past year. This year we remember the more than 86 lives that were senselessly lost to transphobia and hate around the world and in Canada. We know that this number is only the tip of the iceberg and that there are thousands of instances of violence perpetrated against trans people every year that go unrecorded or unreported.

This Trans Day of Remembrance is not only a day to mourn but a day for trans people, their loved ones, and allies to come together and to grow our strength and resiliency on the road to ending transphobia once and for all.

As people come together this Sunday across Canada and around the world, I want them to know that here in this House we know trans people are still targets of violence and hate at undeniably troubling rates. We see the statistics about homelessness and suicide rates among trans and gender-diverse youth, we hear trans people when they say they still cannot access necessary health care, and we hear trans people on the importance of being able to access appropriate identity documents.

Passing Bill C-16, whether that's this afternoon or Monday, is just the start of working through the challenges that face trans and gender-diverse Canadians, but it is a vital first step. The federal government and its agencies will have to get busy making sure policies and practices respect the full and equal rights of transgender and gender-variant Canadians.

I will spare the House an extended metaphor about Charlie Brown, Lucy, and the football, not only because of its rigid gender stereotypes but also because of its deeply embedded misogyny, where the problems of men are always caused by women, but nevertheless I have to use that analogy to say that the trans community is justifiably frustrated as we are now on the way to the third passage of this bill through the House of Commons. What other group of people in Canadian society has had to wait while this House of Commons passes three times a bill that would only recognize that they are entitled to the same rights and protections as all other Canadians?

Let me repeat the story of the journey of this bill through Parliament, hopefully for one last time.

This bill was first introduced by former NDP MP Bill Siksay in 2005. He reintroduced it again in 2007 and again in 2009. On this third attempt, although it took two years, in the spring of 2011, Bill actually saw his bill passed by the House, only to see it die in the Senate when an election was called.

When I was elected, I spoke with Bill, and he asked me to pick up that private member's bill, on behalf of the NDP caucus, and to take that struggle forward into what was a Conservative majority Parliament and, therefore, did not look very promising for the bill. I introduced my version of the bill on September 21, 2011. I stand here now more than five years after I began my attempt to get this bill through. The bill was passed through the House of Commons on March 20, 2013, with the support of I believe it was 19 members of the Conservative caucus at that time. That came as a bit of a surprise to many Canadians. Then it went off to the Senate and what was even more surprising is that, though the Senate had more than two years to deal with the bill, it failed to do so before the election was called. For a second time, a bill guaranteeing equal rights and protections to transgender and gender-variant Canadians died in the unelected Senate.

While this proposed legislation has been languishing before our federal Parliament, some progress has still been made. I would again say that I would like to think that the debate here in this House has helped bring forward progress elsewhere. In the meantime, nine provinces have adopted corresponding provincial human rights legislation. I have to say that in my second reading speech I miscounted, which proves one should use notes for these things, but we have seen corresponding provincial human rights legislation first in the Northwest Territories, then in Ontario, Manitoba, and Nova Scotia in 2012, Newfoundland and P.E.I. in 2013, Saskatchewan in 2014, Alberta in 2015, and British Columbia and Quebec this year.

The issue of trans rights is not a partisan issue. Amendments to protect against discrimination on the basis of gender identity were proposed by NDP governments in Alberta, Manitoba, and Nova Scotia, a Liberal government in P.E.I., and Conservative governments in Saskatchewan and Newfoundland. The amendments to their provincial human rights codes in Quebec, Ontario, and B.C. passed with all-party support.

● (1225)

Nor is progress on trans rights limited to the Canadian context, and I want to say again that we have lost a chance by our delays here in the House to be a leader around the world. Now, more than 18 countries have passed Canada up with explicit protections of the kind that are proposed in Bill C-16, and the list is surprising in its diversity.

These are not just the western European countries or North American countries. In fact, they reflect all cultures around the world. Argentina has in fact been the world leader in protection of the rights of transgender citizens and continues to be so. However, the list also includes Uruguay, Bolivia, Spain, France, Ireland, Estonia, Croatia, Montenegro, Albania, Israel, Cypress, Nepal, Australia, and New Zealand, among others.

In the United States, 16 states plus the District of Columbia provide explicit protections for transgender residents, and there are some good signs amidst the gloom in the United States. The North Carolina governor, Pat McCrory, who had brought forward a bill to explicitly allow discrimination against the LGBT community, was defeated in those elections and largely over what was called House Bill 2, which would have really gone against the American tradition of acceptance, tolerance, and liberty by promoting discrimination against North Carolinians.

However, there is still some gloom. The President-elect Trump has promised to rescind Executive Order 13672 that President Obama put forward in 2014, which protected transgender and gender-variant Americans against workplace discrimination. Interestingly, at the time, Obama pointed out that he felt the U.S. government was lagging behind business in the United States, as almost all the Fortune 500 U.S. companies, the biggest 500 companies in the U.S., already had internal policies protecting transgender people against discrimination.

I have said before in speeches here that certain businesses in federal jurisdiction, in particular the TD Bank, have set an example of how to deal with employees if they go through a transition. The Canadian Labour Congress has produced guides for transition in the workplace that it has made available to all of its union members across the country.

Again, others have moved forward faster than we have here in this Parliament. In fact, today we are here 11 years after the first introduction of the bill, nearly five years after it first passed, and coming up on three years since it passed in the previous Parliament. However, some things have changed, and now in the recorded vote at second reading, we saw nearly half of the Conservative caucus join the Liberals and New Democrats in supporting the bill.

What has really changed? I would say the important change here is that it has become a non-partisan issue, and that is due to the work of transgender and gender-varied activists who have been very vigilant about contacting their members of Parliament and talking to them about their stories and why they need the support of their members of Parliament to make sure that their rights and dignity are respected in this country.

Far too many of these stories are indeed tragic, and I can spend a long time recounting them, but time is, of course, short today. I will just point out the study by Egale, published in 2011, called "Every Class in Every School" shows the severe impacts of transphobia on students in this country, where 90% of trans students reported hearing daily or weekly transphobic comments, and where 78% recorded feeling unsafe at school.

No, the bill does not directly affect schools, as they fall under provincial jurisdiction, but it tells us the size of the problem we face in combatting transphobia in this country.

This is the last remaining gap in Canadian human rights legislation, and I do look forward to it being filled by judicious and expeditious action by the new Senate. The transgender and gender-variant community in this country is asking for equal rights and dignity; the same rights and dignity that all other Canadians enjoy, nothing more, nothing less.

I look forward to the passage of Bill C-16 today or Monday, as I have said, and I am hoping the Liberal government can ensure its swift passage through the Senate.

As I mentioned, what other group has had to wait over a decade while the House of Commons passes legislation to affirm their rights three times? If this is not the time to guarantee equality for all Canadians, then when would that time be?

● (1230)

Mr. Ken Hardie (Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is troubling to know that it has taken so long to bring this matter through the House.

It comes, coincidentally, with something an old friend of ours from Fleetwood—Port Kells, Bob Ibrahim, shared this morning, "This world of ours...must avoid becoming a community of dreadful fear and hate, and be, instead, a proud confederation of mutual trust and respect." That quote comes from Dwight David Eisenhower, President of the United States, and a Republican.

Would my friend comment and reflect on the leadership role that may be thrust upon this place and this country to protect the rights of people of every minority and of every vulnerable community?

Mr. Randall Garrison: Mr. Speaker, I am not in the habit of commenting on Republicans or what is happening in the United States.

We often focus on the negative things that happen to transgender people, but I would like to take just a moment, if I may, to point out that on November 9 the University of Victoria awarded an honorary doctorate of engineering degree to Lynn Conway, whose computer science and engineering work in computer architecture were fundamental at IBM in its early years where she worked until she was fired during her transition. She successfully re-emerged as a very prominent professor, researcher, and innovator at MIT and later at the University of Michigan.

It is really the trans community that provides leadership on these things, and I appreciate the chance to take a moment to emphasize one of the big successes; that is, the new doctor of engineering, Lynn Conway.

● (1235)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, much like my colleague, I am thrilled that this bill has been introduced, so that trans and non-binary individuals can finally enjoy the same rights and protections as all other Canadians. It is the very least we can do.

I am sure all New Democrats are delighted, because this bill is basically a carbon copy of bills we have been introducing for quite some time. We have been working on this file for quite a while now, and we really hope that it goes through, because it is so crucial.

Of course this is an important step, but it does not mean that the entire issue is resolved. LGBTQ communities still face problems and challenges.

I do not like putting the cart before the horse, but I want to ask my colleague what he sees as the next challenges and concerns to overcome.

[*English*]

Mr. Randall Garrison: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for her work in her riding on behalf of the LGBTQ community, and also here in the House for her constant support.

Many of the social problems of discrimination in housing and employment fall under provincial jurisdiction, but there are some very fundamental things that are in the hands of the federal government.

One of those is access to passports and identity documents that will help transgender people travel, be employed, and help them in all facets of their daily life.

A second one is a particular concern of mine that I raised in the House in 2012 and unfortunately in committee where we were laughed at for raising this concern. That is the concern of the emphasis on gender in airport screening, which has nothing to do with security but often causes humiliation and embarrassment to transgender people who are not currently in possession of documents that match their gender identity.

A third, which is very important and I have also worked on for a long time, is federal corrections and making sure that inmates are assigned to the proper correctional facility, because if they are not assigned to the proper correctional facility they face great danger of violence. This also applies to those under immigration detention who are quite often not in federal facilities but face the same kinds of problems if they are placed in the wrong institution.

Ms. Sheri Benson (Saskatoon West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today I rise to speak on an issue that is close to my heart. It is an issue that my colleague, the member for Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, has fiercely dedicated himself to over the years. We just heard about the long struggle and fight he had. I am humbled to share my time with him today, and I want to formally thank him for fighting to include explicit protection for gender identity and gender expression in the Canada Human Rights Act.

I also want to add my tributes to the groundbreaking work of former parliamentarians, Svend Robinson, Bill Siksay, and Craig Scott, all of whom were instrumental in bringing us closer to the inclusive society we want to create.

As the deputy critic for LGBTQ issues, I want to acknowledge the work that the government has done to bring this file forward. I applaud it for bringing this first critical step forward, with the introduction of Bill C-16.

Let me begin by reminding the House, as my colleague has, that this legislation should come as no surprise. Identical legislation has been presented numerous times to the House over the last five years, most recently in 2015, when the bill was left to die on the Senate's Order Paper at the time that the election was called.

This bill has been studied, reviewed, and, most importantly, it has been accepted by elected members of the last Parliament. Now Bill C-16 presents an opportunity for this government and this Parliament to show leadership at a time when our country and our global community needs it the most. We know that existing provincial patchwork legislation is not sufficient. We know that only seven of the 13 provinces and territories currently protect against discrimination based on gender expression and identity in their human rights codes. Canadians deserve swift federal action to provide leadership and to ensure protection in federal law against discrimination.

Earlier this year, people around the world witnessed the heartbreaking and gruesome events in Orlando. Words cannot convey how needless this tragedy was. The recent election in the United States, sadly, has given all of us even more reason to fear for our safety and our rights. May it serve as a heavy reminder that our global community remains unsafe for people who identify as LGBT or Q, and may we redouble our efforts to end bigotry and hatred.

Canada has an opportunity to show leadership within the international community. I suggest that we remember our responsibility as a signatory state to the UN declaration on sexual orientation and gender identity. Let us affirm our commitment to these obligations and secure equal rights for trans and gender-variant Canadians by adding gender identity and expression as prohibited grounds for discrimination under the Canada Human Rights Act.

As our country strives to be more inclusive, I will reflect upon the past, which unfortunately is riddled with instances of discrimination and violence toward the LGBTQ community. Thankfully, it is also full of tales of hope and resistance.

Not so long ago, on February 5, 1981, more than 250 gay men were arrested in Toronto for visiting bath houses. Many of those arrested in Operation Soap were publicly humiliated and faced lifelong repercussions as a result of this assault. I urge that we do not forget these dark moments in our history, as we forge our way forward to a future that is more fair and just for all Canadians.

In my riding and the surrounding area, we have a strong record of organization and activism around LGBTQ issues, from the Saskatoon gay liberation, led by Gens Hellquist in the 1970s; to Gay and Lesbian Health Services of Saskatoon, started in 1991, which continues its important work today as OUTSaskatoon; to the annual Breaking the Silence Conference, now in its 20th year, organized by education professor Don Cochrane at the University of Saskatchewan.

In 1999, Mount Royal Collegiate, a high school in my riding, was the first high school in the province to have a gay-straight alliance for students, spearheaded by teacher Patti Rowley. In June of this year, Beardy's & Okemasis First Nation held the first-ever Two-Spirit Pride Festival and parade on a first nation in Saskatchewan. We are lucky to have a robust history of community activism and work.

● (1240)

This activism has pushed governments to recognize the rights of the LGBTQ community, and has in many cases provided essential services to those who need them most. However, organizations and community activists alone cannot ensure that the rights of the LGBTQ community are respected. We need federal protections that explicitly prohibit discrimination on the basis of gender expression and identity. We need Bill C-16.

When the Minister of Justice introduced the bill, she noted that all Canadians should be safe to be themselves. I do not believe any one of us would disagree with that.

However, the hard truth of the matter is that not all people in Canada are safe to be themselves. Systemic discrimination toward the LGBTQ community persists across Canada, and perhaps most notably in our schools. LGBTQ students are three times more likely than heterosexual students to be bullied. Roughly 74% of trans students report having been verbally harassed about their perceived gender identity or sexual orientation, and nearly 40% of trans students report having been physically assaulted.

The bravery displayed by our young people who report physical and verbal assault after it happens is truly remarkable, but I am heartbroken, as many are, and utterly dismayed by the fact that seven out of 10 trans students are being harassed because of who they are.

It is not just young trans Canadians who desperately need a more compassionate Canadian society. Trans and gender-variant Canadians of all ages face unique barriers.

Many Canadians are unable to secure identification that correctly reflects their gender identity, which in turn imposes severe restrictions on their mobility and limits access to essential services. Those who identify as trans or gender-variant face a real struggle to earn a decent standard of living. They are discriminated against in the workplace and are often unemployed or underemployed.

We cannot stand idly by while such discrimination takes place in the workplace. In 2016, we need safe gender neutral spaces, including public washrooms. For Canadians who identify as trans or gender-variant, this challenge can be at best a nightmare, or at worst, life threatening. It is unacceptable that so many Canadians face these challenges each and every day.

We must do better, and we can start by extending trans and gender-variant Canadians the same rights and protections that all Canadians enjoy under the Canada Human Rights Act.

We have so much work to do in order to achieve the inclusive Canada we all envision. However, we have an exciting opportunity before us to make the lives of trans and gender-variant Canadians better, by supporting Bill C-16. The bill is an important and critical step forward on a long, slow, but steady march forward in the struggle to enshrine in law equality for all.

Next week, on Sunday, communities all over Canada and around the world will pause on November 20 to observe the Transgender Day of Remembrance. On that day, we will remember and honour those who have died due to transphobia.

Let us not just remember, let us not just honour, but let us act. I urge the government to act, to pass this long overdue legislation without delay. I urge all members of this house to support Bill C-16 to ensure the protection of human rights for all Canadians.

● (1245)

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Saskatoon West for the work she has done in this House on LGBTQ issues and for her support today for Bill C-16.

Earlier in one of the questions on the bill, the member for Churchill—Keewatinook Aski raised the question of two-spirited Canadians. I want to mention the conference taking place in my riding on the 25th and 26th, at the Victoria Native Friendship Centre, called 2 Spirits, One Heart, One Mind, One Nation. It is a B.C. aboriginal youth conference.

What I have heard many times, and I am asking the member if she has heard the same thing, is that some of the most discriminated against people are in fact transgendered aboriginal Canadians. Quite often they have the worst employment situation, the worst housing situation, and the worst alternatives facing them.

Ms. Sheri Benson: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for giving me the opportunity to speak momentarily on the issue of racism, sexism, and transphobia, and how those barriers and those issues in the community intersect. We do find, particularly in my community and in Saskatchewan, where young people are not only faced with the racism of being first nations, but are also dealing with many barriers. They are dealing with significant violence and discrimination because they are young aboriginal people and are transgendered.

I was very proud of the Beardy's & Okemasis first nation standing up for two-spirited people in Saskatchewan and across Canada, having a pride parade, raising the flag, having a celebration, and telling all people that they are welcome on that first nation.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I noted in my colleague's excellent speech the discussion of some of the discrimination that is facing transgender people. I had the privilege of being with the member on the pay equity committee, but we focused mainly on the wage gap between women and men and not necessarily transgendered people, who are suffering from precarious work and discrimination against them in the workplace. I wonder if there is anything that the member would suggest to the government that could be done on that same pay equity path.

● (1250)

Ms. Sheri Benson: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague in the House and on the pay equity committee for reminding me of some of the broader issues that we talked about at the committee. However, the scope was very focused. Our ability to start looking at the intersection of sexism, and, in this case, transphobia, in a wage gap between transgendered people and non-transgendered people, I think most of the committee members agree is the next step. As we look at pay equity for women, we will start to open up to look at the broader issues of when sexism, racism, homophobia, and transphobia intersect, and the real way that it impacts people's lives, including their ability to make a good quality of life and have a good standard of living.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her excellent speech.

I was in the House during the last Parliament when my colleague, the member for Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca at the time, managed to get a similar bill passed, but we know that it did not pass in the Senate. In fact, it was not even debated in the Senate.

Is my colleague at all concerned about what might happen in the Senate should this bill pass here? Does she take any comfort in what she has heard so far from the government?

[*English*]

Ms. Sheri Benson: Mr. Speaker, given the track record of the bill, one has to not take anything for granted. I think most of us are empowered to feel that in this day and age, surely the Senate will move forward, that it will not look back at the House and not follow through on what I hope is the passing, finally, of Bill C-16. One does wonder, when a bill like this has gone through the House so many times and has not been passed by the Senate. My hope would be that finally the day will come and we will see equal human rights for all Canadians.

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Toronto—Danforth, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour today to speak in support of Bill C-16, an act to amend the Canadian Human Rights Act and the Criminal Code, particularly because today we are on the eve of the Transgender Day of Remembrance, which is Sunday, November 20.

It is a day that gives us a chance to remember and reflect upon the discrimination that has been suffered and continues to be suffered in our country by the transgender community but also to give strength and think about how we go forward.

Today my heart has been warmed to hear the debate and the very non-partisan nature in which we have exchanged ideas. That helps to pave the way forward as we look at a bill such as Bill C-16.

Since I have taken my seat in this place, I have taken a lot of time to think about what it is I treasure about our country and about Canadian values. To me, it is being a safe and welcoming place and celebrating our diversity. The two are interconnected, because we cannot celebrate our diversity if we are not a safe and welcoming place. This bill helps us to become a safer and more welcoming place.

I grew up in the 1970s. There was a record that was very popular at the time called *Free To Be You And Me*. It said:

> Don't dress your cat in an apron
> Just 'cause he's learning to bake.

There were all sorts of other songs and poems, but the theme, the lesson for all of us, was that we all had the opportunity to grow up being true to ourselves and who we were and that no one should be defining us.

That is something that, as a parent today, I take very seriously. I want my children, all of our children, people growing up in this country, to know that they have that freedom. They should be comfortable and safe being true to who they are.

It goes to principles. An organization called Gender Spectrum states that a person's gender identity is "[o]ne's innermost concept of self as male or female or both or neither—how individuals perceive themselves and what they call themselves".

That is what we are talking about today. Bill C-16 creates a protection for gender identity and gender expression that helps pave the way. It states:

> This enactment amends the Canadian Human Rights Act to add gender identity and gender expression to the list of prohibited grounds of discrimination.

We have had some discussion about that today, and it has already been pointed out that this is not the first time this type of protection is being added to human rights codes. In fact, across our country, most of our provinces and territories have already adopted such protections. We are catching up federally. It is an important step we must take. Discrimination is still an issue, and it is something this legislation needs to address.

Trans Equality Canada has provided some statistics. The unemployment rate in Ontario for transgender people is three times the national average. Nationwide, from a survey of transgender youth, three-quarters of transgender youth have faced verbal harassment in school, and 37% have faced physical violence.

If we want to be that safe and welcoming place that I believe our country is and should be, then we need to step up and provide these protections.

The bill also makes amendments to the Criminal Code. It expands the Criminal Code prohibition against hate propaganda to include protections for gender identity and gender expression. It also requires sentencing judges to consider whether an offence was motivated by bias, prejudice, or hate based on gender identity or gender expression.

These amendments to the Canadian Human Rights Act and the Criminal Code are particularly important, as I have said, as we lead into the Transgender Day of Remembrance and we take stock and reaffirm our commitment to ensuring that this does not continue to happen.

Transgender Europe is a European advocacy group. They monitor violence against transgender communities and gender-diverse communities worldwide. From October 1, 2015 to September 30, 2016, they recorded 295 murders. That is a tremendous number, and that is only what was reported and recorded. These are individuals who deserve our protection.

● (1255)

Bill C-16 is a first step in that direction. It is a first step for us federally to provide further protection.

I want to take a step back and acknowledge that it is not just legislation that is going to get us there. That has been mentioned in this place before. We are going to have to look at how we can be a safe and welcoming society. It is not just a matter of legislation, but it is a first step.

I want to acknowledge the work that is being done on the ground by so many people. I would like to begin by acknowledging the work that has been done by the member for Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke on this issue. He has been working on it for a long time. It is important to have advocates who make sure that we keep working on issues.

My own community has the Triangle Program, which is Canada's only LGBTQ high school. It celebrated its 20th anniversary this year, which is really quite amazing. A member of my community, John Campey, helped to create that high school, and it is a safe and welcoming place.

Other individuals in my community work very hard. One is Susan Gapka. I am sure that Susan Gapka is watching closely as we continue this debate today. Another individual is Rachel Lauren Clark. These are two individuals who work fiercely to advance these issues.

We also have MCC Toronto, the Metropolitan Community Church. It works hard to build a safe place within a faith community.

There is a trans-resource education and advocacy team. I love that the acronym is TREAT. It creates an education network and an advocacy network for gender-diverse people and allies.

On Canada Day this year, I had the opportunity to go to the trans fair and see so many people taking on these roles. I have named some here today but there are many people who are working hard in our communities. They need to be honoured, because that is how we are going to make progress beyond having a bill, which as I said, is a first step.

Parliament has a poet laureate, George Elliott Clarke. I asked if he could write a poem to do with Bill C-16 and transgender and gender-diverse communities. He wrote quite a beautiful poem that really captures a lot of what we are talking about today.

● (1300)

[*Translation*]

I should mention that an excellent translation of the poem was done by Robert Paquin.

Today I will read the English version of the poem only.

[*English*]

Now, *you* and *me* and *he* and *she* and *they*
Are pronouns defining *Humanity*,
But they're not—really not—definitive:
For how we lean determines how we live.
Note that *he* is within *she* or that *she*
Includes *he*: fluid is identity;
Male is partly *female*, because *female*
Carries *male*. To whit, Gender's not a jail.
So, to be transgender is to be free
To be one's entire personality,
A chosen body, unfrozen from *Fear*,
Liberated from *Custom*, free to dare,
To wear what fits, not what suits restrictions,
And to be facts, not plausible fictions.
Transgender's transgressive because it frees
Masculine and *feminine*, as *they* please.

I would like to thank our poet laureate for that lovely poem that really summarizes a sentiment that I believe underscores Bill C-16 and why we need to move forward with this legislation.

It has been an honour to speak today in support of this legislation. I am hoping that we can stand up as a House and support this important step.

Ms. Sheri Benson (Saskatoon West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for sharing wise words and support for a very important bill, which would grant human rights to all Canadians. Today we are talking about making sure that transgender and gender-variant Canadians receive the same protection as other Canadians.

I am wondering if my colleague might comment on the long road it has taken to get Bill C-16 here and why it is important at this time that the federal government take leadership. Perhaps she could share with us how speedily we can see this come forward and make a difference in people's lives.

Ms. Julie Dabrusin: Mr. Speaker, our government made the tabling of this bill a priority very early on in our first session in Parliament.

My colleague is correct. It has taken a very long time to get to where we are now. However, we are here. Our government has tabled this bill. I have heard very hopeful comments across the way. In the vote at second reading we saw hopeful signs that we can push this forward. I will advocate for it, and I am hoping that I can depend on my colleague to do the same.

Ms. Dianne L. Watts (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I understand that there is a special adviser who has been appointed. I am wondering if the member can lay out some of the initiatives that will be undertaken with the work of the special adviser.

Ms. Julie Dabrusin: Mr. Speaker, as my colleague has mentioned, the parliamentary secretary for Canadian heritage is now the special adviser on LGBTQ2 issues. Having someone who will be an outreach and point person is an important signal and an opportunity to help this government make sure we do what we have promised to do, which is create a safe and welcoming country where we take into account diverse perspectives.

I am a strong advocate of gender-based analysis. That is something I like to see applied in everything I do in this place so that we bring in different perspectives. I hope our special adviser is someone who can make sure that this voice is not lost as we continue our debate.

● (1305)

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, now that the legislation will pass, I know that with the number of cases of discrimination and hate crimes that exist, we are likely to see more activity there. I wonder if the member could comment on what additional resources or actions we need to take to make sure we can handle that caseload.

Ms. Julie Dabrusin: Mr. Speaker, at this point, we are setting a legislative framework within the Canadian Human Rights Act to ensure that we have the right protections there. Within our Criminal Code, the sentencing stage will take into account bias as an aggravating factor to prevent the propagation of hate propaganda. Those are the steps we need to take to ensure that we lay the groundwork.

As a community, it is going to take us stepping up and making sure that we point out to everyone in our communities that this kind of discrimination is not acceptable. That is another piece in this, beyond the legislation, if we are to actually see action taken.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will focus my comments not on the content of this bill, Bill C-16, but rather on what I believe is a deeply flawed, undemocratic process that has returned this bill from the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights to Parliament without hearing from any independent witnesses.

I am supportive of any initiatives that help protect persons from hate speech. I also absolutely agree that there can be no tolerance for bullying or violence of any kind for any reason. Parliamentarians and all Canadians have a responsibility to do their part to confront bullying, hate speech, and violence. My concern is that dissent of any kind will be construed as hate speech and could subsequently lead to Human Rights Tribunal hearings or, worse yet, criminal charges being laid. I am concerned that this bill would cause fear for many Canadians that they would not be able to even discuss public policy issues such as this one because they disagree with the government's imposed agenda.

I believe the government and the Minister of Justice directly owe Canadians a clear answer to the following question: What would the impact of implementing Bill C-16 be on immigrant groups and faith groups who may be at odds with gender fluidity concepts? Would they have the freedom to teach their children and practise their beliefs without being accused of hate speech or being accused of human rights violations? Yes or no?

Any law that limits legitimate discussion and debate of closely held beliefs presents a danger to freedom of expression, a fundamental value held dear by people across the political spectrum. The right to disagree is sacred to freedom in our society. It is the lifeblood of both new ideas and age-old protections. The United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, article 18, 1948, states:

> Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either...in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.

For me and millions of other Canadians who acknowledge the supremacy of God, as the first words of our charter affirm, there is the reality that our faith journey is the foundation of our world view. Freedom of religion is a fundamental right, and so it is of paramount importance that Bill C-16 would not infringe upon that fundamental freedom. Today we are debating at third reading a bill that proposes some very fundamental changes to definitions and principles of society. The imposition of a fundamental values system change of this magnitude must be given complete due process here in Parliament.

The current government promised transparency, openness, and accountability. The Liberals assured Canadians that things would be done differently. All members of this House are aware that the normal course of action for a bill that passes on second reading is to send it to the corresponding committee for study, calling of witnesses for input on the content of the bill with the potential for changes or amendments to be made before it comes back for third reading, and a final vote by Parliament. Yet here we are asked to vote on a very substantive bill without the benefit of committee discussion notes or the transcription of witness input to inform our decision. The government has chosen to shortcut the democratic process; a different approach for sure but not what Canadians should expect or have to tolerate from their government. This is a total disrespect of due process.

Those who may see this issue differently are simply being shut out of the debate. Of all the places that should encourage dialogue and debate, certainly Parliament should be at the forefront. Yet here we are choosing not to have an honest debate for fear that we might somehow upset the politically correct apple cart.

We have unfortunately already witnessed this chill on free speech at the University of Toronto as Professor Jordan Peterson is under constant attack for his refusal to use gender-neutral pronouns. Medical experts have lost their jobs not because of scientific knowledge or experience but because their views are out of step with current thinking.

Irene Ogrizek of Montreal wrote:

> If Canadians who believe that gender exists on a spectrum are free to choose their words and reality, Jordan Peterson, as someone who interacts with them, has a right to choose his words and reality too, however objectionable that concept of equality might seem. Allowing one group to use freighted words like homophobe or racist or rapist to tarnish an individual's reputation without proof violates a principle of fairness that some of us hold dear. If hate-speech is to be expanded in our criminal codes, and in Canada that seems inevitable, I suggest we include the egregious misuse of these accusations too. If we are to take the idea of diversity seriously, we can do no less for those who are falsely maligned.

● (1310)

I ask this again. Will parents continue to have their right to teach their children in accordance with their deeply held faith beliefs or will they be subjected to accusations of hate speech for simply living out tried and true principles which are informed by their belief in the supremacy of God, as affirmed in our Charter of Rights and Freedoms? Will faith leaders who teach their congregations to follow the principles clearly laid out in God's word also be subjected to accusations of hate speech, or will they be free to continue to practise with freedom as the UN Declaration of Human Rights declares?

I now echo the Right Hon. John Diefenbaker, whose view of Canadian freedoms expresses what we should all hold dear:

> I am a Canadian,
> a free Canadian,
> free to speak without fear,
> free to worship in my own way,
> free to stand for what I think right,
> free to oppose what I believe wrong,
> or free to choose those
> who shall govern my country.
> This heritage of freedom
> I pledge to uphold
> for myself and all mankind.

In closing, I move:

That the motion be amended by deleting all the words after the word "That" and substituting the following:

> "Bill C-16, an act to amend the Canadian Human Rights Act and the Criminal Code, be not now read a third time, but be referred back to the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights for the purpose of reconsidering all of its clauses with the view to hearing from witnesses in relation to the impact of the bill on freedom of expression".

The Deputy Speaker: The amendment is admissible.

Questions and comments, the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the government House leader.

● (1315)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am a little surprised the member chose to introduce an amendment. I know there has been fairly wide expectation that the legislation, having gone through committee, would hopefully pass in a timely fashion. Over the years, there has been a great deal of effort by a wide spectrum of stakeholders, people very passionate about it. It has been debated extensively inside the chamber.

Does the member feel her amendment will do well in trying to advance what has been a very strong and passionate issue in the chamber for a good period of time, as many people seem to want, including the government of the day, to have the legislation passed?

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: Mr. Speaker, the House deals with a lot of very passionate issues that have required, even in the last few months, an awful lot of conversation in the House and at the committee level. I hope I have made very clear that my concerns are not in regard to the rights of the individuals who are being presented as the root cause of the bill. My concern is that we hear, and it is made very clear within the House and through committee with witnesses, about the rights of all individuals in Canada to have freedom of expression, quite honestly to have a bias of opinion because we differ, to have that opportunity and not face any kind of criminal accusations because of expressing that freedom.

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am very disappointed to see this amendment come forward at this late date. In committee, only one person voted against the bill, so it was not a partisan manner, and we had a long discussion about the fact that there had been three sets of public hearings on the Hill on the bill, and those transcripts are available to all members.

On the question she specifically puts in the amendment, it seems passing strange to me that her amendment does not include removing religious freedom from protections against discrimination, or gender, or race, because the argument she is making could be made exactly in the same manner, that we cannot have those in the human rights code because people might not be able to believe things about race or might not be able to believe things about relations between men and women. Obviously, it has not had those impacts. It has not affected free speech of those groups. How is the question of transgender, gender-variant rights any different than the other rights that are already in the Canadian Human Rights Act and the protected section of the Criminal Code?

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: Mr. Speaker, I know this is disappointing to him and many others in the House at this point, but I feel it is my responsibility.

Quite honestly, the member for Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke and I were at an event where the Minister of Immigration presented what was happening with the movement of Syrian refugees to Canada. I was pleased to support him when he stood up and asked the question, "There will be a gay community, we know, coming over as refugees to Canada. How can we as a gay community here know who they are and be available to them to help them settle and assimilate in Canada?"

The minister responded that he did not know exactly who they were or when they would come, but they would certainly make sure that they had that opportunity, which I applaud.

Then I got up and asked the minister if he could clarify for me who the Christians were who would be coming over as part of that Syrian refugee group so that the Christian community in Canada could do the same, to which he replied, "I would hope that all Christians in Canada would be accepting of all refugees coming to Canada, regardless of their faith, to which I replied "Absolutely, of course." Look at our record in Canada of being there for refugees of any faith, background, or whatever. However, I said, "That's not my question. My question is, can we identify those people." It was made clear, over the course of time, that ethnic and religious minorities were not the priority of the government.

I had a wonderful conversation with the member afterward. He thanked me for supporting the gay community coming to Canada. I said, "No one should die or be afflicted in any way for their beliefs or their perspectives."

He said they had to set up separate camps for them because they were being attacked and killed. I made the comment that Christians were not even making it across the water, that they were being thrown off the boat before they got there, to which he replied, "I don't want to argue."

I replied, "Neither do I. All I want is fairness." That is what I am asking for with this amendment.

● (1320)

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there is no question that as parliamentarians we value healthy debate. What we must also be very clear about is the attempt we are seeing here to truly stand in the way of a minority community in Canada that has experienced some of the highest levels of violence because of who they are.

It is 2016, and as my colleague from Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke has explained, this is the only community whose voices have had to come forward three times to change legislation to protect their fundamental human right to safety and security. Therefore, when I hear attempts, as we have seen today, to block this community from achieving the protection that we all deserve and that we all have, it truly saddens me in terms of the state of Parliament and the way we perceive our work in this place.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: Mr. Speaker, the essence of what I am saying here is being lost on the member, because at this point, it is not about what they are looking for, it is about a balance and a confidence across Canada that everyone's rights are going to continue to be protected.

My fellow member in the House from my own side of the floor, when speaking about the protection of parents to have the right to determine to teach their children to be in the public square, to share that in whatever circumstances, said that she doesn't think that will happen.

I am sorry, but that is not solid enough for me. I want to know that the House supports the rights and freedoms of religious belief as strongly as ever, and I want to see it in witnesses and this issue being dealt with properly within the House.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to be clear, as I said earlier today in the House, I am in support of Bill C-16, but what I am not in support of is due process not being followed.

There is an example here where they can say that the committee took its majority and basically decided to proceed. This is not the first time. It was also done on the national anthem.

I am against not following due process. This is my issue with respect to this amendment, and I wonder if the member could comment.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for bringing that back home, because that is truly my concern as well.

We have a responsibility here. I understand that this has been discussed for a long time. There are a lot of issues before the House that have been discussed for a very long time. I have a responsibility within the House, and to my constituents as well, that we follow due process and that we have on the record the things that should be on the record. Again, as I said, we have the opportunity to do that. It is why I put forward this motion.

● (1325)

The Deputy Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

The Deputy Speaker: The question is on the amendment. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the amendment?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Deputy Speaker: All those in favour of the amendment will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Deputy Speaker: In my opinion the nays have it.

(Amendment negatived)

The Deputy Speaker: The question is now on the main motion.

Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to, bill read the third time and passed)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I am sure if you were to canvass the House, you would find the will to see the clock at 1:30 p. m. at this time so we can begin private members' business.

The Deputy Speaker: Is it the will of the House to see the clock at 1:30 p.m.?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: It being 1:30 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's order paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[*English*]

ITALIAN HERITAGE MONTH

Mrs. Deborah Schulte (King—Vaughan, Lib.) moved:

That, in the opinion of the House, the government should recognize the contributions that Italian-Canadians have made to Canadian society, the richness of the Italian language and culture, and the importance of educating and reflecting upon Italian heritage for future generations by declaring June, every year, Italian Heritage Month.

She said: Mr. Speaker, *oggi e una grande giornata*. Today is a great day.

Today, I have the pleasure of rising in the House to introduce my private member's motion, Motion No. 64, a motion to designate June as national Italian heritage month.

I am delighted to have the support of my Liberal Italian caucus colleagues who have worked with me on this and are seconding the motion. I want to thank those who are in the House with me today to show their support and to share their stories.

I also want to thank those in the community who brought this initiative to our attention, one of them being in the House today, my former colleague, Marilyn Iafrate, from Vaughan Council.

I would like to inform the House that I have also have the support. I just received a letter today from the National Congress of Italian-Canadians, with the Canadian Italian Business Professional Association, CIBPA, and the Order Sons of Italy of Canada, the OSIC. They wholeheartedly express their support for my motion.

The Canadian Ethnocultural Council, the CEC, the only not-for-profit, non-partisan national coalition of ethnocultural organizations, of which the NCIC is a proud member, whose objectives, inter-alia, are to engage ethnocultural communities to foster harmony and acceptance of our diversity and multiculturalism, which is one of the cornerstones of our great country, also ardently supports my motion.

This motion is meant to designate the month of June as national Italian heritage month in recognition of the contributions Italian Canadians have made to Canadian society. It provides a designated month to celebrate the richness of the Italian language and culture, and the importance of educating and reflecting upon Italian heritage for future generations.

People may ask, why June would be the selected month for the motion? Italy celebrates its national day on June 2, and in 2010, the province of Ontario, passed Bill 103, an act to proclaim June as Italian heritage month. Therefore, it is appropriate that June be the designated month.

Some may ask why I am, a non-Italian, bringing this motion forward. I am very proud to represent the second-largest percentage of Italian Canadians in any riding in Canada. I was lucky to draw an early placement in the private member bill order, which provided me the opportunity to recognize the important contributions of Italian Canadians through this motion, and hopefully in time for June 2017, which is Canada's 150th anniversary.

The Italian community is very active in my riding and has shown me significant support over many years. I know how important this motion is to them. I was proud to serve them as a regional councillor and now as an MP. However, this is not just a motion for Italian Canadians in my riding, but for Italian Canadians from coast to coast to coast. This is also a motion for all Canadians as we celebrate our multiculturalism.

In Canada, we seem to have gotten it right, and this is in no small measure because of the work of our immigrant communities, sharing their cultures and traditions, working to support not only their own communities, but all Canadians as we work toward building a better country.

Italian Canadians have contributed greatly over the past century to growing our country. When they came to Canada, they faced many hardships. However, they brought with them a rich cultural heritage, a dedication to family and a strong work ethic that has helped many to succeed. They have become community leaders, successful business entrepreneurs and builders of our country.

It is clear, witnessing the growth in the city of Vaughan and much of York region, we can see the hand of the Italian community at work. Each different region in Italy is known for the trades and the skills that they brought to our country. They have applied those widely across the country. Our country offered them opportunity, but it was their skills and ambition and work ethic that made them very successful.

Italians are known for their wine, prosciutto, parmigiano, marinara sauce, and who can forget the pizza, and all those wonderful food creations that I am so happy to enjoy in my community. Of course there is that iconic Italian style with Armani and Gucci, and many other designers of clothes. Clothes, cars, furniture, actually anything we can think of, Italians have tried their hand at, and given it that unique twist of Italian style.

We can think of Dan Iannuzzi, the great journalist and founder of Corriere Canadese, Johny Lombard, an incredible pioneer in broadcasting, and Guy Lombardo in the music world.

● (1330)

We have Frank Iacobucci, a Supreme Court justice, and Laura Sabia, a leading activist in the women's movement, both of whom are Order of Canada recipients.

I am sure we can bring to mind many others without having to think too hard, as there have been successful and influential Italian Canadians in all aspects of Canadian life.

There have also been notable politicians. I think it is worth mentioning a few from the federal level.

In the 1950s, Mayor Hubert Badanai, of Fort William, was elected the first Italian federal member of Parliament for the Liberal Party. In 1981, Charles Caccia, initially elected as a Toronto MP for Davenport in 1968, was appointed the first Italian federal cabinet minister by none other than former Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau. They laid the foundation for many who came after, including my friend, the mayor of Vaughan, Maurizio Bevilacqua, former member of Parliament from 1988 to 2010 and my Italian Canadian colleagues currently serving in this House.

I want to share a bit of Italian Canadian history, as I am not sure there any many familiar with how far back Italian contributions to this country go.

Italian Canadians are among the earliest Europeans to have come and settled in the country. Over 500 years ago, Giovanni Caboto, John Cabot, an Italian navigator from Venice, explored and claimed the coast of Newfoundland for England.

In 1524, another Italian, Giovanni da Verrazzano, explored part of Atlantic Canada for France.

In the 1600s, Italians served in the military of New France and several hundred Italian soldiers served in the British army during the War of 1812, after which they settled in the Eastern Townships of Quebec and in southern Ontario.

Italian craftsmen, artists, musicians, and teachers came to this country throughout the 19th century. By 1881, almost 2,000 people of Italian origin lived in Canada, mostly in Toronto and Montreal.

In the late 19th century, millions of Italians emigrated and many came to Canada. They worked on our railways, in our mines, and in our industries. By 1901, there were almost 11,000 people of Italian origin living in Canada. Not all were successful, and some were misled and ended up unemployed and destitute in major cities, or working in labour and lumber camps in northern Ontario. Many were often exploited in the early days.

However, as more Italians settled and became successful, they sponsored more relatives and fellow villagers and created businesses and supported each other as they helped to grow our country.

Throughout the 1900s, those who settled in the cities worked as construction and factory workers, building tradesmen, food and fruit merchants, artisans, barbers, or cobblers.

Out of modest beginnings, some became highly successful, for example, Onorato Catelli of Montreal in the food processing industry. In the Niagara Peninsula and in the Okanagan Valley, Italians prospered with orchards, vineyards, vegetable farms. Many Italian farmers grew crops on the outskirts of cities for local consumption. Even now, they are still working the land and selling their products at roadside stands in my riding. Many families in my community tend backyard plots that they use to feed their families and friends fresh food all summer and fall.

By 1930, over 29,000 Italians had entered Canada. This movement of Italians to Canada virtually stopped with the Great Depression. It was a difficult time that got worse after 1935, when Italian Canadians were designated enemy aliens and were the victims of widespread prejudice and discrimination because Italy allied with Germany during the Second World War. Men lost their jobs, shops were vandalized, civil liberties were suspended, and hundreds were interned at Camp Petawawa in northern Ontario.

As a result, many Italians anglicized their names and denied their Italian background. It was a difficult time in Canada for Italians.

After the Second World War, Canada, with its booming economy, began to be receptive to Italian immigrants again.

In 1958, Italy surpassed Britain as a source of Canadian immigrants. In cities where Italians have settled, they tended to create ethnic neighbourhoods, “Little Italy” neighbourhoods, with their distinctive shops, restaurants, churches, and clubs. These areas have been a magnet for all Canadians looking to get a taste of Italy.

● (1335)

Through the years, these areas have been reduced in size as more Italian Canadians moved out to the suburbs. However, they still liked to live in areas that supported their Italian culture, so they brought them their shops and restaurants, showcasing the very best of their culture.

In 2006, 60% of Italian Canadians lived in Ontario, 21% in Quebec, 10% in British Columbia, and about 95% lived in towns and cities. The highest number of Italian Canadians live in Toronto, and approximately half that number now live in Montreal. We have significant numbers of Italian Canadians living in cities across the country, with a total now of almost 1.5 million who list Italian as their ethnic origin or part of their ethnic origin.

For Italians, family and religion are interrelated pillars of their cultural identity. Despite cross-cultural unions, the family and a close connection to the Italian culture are a source of strength and pride. Reflecting the importance of the family unit, and the home as its centre, Italian Canadians have the highest rate of home ownership in Canada.

Another source of pride is their commitment to Italian-Canadian community groups and the wide spectrum of activities that are undertaken to express their ethnocultural identity. I have also personally found them to be exceptionally generous when it comes to supporting those in need, and to improving programs and facilities needed to build stronger communities for all, for example, hospitals, seniors facilities, and many social support programs.

The Italian-Canadian press and media have also been strong promoters of social cohesion and have brought their Italian constituency and the wider society together. The first Italian newspaper was published in Montreal in the late 19th century and, by 1950, dozens of Italian newspapers and magazines proliferated across Canada. Today we have the *Corriere Canadese*, and several other community papers, that promote Italian culture and news. We also have OMNI TV, a multilingual TV station in Ontario that transmits in Italian and other languages daily. We have the Telelatino Network, which is a national cable system for Italian and Spanish programming. Currently, Italian and Chinese are the most wide-spread non-official languages in Canadian television and radio broadcasting.

I am incredibly proud of the contributions made by Italian Canadians in helping to build this great country, and I am honoured to have an opportunity to bring forward a motion to designate the month of June as national Italian heritage month. I am delighted to have the full support of the Liberal Italian caucus members, and to have many of them here with me today, scattered around, as we start the debate in this House.

I will be listening carefully to any concerns raised during the debate, and I hope we can work together to get unanimous support from this House for this important motion.

● (1340)

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): *Grazie signor Presidente*. I thank my colleague across the way for bringing this forward. We have a vibrant and hard-working, strong Italian community within the riding of Sarnia—Lambton. I am very supportive of celebrating their history within Canada, and the many great aspects of their culture, including the food.

My question for the member is this. What are the special ways she would like to see us recognize them when Italian heritage month becomes a reality?

Mrs. Deborah Schulte: Mr. Speaker, that is an excellent question, because we have been turning our mind to what would be appropriate. I think I would have to hold off a bit on exactly what that will be. We are working closely with some of the organizations that I mentioned earlier in my speech, to figure out what they would like to do to represent this special month. I will not jump the gun and presuppose what might be appropriate, but I am looking forward to the many suggestions that I believe will be coming forward.

Mr. Erin Weir (Regina—Lewvan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member across the way has asked for unanimous support. The NDP is certainly proud to support Italian heritage month, and it sounds like the Conservatives are as well. I am proud of the fact that the last annual meeting of the Regina—Lewvan NDP was held at the Italian club, a very popular and historic institution in Regina.

Saskatchewan's provincial motto is "From Many Peoples Strength". Therefore, I would like to ask the member across the way if she could elaborate on how Italian immigration has strengthened our country.

Mrs. Deborah Schulte: Mr. Speaker, I think in my speech I went through quite deeply the many things that Italian Canadians have been doing to strengthen the country. We can look to the simple things, the building side of things. However, we need to realize that the cultural things have been important too. Pizza is a national food item in Canada. I do not know anybody who has not had a slice of pizza, and we can thank the Italians for that. There are a lot of cultural things in our food, in our style, in the way we have our homes, and some of the new and modern ways that we live in our homes, that have come directly from Italian Canadians bringing their rich heritage to this country.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Vaughan—Woodbridge, Lib.):

[*Member spoke in Italian and provided the following translation:*]

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to stand today as an Italian Canadian and Chair of the Canada-Italy Interparliamentary Group, as well as the member of Parliament representing the constituency with the highest concentration of Canadians of Italian heritage.

I am very familiar with the invaluable role our community has played in building Canada as well as the impact we continue to make on Canadian society through our ingenuity, hard work, and cultural influences.

I would like to thank my colleague for her speech and ask the member for King—Vaughan if she could elaborate on the support she has received from the Liberal members of Parliament of Italian heritage and why it is so important that the contributions of Italian Canadians be officially recognized.

[*English*]

● (1345)

Mrs. Deborah Schulte: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for that excellent question in Italian. I hope one day I will be able to reply in Italian. At the moment, for the benefit of the rest of the people in the House, the general thrust of the question was to ask me about the support I received from my colleagues and how I worked with my colleagues to get to this point.

I thank him for his leadership on the Canada-Italy Friendship Group and also for the Italian Liberal caucus. He is very active and stays quite closely connected with the Italian community, with all of those working hard to promote Italian ideals and culture in the country.

I am honoured to have had the privilege of working with the Italian Liberal caucus as I moved forward on this. Before I actually put this on the floor, put it in journals, I made sure I would have their support. They have worked very closely with me to ensure I have done it the right way.

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in this place we tend to debate most often the subjects we tend to disagree on. However, one subject on which I believe we do have agreement is recognizing the unique contribution of Italian Canadians. When I mentioned to a constituent recently that I would be speaking in support of this, I received an enthusiastic response that included references to pizza, pasta, art, sculpture, and the things associated with being uniquely Italian.

The real purpose of my stating my support today is ultimately to recognize the people, those Italian Canadians who have truly enriched this great country. Let me explain what I mean by that. There was a time when a point of view on immigration was that new Canadians should abandon the culture that they originated from to adopt the Canadian way. In the case of many Italian Canadians, and to be clear I am not of Italian ancestry, Italian culture was not only embraced, it was shared. Indeed, in many communities across our great country, including in Ottawa, there is a Little Italy. I am certain I am not alone in expressing my fondness for visiting areas such as these. It is because of regions such as these that our communities have been enhanced and our knowledge has been expanded. Today we often call this multiculturalism. However, to many Italian Canadians I have met it is simply the friendly way to treat friends and neighbours, through sharing and enjoying all that life has to offer.

In Kelowna, as an example, the Kelowna Canadian Italian Club is celebrating 50 years in the community. That is a very exciting milestone. The club wants to share its achievement with the entire community. Some members might ask what Italian Canadian clubs do. Yes, they promote the Italian language and culture through food and music and wine. Really, where could you go wrong with that? Most important, they also give back to the community and participate in many community fundraisers. As an example, recently the Kelowna Canadian Italian Club raised over $13,000 to help earthquake victims, which is a very impressive feat considering the club just has around 130 member families.

I am not certain how many Italian Canadian clubs we have in Canada; nor do I know how many communities have their own Little Italy as an integral part of their community. What I do know is that all of us, Italian Canadian or not, have an understanding of the Italian culture, language, and a unique way of enjoying life, often through celebration; and not just celebration but hard work and innovation. As a former city councillor, when we upgraded a waste-water treatment plant, for many of the systems the advanced technology was designed in Italy; and much of the work, when it was brought over, was recognized as world leading. In speaking to many of the people who work for the municipality, they appreciated those innovations. Italians across the world, particularly those Italian Canadians who share that heritage, are very proud of the quality.

This extends to more than just a small area of public infrastructure. I know from Brutus Bodies trucks in Penticton, of which Nor-Mar Industries is the holding company, they use Italian cranes, which is one of the reasons why their products are in such demand. When a business deals with highly reputable companies that are innovative and that have such ties to Canada, it is much easier to sell that product.

In addition to the innovation, I just want to again loop back to the growing ties between Canada and Italy. My grandfather, who recently passed away—God bless him— served in North Africa and eventually in Italy. He told me, with the utmost respect that he had for the Italian people, about the difficulties many of them had during World War II. His love for the country only grew as the years went on.

● (1350)

The love and ties Italian Canadians have brought to this country have enriched our culture and our understanding and have grown our ties in trade.

It is my understanding that we will be discussing the comprehensive economic trade agreement between Canada and the European Union next week. I have spoken to the House about many of these innovative water systems. I have spoken about the cranes that Nor-Mar uses for its vehicles. All of these things will suddenly have tariff-free access. People will have greater access to Italians, and Italy will have greater access to Canadians with services and skills and shared understanding that will make both countries better.

While I am still on my feet and have the opportunity, I would like to thank the sponsoring member of the bill for his time and for the ability to share a bit of the enrichment I and many people in Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola have had because of the Italian Canadian community.

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today I am proud to stand in the House to speak in favour of Motion No. 64, for the creation of Italian heritage month.

Acknowledging the many contributions of Italian Canadians is key to recognizing the youthful mosaic that is our country. Setting aside time to reflect on why our diversity has made our country great is an important reminder that unless we are indigenous, then our family line is an immigrant one. It is an important reminder in this time that Canada needs newcomers to continue to build our country as our population grows and ages.

Multiculturalism is a fundamental Canadian value, and the NDP has a proud history of supporting multiculturalism and honouring our country's diversity. Across Canada there are many stories of the knowledge and expertise that Italian immigrants have contributed to Canadian society, a history comprised of Italian immigrants who established themselves in many communities across Canada.

In my riding of North Island—Powell River, an Italian immigrant by the name of Joseph Rodello built a hotel and store near Comox's wharf in the 1870s. Later on, he had a street named after him that now runs by St. Joseph's Hospital.

In fact, many Italian immigrants came to the Comox Valley in the 20th century to work principally in the coal mines. Often fleeing poverty from distant parts of the world, they came to our region looking for a better opportunity for their families. Their mark on the communities is still visible today.

In Campbell River for over 20 years, the Campbell River Italian Cultural Society has hosted an annual event at Miracle Beach Provincial Park, where hundreds gather to enjoy the outdoors, celebrate their culture, and savour home cooking. The sale of homemade sausages and spaghetti has raised more than $21,000 to support quality care for residents in Campbell River and the North Island.

In Powell River when the mill was just opening, many Italians came to settle in the community for work. Many settled particularly in the Wildwood area in which the Italian Cultural Centre is located still today. During the most vibrant years for the Italian community in Powell River, a great deal of food was produced in gardens and on small farms: fruits, vegetables, and some livestock. Food security is far less of an issue, with considerable local production and excellent growing conditions, a long season and excellent soils in that part of the community.

When we think of long-term impacts, many of those same orchards remain in Powell River though they are not often attended to and are no longer fully harvested. However, the hard work is still benefiting people today, as we are seeing an increase of people who are taking the fruit and providing it to various organizations that feed Powell River's growing number of homeless and hungry.

In my past work as the executive director of the Immigrant Welcome Centre in North Island, I remember hearing the story of one Italian immigrant whose family had settled in the west coast of Canada. Wanting to have their relatives join it, this man took a boat to Halifax. The reality is that many people when they were new to the country did not quite understand the size of the country. It was an interesting story that he shared with me about how fortunate he was that he brought his accordion with him. Once he arrived in Halifax, he realized he had to travel to the other side of a very vast country. Therefore, he used the accordion to make money to cross the country and be reunited with his family.

It is stories like this that have grown the wonderful diversity of our country. We see the richness that Italians have brought and how strong they have created that culture in Canada of community, family, and feeding one another.

Across Canada, there are 1.4 million Canadians of Italian descent. While the community is alive and thriving today, we must acknowledge that its history in Canada has not always been positive. Canada's allegiance in the Second World War led to many Italian Canadians being singled out as enemy aliens. What we now know is that the Italian community has thrived in Canada even though that dark time happened, while promoting and developing our multicultural fabric.

The numerous organizations that we contacted to discuss this motion were excited and pleased to lend their support. Of course, my province of B.C. declared the month of June as Italian heritage month several years ago.

● (1355)

I am very proud to support this motion, one that allows us the time to appreciate the people who came here to join our country. Their contributions have been significant, be it in the construction of urban infrastructure, the knowledge of arts and trades, or the manufacturing and textile industries, and many more. These men and women worked hard to build the country that we see today.

This motion would allow all Canadians to acknowledge and celebrate the rich cultural traditions we have gained from the Italian community. I look forward to lending my support.

Mr. Randy Boissonnault (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to seek consensus to split my time with my hon. colleague from Vaughan—Woodbridge.

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to speak to the House today in support of Motion No. 64 introduced by my colleague, the member for King—Vaughan.

[*Translation*]

Canada is a proud multicultural society that embraces the diversity of past and present communities and continues to support the origins, identities, and unique beliefs that are the basis for its strength and prosperity.

● (1400)

[*English*]

Italian Canadians have made lasting contributions to Canada's history and heritage, and continue to enrich our growing, diverse, and pluralistic society, including in my home riding of Edmonton Centre. The enduring vitality and richness of the Italian language, culture, and people in Canada are a powerful testament to what can be achieved through multiculturalism, a diverse, inclusive and strong society built upon the foundation of mutual respect.

Italian heritage month would provide an opportunity to celebrate this achievement.

[*Translation*]

The throne speech that opened the current parliamentary session underscored the fact that diversity is Canada's strength. The Prime Minister said that diversity is one of Canada's greatest strengths and a source of pride for all of us. Parliament's support for Italian heritage month would be in keeping with the reaffirmation of our commitment to multiculturalism.

[*English*]

Our government is pleased to support this motion. I am confident that the members of the House will vote in favour of the motion, and the Italian community will receive the recognition it has sought and deserves.

[*Member spoke in Italian*]

Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Vaughan—Woodbridge, Lib.):

[*Member spoke in Italian*]

[*English*]

Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker. It is with great pride that I rise today as the son of Italian immigrants to speak to this motion, which would declare June Italian heritage month.

The motion recognizes the contributions Italian Canadians have made to Canadian society, the richness of Italian culture and history in Canada, and the importance of educating and reflecting upon Italian heritage for future generations.

For many Italian immigrants, the Italian Canadian story is one of sacrifice and hard work, achievement and success, and ultimately, integration into this beautiful country. For Italian Canadians, there is a saying that Italy is my native country, but Canada is my home.

This year will mark 57 years that my family is in Canada. My grandparents, along with their seven children, left southern Italy and the province of Calabria with nothing but what they could carry. They sailed from Naples on board the vessel M.S. *Vulcania*, arriving at Pier 21 in Halifax. Much like many Italian immigrants, they left to find a better future. They settled on the west coast of Canada, where they worked in the construction industry, pulp mills, and fish canneries.

I think humbly of my parents and my aunts and uncles, who came to Canada with little knowledge of English and little or no formal education. What they did have was a sense of pride, a work ethic, and an unwavering commitment to providing a better future for their children.

I think of my father, who like many Italian immigrants, became a tradesman, a carpenter, a roofer, and a sheet metal worker. He taught me the values of integrity, a strong drive to succeed, and a commitment to family.

My mother worked tirelessly in a fish cannery. In the morning, everything would be ready for me and my two brothers, and after a long day at work, she would come home, cook, and make certain the house was spotless. My parents taught me not only the value of hard work but the value of a dollar saved. That was the kind of people they were.

I think of the contributions of the trailblazers who opened the door for many of us: Frank Iacobucci, the retired Supreme Court justice; Charles Caccia, the great environmentalist, social activist, and former MP for Davenport from 1968 to 2004; Pietro Rizzuto and Peter Bosa, both senators, appointed by Pierre Trudeau; Johnny Lombardi and Gaetano Gagliano, whose legacies in the media business continue today.

I think of the success of the Canadian Italian business community that stretches across the country, names such as Bratty, Bosa, De Gasperis, Sorbara, Cortellucci, DeZen, Aquilini, Muzzo, Baldassarre, Saputo, and many more.

I think of the richness and vitality of Italian communites like Commercial Drive in Vancouver, College Street and St. Clair in Toronto, and St. Leonard in Montreal.

I am privileged to represent Vaughan—Woodbridge, which has the largest concentration of Italian Canadians in Canada. My greatest enjoyment as MP is visiting the seniors groups, where many recount their stories of arrival in Canada, the hardships they faced, including discrimination and bigotry, and how much they sacrificed for their children. They are all proud of being Canadian and are thankful for the opportunity for a better future that this country gave them.

I would like to read a quote from the commemorative plaque on the Italian fallen workers memorial in Ontario.

> During the Great Diaspora of Italian emigration between 1870 and 1970, thousands of Italians left their homeland in search of a better life for their families. Many of them found their way to Ontario, where they toiled in all of the harshest industries of the last century...
>
> digging the sewer systems of many Ontario cities;
>
> creating the structures for the new hydroelectricity plants;
>
> building the massive bridges and tunnels of our transportation infrastructure;
>
> mining for ores in Ontario's north; and
>
> erecting residential and commercial buildings

It was in a blossoming construction industry, which ultimately built up this beautiful province.

● (1405)

I feel honoured being here today and being part of this incredible group of people who call Canada home. We are so proud of being Canadian, as this beautiful, diverse, and tolerant country has given so much to us.

I thank all the parties in the House for supporting this very important motion. It makes us all proud Italian Canadians today.

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): *Buongiorno, signor Presidente.*

It is a pleasure to rise in the House to discuss Motion No. 64, Italian heritage month.

Italian Canadians have contributed immensely to Canadian society, and that is something that our party has always acknowledged. By recognizing the month of June as Italian heritage month, we are acknowledging the importance of educating and reflecting upon Italian heritage for future generations, because Italian history is also Canadian history.

Many people do not realize that the second European to discover North America is generally agreed to be an Italian explorer by the name Giovanni Caboto, or as many kids learn, John Cabot. We now believe his first landing was in Nova Scotia, and so we could argue that the first European to set food in Canada was an Italian.

Many people do not know that Canada boasts the sixth-largest Italian population outside of Italy, which is 1.3 million Canadians. We cannot talk about Canadian culture and heritage without talking about the richness and warmth of Italian culture and heritage.

I would like to take this opportunity to talk about the Italian community in my riding of Oshawa.

Earlier this month, I had the pleasure of celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Oshawa Italian Recreation Club. I would like to take a moment to share a little bit about who the members are and what they do, because they are such an important part of my community.

Today, the president, Tony Rizzuto, oversees a vibrant organization. As a matter of fact, I start off many of my mornings with a friendly cappuccino, usually made by Michelle, who since last week has been on maternity leave so Gianni has taken over now. I will drop by for lunch, and they have even named a sandwich after me. They call it “The Colin”. They are always welcoming at social events.

We have a vibrant bocce club, and Nick and Frances take charge of that with all of their members. They actually took a park in Oshawa, Radio Park, which is by the Oshawa Centre, and beautified it. I do not know if members have ever played bocce, but if they have the opportunity, they should come by, because our bocce club is so vibrant and friendly.

At our annual barbeques, for example, Nick, Frances, and all their members come out and share their hospitality. They also share their homemade soppressata, which is always a great hit. I really enjoy it.

However, it was not always like this. We had to start somewhere and they had to start somewhere.

In 1954, a group of newly arrived young Italians created the Oshawa inter-football league. It was an amateur soccer team to remind them of Italy. The team was extremely successful, and the enthusiasm from their accomplishment was the beginning of the Oshawa Italian Recreation Club, which promoted not only sports activities, but social and cultural events as well.

The club is a part of my community today, and it is one of the reasons why I feel that Italian Canadians deserve this recognition we are talking about today. Their warmth and hospitality makes everyone feel welcome.

The Oshawa Italian Recreation Club is the product of two Italian clubs: the Oshawa Italia Club and the Italian Social and Recreation Club of Oshawa. They came together in times of need and ultimately decided to amalgamate, and I will elaborate a little bit.

In 1966, the city of Florence was devastated by a flood that destroyed numerous historical buildings and works of art. In order to help, the two clubs came together and started a fundraising campaign, which raised tens of thousands of dollars for Florence. Unfortunately, a year later, a massive earthquake hit Sicily, leaving thousands homeless and hundreds dead. The two clubs again came together and set up a joint fundraiser committee where Colonel Sam McLaughlin, the founder of General Motors Canada, was the honorary chairman. The success of these two fundraising campaigns and the fact that these two clubs clearly worked together well was a great reason for them to join together into one, and they were named the Oshawa Italian Recreation Club, or OIRC.

This club began as a way for Italian immigrants to feel more at home by doing such things as opening a social agency to help Italian immigrants better integrate into Canadian society, helping with Italian passports, pensions, etc. However, its sole objective was not to only help Italian immigrants. The club has also organized many successful activities and fundraisers throughout our community, such as for the Oshawa General Hospital. It established an after-school program for elementary school-aged kids, and sponsors local minor hockey and soccer teams. It continues to fundraise and donate to local, national, and international charities.

What I am trying to get to is that Italian Canadians have made a tremendous contribution to Canadian society through local communities and internationally. OIRC was established as a meeting place for Italian immigrants. It was a place where they could feel at home. I have to say that, today, they make everyone who walks through their doors feel at home. The Italian community is so well integrated and well established in Oshawa and the club continues to promote Italian culture and recreational activities.

● (1410)

Every year, in June, Oshawa celebrates a great festival called Fiesta Week. It is one of the oldest multicultural festivals in Canada. Every single year, our Italian community opens up its doors to share its culture through dance, dining, and very good cheer. Everyone is welcome.

If members come to my community and it is not during Fiesta Week, they do not need to worry about it. Within walking distance from my office, they can drop into one of our many fine Italian restaurants, two of them owned by the Fazio family, called Fazio's and Tutto's. They will see Tino, Nicholas, Rosaleen, and Martin. They always welcome people with their great hospitality. They work hard and they contribute to our community. Around the corner, Avanti's is run by the Albis family. Tony, Ida, Domenic will always make their customers feel at home, and they serve a great meal as well. Their wood-burning oven makes awesome pizza within a couple of minutes, and I would recommend it to anyone. We have a great Italian community in Oshawa.

This is one of the reasons we support the motion, which suggests that the government recognize the contributions that Italians have made to Canada by sharing their culture and language through education programs and community clubs, such as the Oshawa Italian Recreation Club.

I would like to take a moment to make a brief aside. On my 10th wedding anniversary, I had to think of something really special. Any woman who could spend 10 years with me deserves something special. I thought of one of the greatest surprises that I could do. She loves cooking, and I wondered where I could take her to allow us to enjoy a week together away from the kids. There is a famous Canadian cooking school in Tuscany. A gentleman named Umberto Menghi has great restaurants throughout the Vancouver area. He also has a culinary retreat in Tuscany. I kept everything secret. I packed her bags, and I picked her up on time, and we took off for our 10th wedding anniversary. It was one of the best holidays we ever had. We would wake up every morning to a lovely breakfast. We would then go to the cooking class. These guys did the impossible. They did something they thought could not be done. They taught me to cook. I learned how a bit of *sale e pepe* makes a difference. Everything we cooked up was *bene, molto bene*.

An hon. member: So there is still hope for you.

Mr. Colin Carrie: There is still hope for anyone in the House, Mr. Speaker. If anyone has the opportunity, this is a good Canadian restaurateur to go to.

It also gave me the opportunity to tour around Italy and see some of the works of art, some of the culture, and enjoy a lot of the food.

In closing, I will support this wonderful motion. It is a great opportunity to celebrate everything Italian, everything Italian Canadian. It was an Italian who got me interested in politics, Senator Consiglio Di Nino, one of the leaders in the Italian community, one of the greatest guys out there. I believe Con came from Calabria as well, or he has friends in that area. He has committed his life to making Canada a better place.

We will support this motion. *Grazie*.

● (1415)

Mr. Mike Bossio (Hastings—Lennox and Addington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is such an honour to speak to this great motion that my colleague from King—Vaughan has put forward. I could not be prouder of the fact that she has done this. It is so well deserved and long overdue that we make the month of June national Italian heritage month.

Italians have a rich heritage in Canada, going right back to the original European arrivals with Giovanni Caboto who arrived in Newfoundland in 1497 and claimed it for England. Then Giovanni da Verrazzano also came to Canada and explored Atlantic Canada for the French. Therefore, we have a rich history of exploration within Canada and of helping to open up the frontiers to settle our great country.

They served in senior positions for New France and for the Jesuits all through the colony at that time. They made our country great. We even had an Italian contingent that fought for the British in the War of 1812. There is some great history that I gleaned from *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, which I remember reading as a kid. I am so proud of my heritage which comes from my father.

There were two waves of Italians who came to Canada. The first wave was from 1900 to the First World War when about 120,000 Italians came to our country. They held a very broad range of different positions, from craftsmen to artists to musicians to teachers, etc.

The second wave came between 1950 and 1970 when about 500,000 Italians came to our great country. This has led now to the census in 2006 declaring there are 1.4 million Canadians of Italian descent who are now part of the great mosaic of Canada.

Seventy-five per cent of those Italians came from southern Italy, where my father is originally from. He is from Calabria, from a very small rural village on the side of a cliff in Calabria.

Could I please get consent, Mr. Speaker, to share my time with the member for Steveston—Richmond East?

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Mike Bossio: I would like to tell the story about my father coming to Canada in 1953. He still shares this story today with anyone who will listen.

It was in 1953, after the Second World War. It was a very desperate situation where food, fuel, and clothing were very scarce and the future looked very bleak for so many Italians at that time. CP Rail came to the small town of Savuto di Cleto.

My father and family came over in 1953. In Italy my father was wearing a t-shirt and shorts. In southern Italy there is no snow, no cold weather. They arrived in Montreal in January. They got on a train and he all he saw was snow, ice, and bush, until they arrived in this tiny little town in northern Ontario called Hornepayne. He said that when they heard about Canada, they were told it was cold but not that cold. He wondered how cold could it really could. He said that he thought they were going to heaven in Canada, but when they arrived in Hornepayne, he thought he had gone to frozen purgatory.

However, they were tough, resilient and they pushed forward and survived. They are very prosperous today. I am so proud to be the progeny and to stand in the House today to represent my Italian heritage.

● (1420)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Joe Peschisolido (Steveston—Richmond East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very proud to be here this afternoon to support the motion of my colleague from King—Vaughan.

My name is Giuseppe Edoardo Peschisolido. I am the son of Margherita and Loreto Peschisolido. My grandmother is Domenica Peschisolido, and my grandfather is Giovanni Peschisolido.

[*Member spoke in Italian*]

[*Translation*]

I also speak a little French.

[*English*]

This motion deals with culture, music, and the wonderful contributions of Italians throughout civilization and Italians here in Canada. As my colleague from Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola mentioned, this is about more than language, culture, philosophy, or architecture. It is about people. It is about the many people of Italian background who came to Canada to build a new life for themselves, but more importantly, for their children and grandchildren.

My colleague from Vaughan—Woodbridge eloquently discussed the pioneers, the famous folk who blazed a trail for the Italian community.

As a young boy, with a good friend of mine, Pino Correale, who was like my *fratello*, we would go to the Columbus Centre, which Senator Consiglio Di Nino and Sam Ciccolini worked so hard to build.

My colleague from King—Vaughan talked about *Corriere Canadese* and former members of Parliament. Joe Volpe stepped back in to become the publisher and owner of *Corriere Canadese* so that there would be a thriving Italian voice in Toronto. The motto of *Corriere Canadese* was to be proud of one's Italian heritage but to be fiercely Canadian.

I believe that is what we are celebrating today. We are celebrating the integration of millions of Canadians of Italian background who came with nothing.

My colleague from Hastings—Lennox and Addington, his family came in the second wave of immigration, as did mine. My mom and dad and my grandparents came from nothing, from a little town called Ceprano, which is between Naples and Rome. That is significant, because it was a supply line during the Second World War. My father's, my mother's, and my grandparents' education and livelihood for eight or nine years was making sure they did not get killed during the war. They and a whole lot of other folks came over with nothing.

My parents and grandparents stopped off in Halifax. Just like my colleague from Hastings—Lennox and Addington's family, they also thought they had come to the wrong place, perhaps a purgatory and not a heaven. They then moved on to Toronto, where my mom started to go to school. She was 14, my mother, Marguerite, Mina, and she hung out with six- and eight-year-olds. Guess what? She did not stay in school long. She went out and worked.

That is what a lot of immigrants did. They went out and worked. My father is my hero, Lorato. When I would go to him with a report card, I was proud. I had 88, and his response was, "What happened to the other 12?"

That is the strength of the community: the importance of education, the importance of family, of faith, of social justice. I am proud to stand in the House this afternoon to support the motion of my colleague from King—Vaughan and I encourage all members to support the motion as well.

● (1425)

The Deputy Speaker: There remains about one and a half minutes in the time provided for private members' business, but the member for Laurentides—Labelle will have the remaining time when the House next resumes debate on the question.

Mr. David de Burgh Graham (Laurentides—Labelle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am certainly looking forward to that moment, thank you.

As members of the House know, I am of a Jewish heritage and I think that Jews and Italians have a good deal in common, so it gives me great pleasure to stand here and talk about food culture. Anyone who has been around either culture will know that everything we do has to do with food. I used to say as a joke that I am in politics for the food because every campaign has a lot of interesting meals.

It gives me great pleasure to support the motion and I do not see a lot of opposition to it. I think it is really wonderful that the member for King—Vaughan has brought forward this piece of legislation for Italian heritage month. I am looking forward to passing the motion when it comes back for debate in a few weeks and celebrating the various heritages that we have.

We had had a number of bills that have come forward before discussing specific heritage months and it is really important to us to do that.

I am thankful for the chance to talk about this and I know my time is at an end.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Laurentides—Labelle will have eight and a half minutes remaining in his time when the House next resumes debate on the question.

[*Translation*]

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

[*English*]

It being 2:35 p.m. this House stands adjourned until Monday, at 11 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 2:27 p.m.)

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