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(HANSARD)

Thursday, February 16, 2017

—

Speaker: The Honourable Geoff Regan

CONTENTS

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

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, February 16, 2017

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1005)

[*Translation*]

PUBLIC SECTOR INTEGRITY COMMISSIONER

The Speaker: I have the honour, pursuant to Section 38 of the Public Servants Disclosure Protection Act, to lay upon the table the special report of the Public Sector Integrity Commissioner concerning an investigation into a disclosure of wrongdoing. This report is deemed permanently referred to the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates.

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COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Orders 104 and 114, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 22nd report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs regarding the membership of committees of the House. If the House gives its consent, I intend to move concurrence in the 22nd report later this day.

JUSTICE AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Anthony Housefather (Mount Royal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 8th report of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights in relation to Bill C-247, an act to amend the Criminal Code (passive detection device). The committee studied the bill and recommends not to proceed further with its study.

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.) Mr. Speaker, if the House gives its consent, I move:

That the 22nd Report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, presented earlier today, be concurred in.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

[*English*]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

Mr. Gordon Brown (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if you seek it, I believe you will find consent for the following motion.

I move:

That, at the conclusion of today's debate on the opposition motion in the name of the member for Cypress Hills - Grasslands, all questions necessary to dispose of the motion be deemed put and a recorded division deemed requested and deferred until Tuesday, February 21, 2017, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

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PETITIONS

ABORTION

Mr. Dave MacKenzie (Oxford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition signed by a number of people in southwestern Ontario who request that the House of Commons enact legislation that restricts abortion to the greatest extent possible.

ORGAN DONATION

Mr. Len Webber (Calgary Confederation, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present another petition in support of my private member's bill, Bill C-316, which was submitted by Heidi Smethurst of Calgary. The petitioners are calling upon the House to improve the organ donation system in Canada by making the process to register as an organ donor easier. This would be achieved by adding a simple question to our annual income tax returns. Currently, 90% of Canadians support organ donations, but only 25% are registered. We know that making the registration process easier will save more lives.

*Business of Supply***QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER**

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

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—SYSTEMIC RACISM AND RELIGIOUS
DISCRIMINATION

Mr. David Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC) moved:

That the House: (a) recognize that Canadian society is not immune to the climate of hate and fear exemplified by the recent and senseless violent acts at a Quebec City mosque; (b) condemn all forms of systemic racism, religious intolerance, and discrimination of Muslims, Jews, Christians, Sikhs, Hindus, and other religious communities; and (c) instruct the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage to undertake a study on how the government could (i) develop a whole-of-government approach to reducing or eliminating all types of discrimination in Canada, while ensuring a community-centered focus with a holistic response through evidence-based policy-making, (ii) collect data to contextualize hate crime reports and to conduct needs assessments for impacted communities; and that the Committee report its findings and recommendations to the House no later than 240 calendar days from the adoption of this motion, provided that in its report, the Committee should make recommendations that the government may use to better reflect the enshrined rights and freedoms in the Constitution Acts, including the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Louis-Saint-Laurent.

What a great day. I have involvement in two portfolios, agriculture and human rights. Today, of course, is Canada's Agriculture Day. We are going to talk about that a little later. It is great that we can celebrate the contribution agriculture makes to our country.

For the rest of today, we get to talk about the issue of religious freedom in Canada. This is exciting. We had a good debate last night, and we will discuss some of the issues all day today. We do not often get a full day to deal with some of these issues.

I will talk today about the opposition day motion. I did not think, when I came here this morning, that there was anything we would disagree on in terms of this motion. I had expected that this would be one of those rare days in Parliament when all parties could agree on the substance of the motion, and then we could move the issue forward together.

Today is an opportunity to talk about the challenges we face and the proposed solutions to these very real issues. I hope that all of my colleagues in the House can get on the same page and deal with these issues seriously.

The motion begins exactly where we should start, by recognizing that although we hear most often of atrocities in other countries and regions, we are not immune to extremism in Canada. Every person

here in the House was appalled by the recent and senseless violent act at a Quebec City mosque, and that is noted in the motion.

We have already, and we do again today, expressed our sympathy to the victims of the horrific Quebec City shooting. No one in this House can express anything but our deepest condolences and our revulsion at what happened there. People were attacked while they were praying. Over a dozen people were shot, and several were killed. Therefore, our motion begins where it must, which is by recognizing them.

Our motion moves on to condemn all forms of systemic racism, religious intolerance, and discrimination against Muslims, Jews, Christians, Sikhs, Hindus, and other religious communities. What stands out here is the inclusiveness of this motion. Although it lists the half-dozen largest faith groups in Canada, it obviously includes all religious communities in Canada. There is no sense in excluding any of them. We know that this is important, because some of the smallest communities, such as the Baha'i, have faced some of the most severe persecution around the world. Therefore, we want to recognize all religious communities.

Every faith group has a story of being at odds with the culture around them. These stories often involve periods of persecution and discrimination. I have been able to host five annual parliamentary forums on the Hill dealing with the issue of religious freedom in the last five years. The first one looked at this very subject. We invited six or seven of the faith communities to tell us about their perspective and their history as it relates to persecution and religious freedom. These histories were fascinating. As we move ahead with this motion, perhaps we could make that part of our request to the committee. I will talk about our request to the committee a little later. I really think we need to take time, if this is going to be referred to a committee, to hear those stories to understand the depth of people's commitment to their faith.

Every member here obviously condemns all forms of systemic racism, religious intolerance, and discrimination against all religious communities. The motion moves on to call on the heritage committee to take a good, solid look at religious discrimination in Canada. We want to give faith communities a chance to come and tell their stories, to give their version of where they feel they are being pressured and where they have been pushed aside.

Last night, both the NDP and the Liberals in the House talked about the importance of such a committee. We wanted to bring this motion forward to provide the opportunity for that. I hope I can be part of that committee when it is struck, because in these hearings, there are all kinds of things we can look at. There are many questions in Canada we need to address.

The issue of religious freedom is becoming increasingly important, not only in other parts of the world but in our country as well. I think it is fair to look at faith in Canada and at the role of faith in our country. It is also fair to look at the role non-belief plays in our country, because we have people who see things very differently in our country.

Business of Supply

What is faith? What role does it play, and what role should it play in the future of our country? How do we balance the freedom of belief or non-belief with freedom of speech, which is part of the discussion we are having? There are always issues around freedom of speech and whether people can say the things they want to say, while running the risk that others will be offended by the comments being made.

• (1010)

What is the role of religious symbolism in our country? What freedom do private institutions have in expressing our core values? That would be an important issue for the committee to look at. Do we look at the judiciary and its role in the establishment and protection of religious freedom in this country?

We had a presentation at one of our forums about the role that the courts have played in rulings on religious affairs. It was clear that there has been no consistency in those rulings, that no thread runs through them so Canadians can say this is how the courts see the issue of religious freedom and religious discrimination in Canada. There is always the question of whether we can examine the role of judicial organizations. What role will they play in the future as well?

Perhaps we could look at the role that educational institutions play in limiting freedom of speech or in advancing it on faith issues. There is a lot of concern. We hear almost monthly about the role that secondary institutions are playing on free speech issues. The committee might also like to look at this.

There is another thing that we probably need to talk about. Are we going to talk about some of the religious beliefs of other countries that are brought in to our country as people come here? We had a panel about a week ago on the Ahmadis in Pakistan and the pressure that they face as a result of their government bringing in legislation that has changed their position in their society and restricted their ability to function as full citizens. We have had debates in the House about the Yazidis. We will have Yazidis coming here soon as well. There are large issues with the Rohingya community in Islam, and we have a Rohingya community in this country as well. What role do we have in speaking to these people about their faith and the role that it plays in their lives?

I see this as a really exciting opportunity and an exciting challenge. This could be some of the most significant work that a committee has done on Parliament Hill in a number of years. As I pointed out last night, we really need to start to get some of these issues resolved before division becomes the order of the day. It is time for Parliament to step forward and look at the issues, look at some of the hostility that is being exhibited in this country toward religious belief and find some ways to deal with it.

After listening, the committee is being asked to do two things. One of them is to come up with an evidence-based, community-centred approach to deal with religious discrimination. This will be a huge job. The challenge is obvious but it can be done. That report would be groundbreaking if the committee takes its work seriously. The second instruction to the committee would be to come up with a way to track hate crimes for all religiously motivated crime.

Obviously things are not perfect in this country, but our Conservative government worked to make sure that issues of faith

were a priority for Canadians. We always kept in mind the three principles of religious freedom, as follows: that for people to be truly free they must be free to be able to believe or reject belief as they choose, they must have the opportunity to change that belief if they want to, and they must have the freedom to practise their beliefs.

Our government highlighted those issues. We made them a priority. In 2011, we formalized that commitment with a promise to establish the office of religious freedom. It had a small budget, a small number of people, and it played an extremely significant role around the world on these issues.

There is a place for this to be discussed in our country. We need to respect the right of people not to believe as well, because this is another important factor in these conversations.

I have the opportunity to be involved with a multi-faith group of legislators who are pursuing the issue of religious freedom. We talk about how these things are taking place and how they are impacting our country. We are trying to approach these issues in a positive way.

My office is in the process of setting up a sixth parliamentary forum on religious freedom for sometime in April. We welcome all members to come out to that. In the past it has been supported by members of various parties. It is one more place where we can meet to discuss issues of domestic and international religious freedom.

There is lots to do. It is an exciting time. The motion has fired me up on these issues. I look forward to working with my colleagues in the House on this. I look forward to a positive, inclusive, and mature debate today on the issue of religious freedom in Canada.

• (1015)

Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage (Multiculturalism), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Cypress Hills—Grasslands for commencing this debate today. It is an important one.

As he knows very well, as he participated in the debate yesterday on Motion No. 103, the only significant and salient difference between the motion of the member for Mississauga—Erin Mills and today's motion is the term "Islamophobia". We on this side of the House believe it is fundamentally important to name Islamophobia for what it is.

I want to read something to the member and ask him a question.

Some have suggested Motion 103 signals out Canadian Muslims for special treatment. This is not true. The House of Commons has long had a tradition of passing motions denouncing discrimination and hatred against particular groups, especially religious minorities. For example, in recent years the House of Commons has adopted similar motions regarding Jews (February 22, 2015), Yazidis (October 25, 2016) and Egyptian Coptic Christians (October 17, 2011).

That is a statement from the member for Wellington—Halton Hills. I want to ask my friend opposite about those comments, whether he agrees with the statement by the member for Wellington—Halton Hills, and why Islamophobia is not contained in today's motion.

• (1020)

Mr. David Anderson: Mr. Speaker, I know the member was here last night when we were having the debate on their motion last night. What we heard that last night was the issue was that the definition was not provided with that word.

Business of Supply

I guess he could go back and take a look at the blues from last night and certainly get a broader perspective on that, but the member who brought the motion forward said, a couple of days ago on a panel, that it is up to the committee to define Islamophobia. We said that is not good enough, that she brought a motion forward, expects the House to support it, and she could at least define the terms she is using in her motion.

We believe this motion is much more inclusive. Just by reading it, we can see that. I would actually encourage the Liberal members across the way to support this. We know they are getting that word from their constituents. We know there is pressure being put on them to support a motion that is as inclusive as this one.

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to encourage everyone here, in addition to the many proposals being made for us to navel gaze inside various committees, to we reach out to religious communities in our constituencies and help them come together and discuss these matters. That is going on in my riding, and I am very proud of the religious beliefs to do this together.

I wonder if the member could address a couple of questions I have. Can I presume that the call is also to consider supporting our call for additional action to protect Canadians who are being turned away at our southern border because of either their race or their religion? Does he also think this is maybe a matter for other committees, including justice and human rights, since he wants a review of hate crime reports?

Mr. David Anderson: Mr. Speaker, today's motion focuses on religious discrimination and religious intolerance. If the member would like to bring forward a motion on some of these other issues, I am sure we would be more than happy to discuss that in the House.

I am proud of our party. We have always been the party of human rights. We have always believed in that. It goes back as far as John Diefenbaker and the bill of rights. He defined the freedom of religion, freedom of speech, and freedom of expression that are still so important to us today. We have a long history of interest in these issues and protecting them. Today will be one more step in that.

Mr. Anthony Housefather (Mount Royal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for his motion, and the careful consideration he gave in drafting the motion. I appreciate the inclusivity of the motion. I think the real issue for many members on this side of the House is the lack of the word "Islamophobia" that is present in Motion No. 103.

I believe Islamophobia should be defined. I wonder if the hon. member would be willing to add at the end of the first sentence "...senseless violent acts at a Quebec City mosque, which speaks to an irrational hatred or fear of Muslims, known as Islamophobia"?

There, I have defined it. I have put it in context. I have said it is an irrational hatred and fear of Muslims. I have said nothing else to further define it or do anything to take away freedom of speech. I wonder if the member would consider working with me this morning to find an amendment that would make everyone in the House willing to support the motion so we could have unanimous agreement.

Mr. David Anderson: Mr. Speaker, I hope the member opposite is not being mischievous, because it is my understanding that the

Liberals have already come out and said they are going to oppose this motion. They are going to conflict their own members by doing that, and that is actually an issue they are going to have to deal with over there. We are of one mind on this side.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is always a privilege and an honour to rise in the House to talk about an issue. However, after 16 months of having the privilege of representing the people of Louis-Saint-Laurent here in the House, rarely have I felt so passionately about something as I do this morning.

The motion before us today is a positive, unifying motion that is based on the same principles that form the very foundation of our country, namely, freedom of religion, freedom of speech, and an unequivocal condemnation of racism, discrimination, and intolerance. It also calls on our fellow parliamentarians to ensure we work together to come up with solutions to fiercely fight against all disrespectful acts committed against individuals who practise the faith of their choosing. That is why we strongly support this motion. We find it surprising that anyone could be indifferent or opposed to the wording of this motion. Let us take the time to give it the due diligence it deserves.

First, we mention the tragic events that happened at a Quebec City mosque two and a half weeks ago. We were all shaken by this tragedy, but I am from Louis-Saint-Laurent, so it hit closer to home for me. I live about 15 kilometres from the mosque in question. It is hard to imagine that something like this could happen in Quebec City, or anywhere in Canada, but it did. Let us leave it to the courts to handle this, but so far it looks like the suspect was not motivated by the ideology of any political party whatsoever in this country, contrary to what some fools have said. It is important to point that out.

We are all moved by what happened in Quebec City. Innocent people practising their faith were gathered together at a place of worship to pray, when they were savagely killed by a murderer. That is what is driving us to move this motion.

Then, there is the next phrase, "That the House...condemn all forms of systemic racism, religious intolerance, and discrimination". Who could be against that? Vigorously condemning racism, intolerance, and any act of discrimination is the very essence of this country and of every man and woman who lives by democratic principles. How can anyone in the House be against that?

These are some of the most horrendous crimes that can be committed against Muslims, Jews, Christians, Sikhs, Hindus, and other religious communities, and we condemn those acts. Terrorism has no borders. Unbridled terrorism has no language, law, gender, religion, or faith. Terrorism is the worst side of society. It is an attack on all people and all religions.

No one religion is better than another. Every religion is equal. Unfortunately, yes, there are despicable people who deserve to be severely condemned. That is why our motion talks about condemning "all forms of systemic racism, religious intolerance, and discrimination of Muslims, Jews, Christians, Sikhs, Hindus, and other religious communities". I am quoting the motion here because it is important, and words have meaning.

Business of Supply

The motion then calls upon the House to instruct a parliamentary committee to find a way to eliminate all types of discrimination in Canada and to better reflect the enshrined rights and freedoms in the Constitution Acts, because that is key.

The wording of a motion is very important, and in this case it is based on respect for the individual, freedom of speech, freedom of religion, proper religious observance, the unequivocal condemnation of the worst side of society, and efforts to find meaningful solutions so that we can live in a country that is more tolerant and more open to everyone.

The motion, as it now stands, is beyond reproach. It is unfortunate to see that some people are trying to claim that it has inappropriate partisan motives. It is exactly the opposite. This motion seeks to bring everyone together. It tells everyone that we believe in all religions, that we respect all religions, and that we are going to protect Canadians' right to practise their faith as they see fit. No one faith is better than another. Every religion has something to offer those who believe and are driven by that belief system. That is a good thing.

Like most of the people in my riding and most French Canadians, I am Roman Catholic. Why? It is because my parents, my great-grandparents, and probably my great-great-grandparents were.

● (1025)

When Father Léger Robitaille, the Sainte-Marie-Médiatrice parish priest, baptized me in 1964, I was not asked if I wanted to be baptized, but I am very pleased that I was. However, I could have been born into another faith. No one religion is better than another. Woe to those who attack others because of their religion.

Working really hard to protect laws, to protect religious faith, and to give people fundamental freedoms is nothing new for us. The first initiative was introduced in 1960. It was a Conservative prime minister, the Right Honourable John George Diefenbaker, who brought in the Bill of Rights. It was a step in the right direction for Canada. I am glad that it was a Conservative prime minister, but that is not really important; what is important is that it was a Canadian prime minister who took this step. This bill of rights says that freedom of religion, freedom of speech, and freedom of association are fundamental freedoms. That is what Canada is about and that is what our motion says.

Many years later, on April 24, 2013, the House of Commons gave its unanimous consent to a motion. That motion was about how Canada's commitment "to the creation of an Office of Religious Freedom should be used to help protect religious minorities and promote the pluralism that is essential to the development of free and democratic societies".

Way back in 2013, not just the Conservative government but the entire House of Commons unanimously called for the creation of the office, which was in fact set up in 2013, February 10, 2013, to be exact.

What was the office's purpose? It had a three-part mandate: first, to advocate on behalf of communities under threat and to build our capacity to monitor and promote religious freedom. A key objective of Canada's foreign policy is to promote freedom of religion and the freedom to practice religion around the world as one of Canada's

fundamental values, which it is. Lastly, the office was supposed to implement effective programs to establish partnerships with international organizations.

The purpose of the office was to promote absolute freedom of expression and absolute freedom of religion, to promote what makes Canada the great, beautiful country that we all love and appreciate, that is recognized around the world, because we respect each and every person and we protect them through this measure.

It is also worth noting that the office had an external advisory committee made up of representatives from various communities, including atheists, Muslims, Sikhs, Jews, and Hindus. That committee was created specifically to help ensure that everyone can live and worship as they please, to promote that.

Furthermore, in what is perhaps an even more telling move, the creation of the office was not announced at a hotel, in a press room, or here, in the nation's auditorium during a press conference. No, it was announced in a mosque, because we are all aware that, in today's world, we cannot rule out the possibility of someone attacking a mosque, which is sadly what happened recently right here in Canada, in my home province of Quebec. The Conservative government wanted to send a very clear message. It promoted religious freedom, freedom of opinion, and freedom of expression in a mosque. The message was clear.

Now the current government, unfortunately driven by the worst partisan political instincts, decided the office had to be bad since it had been created by the Conservatives, so it retooled it and give it a new mission. Fundamentally, this issue should unite all Canadians; it should not be a partisan issue. There are plenty of files in which we can let each other have it. We can play politics on all kinds of other topics, but on this particular topic, we should be appealing to the most serious, noble values of Canadians, namely, freedom of expression and freedom of religion, and that is exactly what this motion is promoting.

● (1030)

[*English*]

Mr. Omar Alghabra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs (Consular Affairs), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his contribution today, and I want to take this moment, probably one of the rarest moments that I will get to ask him a question.

It is regrettable that only two weeks after the mosque attack the Conservatives are doing everything they can to avoid the word "Islamophobia".

I know the hon. member condemned the mosque attack, but has he had some time to reflect? He is a prolific guest on radio talk shows in Quebec. Has he reflected on the words that he has been using over the last few years? Has he accepted some responsibility for the type of rhetoric that has been going on there?

● (1035)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is walking on very thin ice.

Business of Supply

I would like to bring to his attention a fact about the suspect. So far there is no evidence of any ties to the radio shows the hon. member is referring to, or any ties to any political party in Quebec, or any ties to any federal political party whatsoever.

This is a loaded question, so I will choose my words carefully.

My colleague seems to follow closely what I say on the radio. True, I have been known to appear on the odd radio show. Generally, when the phone rings, I answer it. I would like to share with him something that I said in January, when his Prime Minister took three days to react to the tragedy in Berlin. I was asked if I thought that the Prime Minister of Canada had taken three days to react because the victims were Christian and the attack was carried out by ISIL.

Do you know what I said? I said that the primary victims of ISIL were Muslims, people practising their own faith and for whom I have a great deal of respect. Among ISIL's victims are good Muslims, people who believe in freedom of expression and freedom of religion.

Mr. Robert-Falcon Ouellette (Winnipeg Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, why is a distinction being made? The motion also refers to other religious communities.

People are often dismissive of or know absolutely nothing about the religious traditions of indigenous peoples, particularly those of the Neheyo, which is part of the Cree nation.

Personally, I take part in a ceremony that lasts four days, during which I do not eat or drink and I dance for the Creator. It is an extremely complicated religious ceremony.

In the past, indigenous peoples have been oppressed. We could not practise our religion in public until 1951. Even today, indigenous communities across the country are still experiencing problems in some areas, such as in schools and even in certain communities.

I believe Islamophobia is a bigger problem than we realize.

As a result, I would like to know two things. First, why are we not including all communities? Second, how can we make a distinction between what is happening today with indigenous peoples and Islamophobia, which I believe to be a real problem.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Mr. Speaker, I am moved by my colleague's comments. I respect him and what is more, Wendake is in my riding, as he well knows, and I am proud to represent that community.

Our motion does not distinguish between communities. Religion is specific to each Canadian. The motion is for all Canadians, beginning with the first nations and the faith that inspires them and is specific to them.

Therefore, we do not have a list that focuses on a single word or a specific religion; it applies to all religions, other religious communities, and other religious practices.

It is a good thing that the member is so proud of his heritage. I encourage all Canadians to be proud of their heritage, especially the first nations. All the better if the member participates in religious practices of that nature, and I congratulate him for it. That is exactly what the motion says. Canadians must continue to own and live their faith and to show that they are proud of their religion. All Canadians must be able to do so safely.

[English]

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the parliamentary secretary for multiculturalism, the MP for Parkdale—High Park, stood in the House of Commons in solidarity with the Liberal caucus to announce the government's support for the MP for Mississauga—Erin Mills' motion recognizing the need to counter all forms of systemic racism and religious discrimination, including Islamophobia. Today, it is my turn to stand in the House of Commons to echo this same message and denounce loud and clear the unfortunate tide of hate and fear. Our government stands united in support of this message of compassion and empathy, confirming our support for the Muslim community here in Canada and acknowledging the hardships the members of this community endure.

Today, the opposition is presenting a watered-down version of the motion put forward by the MP for Mississauga—Erin Mills. It is without a doubt a political ploy put forward by the Conservative Party to save itself from internal division. The motion presented today is a diversion to serve political purposes.

• (1040)

[Translation]

We must not fool ourselves. The Conservatives lack courage and are hiding behind a false argument. They claim to be bringing people together, but they are not acknowledging the challenges faced by the Muslim community across the country.

[English]

This is why we will not be supporting the opposition motion today.

Over the past few years, I and many other Canadians have witnessed a growing tide of hatred and intolerance toward the Muslim community. Yesterday, our government came forward with a message of hope, a message of solidarity, a message of support for the MP for Mississauga—Erin Mills, who faced a barrage of online abuse, but we can think of many other instances of Islamophobia.

Let us recall what has happened. A fire at a Peterborough mosque was arson. A Hamilton mosque was firebombed. Two women were threatened with a noose in Edmonton. Two men in Toronto tried to rip off a woman's head scarf. A Muslim woman in London was spat on in a grocery store. There were anti-Muslim posters at the University of Calgary. Mosques were vandalized in Ottawa, Montreal, Quebec, and Sept-Îles. Those of us in leadership positions have a social responsibility to take a strong stance on these acts of hate perpetrated against individuals of Muslim faith.

Let me be clear. Islamophobia is a real problem. Neighbours, friends, co-workers of the Muslim faith endure systemic racism and religious discrimination in our country.

Business of Supply

[Translation]

Our government recognizes that Islamophobia exists, and that is the first step in fighting the hate and fear towards this community.

[English]

While police-reported hate crimes have fallen in Canada in recent years, they have doubled against the Muslim community between 2012 and 2014.

[Translation]

As the Minister of Canadian Heritage but also as the member for Ahuntsic-Cartierville, one of the most diverse communities in the country and home to 50 different cultural communities, I urge the House to keep all of that in mind.

As I stand here in the House today, I am thinking of Esra, one of my constituents in Ahuntsic-Cartierville. This young Muslim woman was born here in Canada. She is currently studying education at UQAM and is having a hard time finding a job. She is a victim of discrimination every day because she wears a head scarf.

I am also thinking of Mohamed, a good friend of mine, an intelligent, skilled young man who is having trouble finding a job because of his name. I am also thinking of colleagues of mine in Ahuntsic-Cartierville who are afraid to go pray at their local mosque. They do not feel safe because of the prevailing climate in this country right now.

That being said, foremost in my mind are the Muslims who were killed because they were in a place of worship.

[English]

The tragic events that occurred in Quebec City on January 29 shook us deeply. The motivation behind this horrendous attack in a place of worship and reflection goes against everything this country stands for. We stand united in the face of this catastrophe. As political leaders, we have a moral imperative not to turn our backs on something so insidious, so galling as discrimination based on religious beliefs.

• (1045)

[Translation]

Things do not cease to exist just because we do not name them. We have a real problem, and that problem is Islamophobia. The Conservatives want to find a solution without really talking about the problem, without naming it, and that is actually making the problem worse. We have a duty. Every time a community is targeted, we must condemn such actions. I find it sad that people are using certain communities to make political hay. We need to condemn that too.

The Conservatives have decided to engage in divisive politics. They were unable to stay united in the fight against discrimination even though it is so important.

[English]

At the end of the day, the motion of the MP for Mississauga—Erin Mills ensures that in Canada we stand for free and respectful exchanges of ideas and opinions, and it leaves no place for hatred nor any tolerance of abuse. It bears repeating that we are at our best when we care for one another. Over the years, we have learned to

work together and to value diversity, diversity of backgrounds as well as diversity of opinions, customs, and beliefs. This diversity has strengthened and enriched us.

[Translation]

We must never stop protecting what makes our country great: our diversity. As Canadians, we must stand united and say no to the politics of fear and division. More than ever, we must defend our values and lead by example.

[English]

Canada's strength is found in many facets: in our respect for rights and freedoms, in our welcoming and open society, and in our diversity. There is no better time to reflect and build on these strengths, and our government is fully engaged to focus on Canada's ethnic, linguistic, cultural, and regional diversity and to find ways to deepen our relationships across the country and within our many communities. Canada's commitment to diversity is one of the pillars of our social contract, the social contract that unites each and every one of us. I am really proud of this.

I would like to bring attention to the fact that the opposition thinks otherwise. The Conservatives have brought this motion forward in a cynical attempt to serve their political purposes and avoid addressing the real issue of Islamophobia. It boggles the mind that members of the House, members who have put their names forward to lead political parties, would try to capitalize on fear and division for their own benefit. Some have actually had the gall to use this as an opportunity to blast out emails and mailers to raise money for their campaigns, to use fear of Islamophobia to enrich their own success.

Others have used poor taste by using imagery of the Ottawa terror attack as a backdrop in mail-outs and emails to protest Islamophobia. In fact, just yesterday, three members of the House were speakers at a so-called freedom rally in Toronto, a rally organized by a man who claimed that the mosque shooting in Quebec City was actually an act of Muslim terror that lying media refused to report. Anyone who tells Canadians that this motion is the “first step toward restricting our right to criticize Islam” or that “thought police in Ottawa dictate what we can and cannot say” is misleading and undermining a real issue that is deserving of our attention.

As we fight racism and discrimination, I want to share with members a program I announced last week in Scarborough. As minister responsible for multiculturalism, I was very proud to announce that our government invested \$5.5 million in the interaction multiculturalism funding program. Non-profit organizations can apply for funding for projects that aim to promote intercultural dialogue, fight systemic racism, and cultivate respect of diversity. Programs like this one foster mutual understanding and help create bonds between all Canadians. After all, diversity and inclusion are central to who we are as Canadians, which is why they are a pillar of Canada 150 celebrations taking place this year.

Business of Supply

[Translation]

Today, I invite all hon. members of the House to promote this program in their community.

• (1050)

[English]

A few months ago, I had the opportunity of hosting a round table on diversity with my colleagues the MP for Edmonton Mill Woods and the MP for Edmonton Centre. We sat down with 15 students and we heard about their successes, their challenges, and their ambitions. It was really an uplifting conversation.

[Translation]

I learned a great deal from this conversation and I was surrounded by people from different religious backgrounds.

Everyone there condemned Islamophobia. No one was afraid to speak out against it. Even though as Jews, Sikhs, indigenous peoples, or black persons they are part of a minority, they stood behind the Muslim community. Having often been victims of discrimination themselves, they acknowledged that Islamophobia is a problem in Canada.

The same thing happened in my riding. In Ahuntsic-Cartierville, I had the opportunity to meet with several leaders from different religious backgrounds, including Armenians, Coptic Christians, Maronites, or even Shia Muslims, Sunni Muslims, and atheists. All these community leaders and religious leaders acknowledged that Islamophobia is a problem. They all acknowledged that we must work together to fight prejudice and that if we did not, we would be preventing our society from achieving healthy social cohesion.

[English]

While we are dealing with a difficult subject—and we cannot ignore the evidence of racism and discrimination in Canada—we have reason for optimism. An Environics study reveals that an increasing majority of Canadians identify multiculturalism as one of the most important symbols of the country's national identity. But the study also showed that Canadians increasingly acknowledge that there are systemic barriers facing visible minorities, which require a societal response.

I strongly oppose this motion and encourage my fellow members to recognize the importance of collectively standing against a motion like this that seeks to avoid the real conversation, and which attempts to divide us.

Motion No. 103 is a signal to the Canadian people that we will never relent in our pursuit of a more equitable and just society, one that actively promotes diversity and inclusion. Our strength as a country lies in our diversity. I would encourage my colleague across the way to support Motion No. 103.

I would also like to seek unanimous consent for the following motion. That the motion be amended, first, by deleting the words “the House: (a) recognize that Canadian society is not immune to the climate of hate and fear exemplified by the recent and senseless violent acts at a Quebec City mosque; (b) condemn all forms of systemic racism, religious intolerance, and discrimination of Muslims, Jews, Christians, Sikhs, Hindus, and other religious

communities; and (c) instruct” and substituting the following: “, in the opinion of the House, the government should, (a) recognize the need to quell the increasing public climate of hate and fear, (b) condemn Islamophobia and all forms of systemic racism and religious discrimination and take note of House of Commons' petition e-411 and the issues raised by it; and (c) request that”; and, second, by adding after the words “all types of discrimination” the following: “including Islamophobia”.

The Deputy Speaker: It is my duty to inform hon. members that when an amendment is proposed to an opposition motion, that amendment can only be moved with the consent of the sponsor of the motion. I therefore ask the hon. member for Cypress Hills—Grasslands if he wishes to consent to the amendment being moved.

Mr. David Anderson: Mr. Speaker, I have had no prior contact on this amendment. I do not know what the member is trying to do from the floor of the House of Commons here and I have no idea of the content of the amendment, so I have to say no.

The Deputy Speaker: There being no consent, pursuant to Standing Order 85, the amendment cannot be moved at this time.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Cypress Hills—Grasslands.

• (1055)

Mr. David Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I do not know that the bizarre stubbornness of the Liberals amazes anyone anymore.

The member has talked about Motion No. 103 and the message of confusion that surrounded this motion. Even senior figures of the Liberal Party, such as Irwin Cotler, had advised her to make amendments to this motion, and those amendments were very similar to the ones we proposed as well.

Everyone here has condemned all forms of religious discrimination, and particularly the examples that she has used this morning. However, I am just wondering if the member could tell us what the Liberals think they are going to gain by dividing religious communities and by rejecting this inclusive motion that has such a positive message for Canada.

Hon. Mélanie Joly: Mr. Speaker, I think that my colleague is not talking about the real debate. The real debate is about the fact that, as the House, we need to stand united in condemning Islamophobia. I do not understand the fear that my colleague, and colleagues, are expressing against Islamophobia because when we know we have a problem, it is not by eluding to it and not talking about it that we will solve it. Therefore, I would urge my colleagues to stand with us, as strong parliamentarians, to support this very inclusive motion, Motion No. 103, in order to condemn Islamophobia and all forms of systemic racism.

Business of Supply

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Canadian Heritage is absolutely right that we all need to stand up and condemn hate and discrimination of all forms, no matter where we see it, and that includes where it is taking place south of the border. One might argue that President Donald Trump is perhaps one of the biggest promoters of Islamophobia right now, with the immigration ban that he tried to bring forward. The member said that we have an obligation to denounce hate and discrimination. Does she agree that the Prime Minister also needs to stand up and denounce the hate and discrimination in Trump's discriminatory and racist ban?

Hon. Mélanie Joly: Mr. Speaker, we are talking about a debate happening in the House of Commons of Canada. We denounce any form of systemic racism and also Islamophobia in Canada. As the Prime Minister has said, he is not there to lecture other countries. I am proud to see that my colleague is supporting our work and our Motion No. 103.

[Translation]

Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague, the Minister of Canadian Heritage impugned the motives of the Conservative Party.

Therefore, I must say to the Liberals that they should take a look in the mirror. They are the ones who are trying to make political hay. As a parliamentarian, I find this to be unacceptable. The tragedy in Quebec City happened 10 minutes from my home. I represent the riding next to that of my colleague from Louis-Hébert, where this tragedy occurred.

I find it unacceptable that the Conservatives are being accused of being opportunistic. I would accuse the government and the party in power of the same thing. They are political opportunists and they are excluding certain groups.

They need to include all religions.

Hon. Mélanie Joly: Mr. Speaker, last December, our colleague from Mississauga—Erin Mills tabled a motion in response to a petition presented by the member for Pierrefonds—Dollard that had been supported and signed by 70,000 people. The member for Pierrefonds—Dollard and the member for Mississauga—Erin Mills decided to put forward this initiative, and I am very glad they did.

As a government, we recognize that Islamophobia is a problem. We are not afraid to recognize it or to say so, because we know that we need to come up with solutions to address this phenomenon.

What we do condemn is the fact that not only is the Conservative Party trying to present another version that trivializes Islamophobia, which proves that they are afraid to talk about this phenomenon, even though it is based on police-reported data, but also that certain people in the House who are running for the Conservative leadership are using Islamophobia to score political points. That is extremely troubling.

• (1100)

[English]

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, this debate is lamentable. We know that Motion No. 103 would not remotely change the rights of free speech nor bring in sharia law. Also, on its face, the motion today from the hon. member for

Cypress Hills—Grasslands does not pander to those elements that are creating these false impressions, but it creates a non-debate, where we should be unifying the voices in this place against hatred. We should be saying clearly to the Muslim community that it is protected in this country, at a time when elsewhere voices of intolerance are being raised against it. That is why Motion No. 103 makes sense.

Hon. Mélanie Joly: Mr. Speaker, I thank the leader of the Green Party for her sound words and her moral leadership on the issue.

Mr. Martin Shields (Bow River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to participate in this today.

My community is one of the most ethnically diverse communities in Canada, and people might find that a little surprising. We adopted the motto and worked for it, a community we are proud to call home. We have representatives of 100 different nationalities in our community. As the mayor, we worked strongly on inclusiveness over the years. I have been working with everybody in the community, every ethnicity, every religion.

That is why we support our motion. My community has done this for the last 15 years, and very successfully. We do not want specific ethnicities treated separately. We want to work inclusively, and that is why I support the motion.

Hon. Mélanie Joly: Mr. Speaker, I am happy to hear there is a strong social cohesion in the member's riding, and that should be the case across Canada.

The reality is that some people of Muslim faith right now are not living in security in their own environment. We must address that issue. We must ensure to increase the level of security of trust in each other in order to ensure we have a strong social cohesion in every community.

It is our job as political leaders to do so, and I am happy to work with my colleague to ensure that Motion No. 103 is supported so we can address together that important problem.

Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage (Multiculturalism), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the minister a bit more about the social media campaign of misinformation, fearmongering and abuse we have seen in the wake of the tabling of Motion No. 103, and even in the discussion about today's motion. How does that influence the necessity of addressing Islamophobia and specifically of calling it out by that very name?

Hon. Mélanie Joly: Mr. Speaker, my colleague, the member for Mississauga—Erin Mills, since the presentation of her motion, has been going through a barrage of online abuse. She has been receiving thousands of emails, discriminating against her. Since even yesterday, when I announced we would be supporting Motion No. 103, my entire team in charge of social media has been dealing with online abuse against me because of the very issue of Islamophobia.

Business of Supply

We know this is happening and we know we cannot tolerate it, so let us act on it. Let us ensure we denounce it and really work together to support 103, which will study the issue, come back with recommendations, and ultimately we can do a good government program to address this issue.

• (1105)

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak to the opposition day motion, tabled by the member for Cypress Hills—Grasslands. I will be sharing my time with the member for Longueuil—Saint-Hubert.

As the NDP critic for immigration, refugees, citizenship, and multiculturalism, as well as a member of the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration, I have often had the opportunity to speak to the issues of persecution and discrimination abroad and how Canada can best respond to be a world leader in a humanitarian crisis. Unfortunately, too often issues of discrimination, racism, and intolerance go unaddressed, and often even unnoticed at home.

This motion is very similar to Motion No. 103, as mentioned, on which the debate just began yesterday. As elected officials, and the representatives of our communities in the House of Commons, I firmly believe we have a duty to stand together against racism and discrimination of all forms. We currently find ourselves in a time of increasing polarization of political debate and, sadly, of a global climate of increasing fear, and in some cases, hate.

Canada's multicultural society can flourish in the context of cultural diversity only if we are united in condemning and remedying issues of racial and religious discrimination, be that overt instances such as the recent and devastating Quebec City mosque attack; or be that systemic, long-standing discrimination, such as that faced by too many members of the indigenous communities, and recently made headlines regarding the Sixties Scoop court ruling. We have a duty as members of Parliament to set an example and speak out against all forms of discrimination wherever we see it, in Canada and abroad.

I note this motion proposes a committee study be undertaken at the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage to determine how the government can develop an approach to reducing and possibly eliminating all types of discrimination in Canada, with a community-centred focus based on evidence. It also calls on the committee to determine how best to collect data to contextualize hate crime reports and conduct needs assessments for impacted communities.

The work to be undertaken by the committee is exactly the same that is being proposed in Motion No. 103. As both of these motions are private members' motions, and in the tradition of each party, private members' bills or motions are generally not whipped and, as such, members are entitled to vote their conscience. I am looking at both of these motions as stand-alone motions, and not around the political gamesmanship that is being played. I am not sure if one or both motions will pass.

I support both Motion No. 103 and this motion. Both are valid. It is my view that both motions aim to achieve the same outcome, and the work to be undertaken by the committee, if these motions pass, is exactly the same. Therefore, in the event that both motions pass, I would expect the committee would have to sort out how best to proceed. To be clear, the work sent off to committee will not be an

easy task. Both motions seek to find answers to address difficult long-standing problems. As parliamentarians, our job is not about doing what is easy. Being here is about doing what is right and what will make Canada a better place.

We have all been troubled by recent events of race or religiously motivated hate. I can recall when Canada began its Syrian refugee initiative in the city of Vancouver. After a welcoming reception, an individual pepper sprayed a group of newly arrived Syrian families, including young children, as they were waiting for the bus to take them back to their temporary lodging. I was horrified to learn of the incident, as I had just left the event. The families were just gathering the children together to get on the bus.

In the nearby community of Richmond, there are also deeply troubling reports of the Chinese Canadian community being targeted with racist flyers being distributed in the area. In Abbotsford, a man was filmed hurling abusive and racial slurs. He said, "You [bleeping] Paki. Go back to [bleeping] India. You camel-rider." The individual then clearly states, "White power" as part of the exchange.

Other incidents include flyers promoting the Ku Klux Klan being found outside homes in British Columbia. Spray painted swastikas were recently found on a rabbi's door at a synagogue in Ottawa. A racist rant was caught on film in transit in Toronto. Racist posters also went up in the University of Alberta targeting the Sikh community.

• (1110)

Jewish Canadians are still the most targeted religious group in Canada though those types of attacks have dropped while attacks on Muslims have increased. Hate crimes against Muslim Canadians have more than doubled in three years, even as the total number of hate crimes has dropped, which is why Motion No. 103 is important and ought to be supported.

No matter in which community hate and discrimination is being targeted, we have a duty to stand up against this kind of despicable behaviour.

We cannot have a conversation about discrimination in our country without acknowledging the systemic and unacceptable discrimination that continues to this day against indigenous, Métis, and Inuit communities.

I had the opportunity to rise in the House on Wednesday to deliver a statement in support of the missing and murdered indigenous women's march, which began 27 years ago in my riding. The memorial march has now since spread across the country, with marches in dozens of communities from coast to coast to coast, yet the horrific problem of missing and murdered indigenous women persists.

Just this week, the Canadian court system declared that while the government had breached its common law duty of care in the situation of the Sixties Scoop in Ontario, indigenous culture and identity were stolen from children as a result of those actions. This did not happen hundreds of years ago. This happened between 1965 and 1985. Systemic discrimination against indigenous peoples is so deeply pervasive that it has impacted generations of the first peoples.

Business of Supply

Hundreds of children came to Ottawa on the “Have A Heart” campaign this week. This campaign calls on the Canadian government to end systemic discrimination against indigenous children on reserves as they do not have the same rights to education as other off-reserve children.

There is no question that much work needs to be done. We need to look long and hard at our own current policies and actions. We absolutely need to collect data on incidents of hate and discrimination. We need to understand what is going on. We need to educate. We need to devise a plan to take all of this on. In my view, it would be worth our effort to examine and track over time if hateful racist incidents reported in Canada have increased since Trump became President. On the face of it, it certainly feels like it to me.

According to Professor Rinaldo Walcott, director of women and gender studies at the University of Toronto, “I think that the election has allowed people who might have been formerly in the shadow to feel emboldened”. In the same article Professor Walcott suggested “it may be easy to stand by and do nothing, but it is up to everyone to help”.

We must speak clearly and forcefully against racism, discrimination, and bigotry. We teach our children to stand up to racism. We teach them to call it out wherever they see it. On that note, is it not time that our own Prime Minister also spoke up forcefully against Trump's racist immigration policies? The executive director of the National Council of Canadian Muslims Ihsaan Gardee, said, “Unfortunately, the election of Mr. Trump has really galvanized and mobilized many Islamophobic and racist individuals”.

At the heart of both Motion No. 103 and today's motion is that the Canadian government needs to recognize the need to quell the increasing public climate of hate and fear, and condemn all forms of systemic racism and religious discrimination. That also means the Prime Minister must muster up the courage and stand up against Donald Trump's racist immigration policies. That would be good for Canada. Let us get the job done and let us put politics aside.

• (1115)

Ms. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate what the member had to say. It has resonated with me as an individual who really senses we have a lot of work to do on many fronts to improve human rights and deal with discrimination.

I faced the circumstance, in the midst of a campaign, of having swastikas spray painted all over my signs in my riding. That was personal. Stop signs and whatnot were also defaced in my community.

The member gave all kinds of examples of issues with different groups, different faiths, and different ethnic people. Would our motion not be more appropriate by saying that across Canada, across all ethnic groups, across all religions, we as a country have work to do, that we need to focus on the rights and opportunities of all those people?

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for sharing her personal experience of hate and racism.

The fact of the matter is that both Motion No. 103 and this motion before us ought to stand. They are both good motions. They both speak to fighting against discrimination and hate.

Motion No. 103 specifically highlights Islamophobia. Why? I believe it is the rise in hate towards the Muslim community. This is why racism is used as a specific example. However, the opposition motion does not exclude discrimination of all forms for all people. Let us not get divided on that. Why are we doing that? We should not be doing that.

It is so disheartening to me that this debate is happening the way it is. Why can we not find a way to come together and say that, above all else, we need to stand together united, all of us, to say that discrimination and hate cannot be tolerated anywhere in Canada or abroad?

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I understand it, the Conservative motion today is really a reaction to Motion No. 103. The main distinguishing feature is that the party opposite, the official opposition, does not want to mention Islamophobia specifically in a House of Commons motion. I fail to see why this suddenly has become an issue. On October 26, 2016, the House of Commons unanimously adopted a motion condemning Islamophobia. Other legislatures have done the same. The National Assembly of Quebec unanimously adopted a motion against Islamophobia. Why all of a sudden is it not appropriate to mention Islamophobia in a motion in this House?

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Mr. Speaker, in fact, I have that motion which was passed unanimously in this House. The motion states:

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

Motion No. 103 references petition e-411. In that sense, the definition of Islamophobia is included in that, if we go back and look at the petition referred to in the motion that was passed unanimously in the House.

Why are we having this debate? I do not know, but if we look at these two motions separately as stand-alone motions, both are worth supporting. I implore the government side and the Conservative side to come together to find a way to resolve this, so that we can speak with one forceful voice to say that discrimination and hate in any form, anywhere, is not tolerated, and we will do our job to denounce it.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this is obviously a very important time to rise and represent the people in my riding of Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, because the horror that took place barely two weeks ago requires all of us to reflect and take stock of ourselves.

We rise in the House, united and stating loud and clear that we reject this hate and this violence. More than ever before, we have a responsibility to denounce, isolate, and combat radicalization in our neighbourhoods. It is our role to ensure that we never have to experience another tragedy like that of January 29, 2017.

If we must emphasize the importance of not letting this attack change what is fundamentally good about Quebec City and Quebec, it is also our duty and great responsibility to reject those who profit from this hate and feed on it. We have to slam the door forever on this type of discourse in the public realm by countering it with love, the desire to get along, and respect for others.

Business of Supply

We do not always point it out, but there is respect, love, and a desire to get along in our society.

I think that we need to take the time to look at everything we are doing right. I think we need to work together to do more so that events like the ones that took place in Quebec City never happen again, so that no community is ever again the target of such a hateful attack.

I want to talk today about my responsibilities as a Quebecker and about our collective responsibilities as Quebeckers and Canadians.

There is a need to state the obvious: Canada is seeing a trend toward the stigmatization of Quebeckers and Canadians of the Muslim faith. Obviously, we can no longer deny this reality. Islamophobia is indeed present in our society. We can no longer talk about radicalization as though it were a religious phenomenon. We now need to talk about extreme-right radicalization here in Canada. We can no longer talk about radicalization as though it were someone else's businesses, something that only happens elsewhere. We can also no longer think that radicalization is something that only happens in remote corners of the Internet. The Internet has certainly made it easier to share ideas, for better and for worse. The social climate in which we live and to which we contribute every day, both individually and collectively, has a role to play in countering the indoctrination made all too easy by the Internet. There is no place for hate speech and harassment. It is our responsibility not to turn a blind eye to the vicious indoctrination that can lead to an unspeakable tragedy like the one that occurred in Quebec City.

It is no infringement of freedom of expression to tell your brother who is sinking into racism, fascism, or simple crude prejudice that he is crazy. It is up to our community to call out and say “stop” to this sort of schoolyard bullying that degenerates into unfortunate incidents. Society must stand as a bulwark against all forms of discrimination, whether based on religion, nationality, gender or sexual orientation.

It is up to us to act to ensure that this does not start up again, not in the next few weeks, not in the next few years, not ever. It is up to us as individuals to intervene when we witness discriminatory speech or discriminatory situations. It is up to us as a society to call upon our public authorities to assure us that the rhetoric of propaganda is cast out of the public sphere. It is up to us to single out discourse that fuels ostracism and stigmatization.

As the member for Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, I have the opportunity to talk to Canadians who are deeply concerned about tolerance and the need to fight discrimination. In addition to the very open and unifying approach of Mr. Habib Ranni, president of Longueuil’s Muslim community centre, which incidentally held an open house last Sunday, we have people who are tremendously involved in all of our public meetings and family get-togethers. I am thinking of Mr. Noureddine Sedfi, who takes every available opportunity to offer us his delicious tea and whose personal mission is engaging in cultural mediation with residents of Longueuil of all ages and all origins.

I am also thinking of the committee dedicated to making Longueuil a city free of racism and discrimination. I would also note the tireless work of the community agencies that gave rise to that

initiative, namely Vision inter-cultures, Carrefour le Moutier, the Centre des femmes de Longueuil, Services et formations aux immigrants en Montérégie, the Riverside school board, and the research chair in law, religion, and secularism at the Université de Sherbrooke.

The committee for a Longueuil free of racism and discrimination is helping to develop measures and take action to combat racism and discrimination based on ethnic origin, culture, and religion. It organizes a variety of events to raise awareness about racism and discrimination. Its members take socio-political action with decision-makers to find solutions together.

● (1120)

I would also cite as an example that in 2013 Longueuil decided to join the Canadian Coalition of Municipalities Against Racism and Discrimination under UNESCO. The municipality subsequently adopted an action plan whose objective is to combat racism and discrimination. The action plan has eight specific objectives. It lays the foundation for an initiative that promotes respect for others and openness, so that one day we can say, all of us together, that this hatred has been eradicated.

To help inspire my colleagues and the proceedings of the House, I will now quote the eight objectives of the action plan:

1. Cultivate people's openness to difference and respect for ethnocultural diversity in order to fight racism and discrimination.
2. Make municipal services more accessible in order to foster inclusion and the active civic participation of ethnocultural, indigenous, and immigrant communities.
3. Monitor and evaluate the impact of the municipal action plan.
4. Partner with community organizations and public sector organizations and institutions that are fighting racism and promoting community well-being.
5. Stay abreast of innovative and effective measures and practices to fight racism and discrimination and promote community well-being.
6. Implement the equal access employment program.
7. Do more to fight racism and discrimination within the police force.
8. Educate municipal employees about racism, discrimination, and ethnocultural diversity.

These eight measures are part of a Longueuil initiative that I believe could serve as inspiration to everyone in the House.

In closing, I have to say that a partisan dispute that exploits events and the values that all Quebeckers and Canadians cherish is a little low. The Liberal government's amendment, which serves the official opposition's interest, results in a kind of unanimity on this very important subject. I am not very proud to see anyone scoring partisan points in connection with such a troubling issue of such great importance to our society.

● (1125)

Mr. Alupa Clarke (Beauport—Limoilou, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Longueuil—Saint-Hubert for his speech. I have enormous respect for him.

He is entirely right. Every democratic state, especially liberal democracies, must exercise great vigilance toward all hateful or radicalizing trends, but also toward all political agendas of any religion whatsoever.

Business of Supply

All the same, I would like to ask him a question. For him, what exactly is Islamophobia? Does he not think that in the Liberal motion it would have been appropriate to clearly define what Islamophobia is, as such?

Mr. Pierre Nantel: Mr. Speaker, the word “Islamophobia” contains the word “phobia”. What is the problem with people who are agoraphobic? They are suffering from a fear, an unreasonable fear of being in a public place.

Islamophobia is precisely a fear that has no basis in reality, a fear that is disproportionately magnified, of a religious group, of a belief. This is precisely why this word is so important and at the same time so charged with meaning, a word that for many seems to point to something that should be broader and apply to all beliefs.

As we speak, this Islamophobia has taken root, and it is precisely the role of a parliament to rise above debate, to calm things down, to take positions that bring people together, and certainly not to play petty political games.

[*English*]

Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage (Multiculturalism), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when we see the more than doubling of hate crimes against Muslims in this country over the past three-year period and when we see a climate of hatred in this country which has now culminated in the massacre of six men in a mosque simply because they were worshipping, I have one simple question for the member opposite, whom I respect a great deal. Is it not incumbent upon this Parliament now in the context of this motion we are debating today to call out that discrimination by the name Islamophobia?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Nantel: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

It is a pity, for as an individual, a citizen and the father of two daughters, I believe that it is my duty to rise above what is currently driving me, namely the desire to deplore all exploitation. For the government to deem it pertinent to celebrate this motion is one thing. It is precisely here that I am going to force myself to rise above my concerns. We do not have to be ashamed of our choices and our virtues, but proclaiming them so loudly may be a bit like blowing our own horn.

It is a pity that the Conservatives are opposing this motion for reasons that seem to me rather opportunistic, once again. However, I want to keep to the high road, and I hope to see the House united in denouncing Islamophobia.

• (1130)

[*English*]

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, trying to define that term is what concerns me as an individual with the responsibility in this House to reflect Canadians and also our responsibility to protect them. The term “Islamophobia” is very subjective at this point.

We are aware that Muslims themselves are being attacked where they are working through the dynamics of what they believe and do not believe within their faith. Would that fall into that definition?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Nantel: Mr. Speaker, this is an extremely important debate, and I am trying to tread cautiously on each of the stones on this road.

What is truly sensitive is not so much the individual nuances and perceptions of each person, but rather the message that we have to send. Although we can praise the merits of the initial motion and question the government’s horn-blowing and the opportunism of the official opposition, I still think that it is our responsibility to define what we consider unacceptable, and that is, quite obviously, all forms of ostracism of any group in our society.

[*English*]

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Calgary Nose Hill.

Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights says,

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

This declaration correctly situates conscience and religious rights in the individual, not in the community or the doctrine. A religious community does not have rights apart from the individuals within that group. A religious community does not have the right, for example, to compel someone to join or to remain in that group. A religious doctrine does not have rights either. To hate a person is wrong, and to discriminate against a person is illegal, but to hate a doctrine or an idea, or to treat differently an idea that is different, may be quite reasonable and proper. In any event, it is certainly part of what it means to live in a free society.

As I have said before, religious liberty is the liberty of the individual to choose and practise a faith or no faith. All of our human rights codes invest that freedom in the individual, yet many countries around the world deny that freedom. Sometimes, perversely, they deny it in the name of human rights or religious freedom, but they invest those rights in the community or the doctrine instead of in the individual. In some countries, the very practice of faiths other than the majority faith is prohibited. In some, the state seeks to control religious organizations. In some, conversion from the majority faith to a different faith is prohibited or punishable even by death. In some, insulting religion is prohibited. In some, conversion requires the approval of local authorities. In some, the freedom to worship is protected but the practice of faith in the public sphere is restricted by professional codes or by those who fear offence.

Unfortunately, in every country, religious liberty is compromised by the threat of violence. The attack on the Ste-Foy Islamic Cultural Centre was a terrorist attack, which by all indications, was designed to make Muslims feel unsafe in practising their faith, and therefore impeded. This was an attack on religious liberty.

Business of Supply

In the face of this, I hope that the House will come together to clearly and decisively condemn religious discrimination, and while doing so, correctly situate that condemnation. We do not condemn debate about religion. We do not condemn the criticism of religion. We hope that criticism will be respectful and polite, but we recognize that mandating politeness is neither practical nor desirable. To condemn even rude or impolite criticism of religious doctrine would put the state in the position of needing to define or assess what is and is not polite, and that is unacceptable in a free society.

Last night, as I was preparing for this speech, I was thinking about the life and work of the late Christopher Hitchens. Hitchens was anti-Christianity and anti-Islam, yet he did not advocate discrimination or violence on the basis of religion. He was anti-Christianity without being anti-Christian, and he was anti-Islam without being anti-Muslim. He was even, to be fair, somewhat rude from time to time. Still, his speech was very much tolerated by many and also well loved by many. I always found him thought-provoking and entertaining, and even occasionally insightful.

Religious liberty, including criticism of religion, is important. Why? It is because religions are systems of thought that seek to answer all of the most fundamental questions in life. Why are we here? What is our purpose? What will happen to us after we die? What is the nature of morality and of the good life? What is the nature and source of happiness?

Most human beings answer these questions by embracing unifying systems of thought that seek to describe the nature and origin of reality, and we call these systems of thought religions.

If we believe that these things are important, then we should be invested in creating the conditions that allow a free and authentic search for truth, a search that empowers individuals to realize and embrace true answers. The answers that individuals come to with respect to questions of purpose, morality, cosmology, and happiness are most likely to be true if they are come to without coercion, without physical coercion and without intellectual coercion; that is, if they are free from discrimination in all its forms and also free to make, to hear, and to consider opinions that are hostile to their own pre-existing ideas on religious questions. The authentic search for truth requires both. It requires freedom from the coercion that we call discrimination, and it requires the sometimes unwelcome, but always useful, freedom to receive criticism, hopefully polite, but not necessarily. These two freedoms are two sides of a coin of great value, indeed, of ultimate value.

In *Dignitatis Humanae*, Pope Paul VI wrote the following on the nature and origin of religious liberty:

• (1135)

...the right to religious freedom has its foundation in the very dignity of the human person as this dignity is known through the revealed word of God and by reason itself...

It is in accordance with their dignity as persons—that is, beings endowed with reason and free will and therefore privileged to bear personal responsibility—that all men should be at once impelled by nature and also bound by a moral obligation to seek the truth, especially religious truth. They are also bound to adhere to the truth, once it is known, and to order their whole lives in accord with the demands of truth. However, men cannot discharge these obligations in a manner in keeping with their own nature unless they enjoy immunity from external coercion as well as psychological freedom.

Notably, John Stuart Mill, like Hitchens, an atheist, said something not dissimilar about the search for truth in *On Liberty*. He states:

...the peculiar evil of silencing the expression of an opinion is, that it is robbing the human race; posterity as well as the existing generation; those who dissent from the opinion, still more than those who hold it. If the opinion is right, they are deprived of the opportunity of exchanging error for truth: if wrong, they lose, what is almost as great a benefit, the clearer perception and livelier impression of truth, produced by its collision with error.

Mill states later:

There is the greatest difference between presuming an opinion to be true, because, with every opportunity for contesting it, it has not been refuted, and assuming its truth for the purpose of not permitting its refutation. Complete liberty of contradicting and disproving our opinion, is the very condition which justifies us in assuming its truth for purposes of action; and on no other terms can a being with human faculties have any rational assurance of being right.

To be fair, it is not for comfort or for emotional solace that we defend a robust and fully coherent doctrine of religious liberty, at least not for these things alone. Rather, it is for a much higher purpose. Religious liberty is defended today for the highest purpose: for the integrity of the search for the highest truth. The integrity of that search for truth is compromised in many places and by many different forms of coercion. However, those who are sure of the rightness of their cause should understand and embrace the maxim that good ideas win fair and open debates.

I have spoken in this speech about two different kinds of coercion, and in the context of this broader debate, I think, in some sense, we can look at both.

Our friends across the way are opposing our motion today because the word “Islamophobia” is not included. To me, it is the height of absurdity to oppose the motion on the basis of the absence of a word, which in the motion they prefer, is not even defined. They insist on a word for which there is no clear definition, even in their own motion. They talk about the importance of condemning discrimination against Muslims. They should read the motion being proposed, which specifically refers to discrimination against Muslims as well as other groups.

The reality is that Islamophobia is a word with a particular etymology. Islam is the religion of Islam, and phobia refers to fear. It is not surprising, then, that many people regard the use of this word as describing fear of Islam. Some Liberals have said that this word means discrimination against Muslims. However, that is not what the word means etymologically or according to the Oxford English dictionary, which defines Islamophobia as dislike or fear of Islam as opposed to dislike or fear of Muslims.

As someone who believes that religious liberty is an individual freedom, I am concerned about terminology that seeks to condemn dislike or fear of doctrine as opposed to dislike or fear of individuals. One can believe in the freedom of individuals without liking or assenting to their doctrines. To discriminate against individuals on the basis of religion is coercion, which impedes the proper search for truth. Condemning the criticism of religious doctrines, through a motion or through legislation, is also socially coercive, because it seeks to deny religious believers their right to hear contrary ideas and to be challenged by contrary arguments.

Our motion has been characterized as a watering down. Ironically, the government has proposed amendments to our motion, while refusing motions on Motion No. 103 on the basis that they will not water it down. Is it watering down to ask for definitions? Is clarity watering down? I do not think so. I think providing clarity and actually knowing the meaning of the words we are talking about strengthens the motion and does not weaken it.

Our motion is clear. It waters down nothing. It condemns all forms of discrimination. It starts by condemning discrimination against Muslims. I certainly assent to the importance of doing that in the present time and in the present climate. Our motion condemns bigotry and affirms religious freedom in a clear way, in a specific way, in a strong way, and in the right way. It does not trade on ambiguity for the purposes of shameful wedge politics. It says what it means, and I commend it to the consideration of hon. members.

● (1140)

Ms. Kim Rudd (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have been listening to this debate, there are a couple of things that are frustrating me and many other people who are watching this.

In October, when the motion came forward to condemn all forms of Islamophobia, the members opposite voted for that. I have also heard that this is not about division on behalf of the members opposite. This is not about fundraising. This is not about appealing to a society that is eager to engage in some of the falsities that are happening on social media and in other media. However, it is not very difficult to find a Conservative leadership candidate whose website now reads that people can make a tax deductible donation to that campaign specifically using this issue. I personally find that offensive, and I would like a comment from the member.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, I am sure the Liberal Party never engages in fundraising, ever. We could have a long conversation about the fundraising tactics of the Liberals. I am not here to defend every single leadership candidate. I only feel obliged to defend one, but I do not think the floor of the House of Commons is the proper place to do that.

Let me just say, I think our motion is very clear and very inclusive. It condemns discrimination against a wide variety of different groups and it is inclusive in its language. For the Liberals to oppose it on that basis is not appropriate. They should read the text of the motion and decide whether or not they can support it on that basis.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will be supporting the motion, but I will also be supporting Motion No. 103. I would really hope that the member, in showing real leadership, would support both motions so that we can move forward.

I hope the member can also agree that certain politicians have misled the Canadian public about what Motion No. 103 actually is. That has created more division.

The member talked about clarity in his speech. When we have a spike in a certain type of crime, we hone down and focus on how we will remedy that, how we will create determinants, and how we will fix the problem. When it is the economy, we talk about oil workers out of work, so we have debates and focus on certain parts of our economy.

Business of Supply

Right now, we see a significant spike in racism toward people of the Muslim faith. Does he not agree that we should be focusing on dealing with this issue when we have had a spike? That is clarity, clarifying that this is an issue that should be focused on right now in light of what has happened.

● (1145)

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, I agree with the member that we need to speak clearly, and hopefully can speak in a unified way about the issue of discrimination against Muslims, but I do not think it is leadership to support a motion that does not have a clear definition. I have spoken about the important distinction here between talking about discrimination against Muslims, but also talking about questions of criticism of doctrine.

I am not alone in these considerations. In terms of what other people are saying, Irwin Cotler, former Liberal justice minister, said that he would advise amending the motion to replace the term “Islamophobia” with “anti-Muslim”. A former NDP candidate from Calgary I know, Teale Phelps Bondaroff, wrote on Facebook, “Reading through the motion, I tend to agree with the position that a clear definition of Islamophobia needs to be included”. That is what Liberals are saying; that is what New Democrats are saying.

It is not strong, it is not leading to decide we need to vote for something when we actually have no idea what it means. Leadership is insisting on clarity and then proceeding on that basis.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I will try to keep this brief.

I have a lot of respect for the hon. member. Would he clarify for those watching this debate that Motion No. 103 will not lead to sharia law? Nothing about it will change our respect for the rule of law in this country and the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, I have spoken often on this issue online and I have been very clear about trying to educate those who are following this about what this motion is. It is a motion, not a bill. It does not change any laws, full stop.

I think it is important that when we have an ambiguous motion, we recognize the reality that some people draw the wrong conclusion, and yes, some people torque it up for their own purposes.

We have always been clear in the Conservative Party, though, about the realities here and about what our position is, which is to support the inclusive, unifying language that condemns all forms of discrimination.

Business of Supply

Hon. Michelle Rempel (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in a democratic, pluralistic nation, the role of the state is not to defend the tenets of any particular faith. Rather, its role is to protect the right of the faithful to practise their faith free of fear of reprisal and to ensure that none of us are forced to worship that which we do not. Our responsibility in upholding the protection of this freedom is our submission to an understanding that while we have the right to believe whatever we choose, we do not have the right to act upon beliefs that are not lawful. In Canada, this covenant is formalized in our Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Parliamentarians are charged with determining what is and is not lawful. Here, while our respective faiths or lack thereof may influence our opinion in this regard, our first duty is to uphold this covenant as it keeps our nation largely free from widespread religious conflict. Given the history of humanity, this is no small feat. Since time immemorial, we have been harming one another at the behest of our governments and leaders in the name of one religious or another.

We now turn to the motion in front of us today. In its first section, this motion asks Parliament to acknowledge that Canada is not immune to a climate of hate and fear. Historically, we only need to look to the residential school system and to the “none is too many” policy for examples of what happens when we let religious doctrine turn to racism and in turn influence government policy. Today, sections 318, 319, and 320 of Canada's Criminal Code forbid hate propaganda. Even so, places of worship of all different flavours are still vandalized, death threats are uttered, and calls to violence in the name of one god or another are still made.

While he was not at a place of worship, Corporal Nathan Cirillo was murdered by someone who asked his god to praise his actions and curse those he was targeting. Since the day Michael Zehaf-Bibeau opened fire in this place, I have lived with a fear I have learned to manage but that I cannot erase. To this, when reports of a gunman opening fire and murdering worshippers at the Centre culturel islamique de Québec emerged, my concern for the well-being of those affected by the shooting came from a place of deep personal understanding, for the families of those who died but also particularly for those who survived and now have to live with scars they now bear, be they of the flesh or of the mind and heart.

Indeed, Canada is not immune to a climate of hate and fear. To prevent the escalation of hate and discrimination, we must first acknowledge this truth and then ask what actions we should take, if any. This is precisely what the latter part of this motion asks for. If this motion passes, the House of Commons Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage will undertake a study that will examine incidences of hate crimes and provide Parliament with a non-binding report that will make recommendations on possible ways we can prevent and reduce incidences of these crimes in Canada.

I believe that this is something that Parliament should undertake as Canada is not an unchanging nation. As the context of our nation changes, so should we review the efficacy of our laws and our programs. To wit, Parliament has not conducted a comprehensive review of this particular issue since social media platforms have become our key modalities of communication. Moreover, and in a much more difficult context, we have not reviewed this issue since

the Syrian conflict, the Middle Eastern migrant crisis, and the rise of the so-called Islamic State began. All of these events have thrust adherents of Islam, as well as those who kill, torture, rape, and maim in state-sanctioned actions in the name of Islam, to the front of the world's mind.

We now turn to Islamophobia. As opposed to Motion No. 103, the motion before us today asks us to “condemn all forms of systemic racism, religious intolerance, and discrimination of Muslims, Jews, Christians, Sikhs, Hindus, and other religious communities”. In using these words, it respects the state's obligation to protect the rights of the faithful to practise their faith because it refers to individual adherence of faith. It does not ask Parliament to condemn the practice of speaking against any particular faith itself. This is why this motion is preferable to Motion No. 103.

There are those who argue that Motion No. 103 does not ask Parliament to condemn the practice of speaking against Islam. They argue that Motion No. 103 simply asks Parliament to condemn acts of racism and discrimination against adherents of the Muslim faith. To validate this argument, we must look to popularized definitions of the term Islamophobia, as Motion No. 103 does not include one. A popularized and promoted definition of this term was given in 2011 by the adviser and special envoy of the secretary general of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, or the OIC. The OIC self-describes as the second largest intergovernmental organization after the United Nations, and claims membership of 57 states. This definition of Islamophobia reads:

Islamophobia is a contemporary form of racism and xenophobia motivated by unfounded fear, mistrust, and hatred of Muslims and Islam. Islamophobia is also manifested through intolerance, discrimination and adverse public discourse against Muslims and Islam. Differentiating from classical racism and xenophobia, Islamophobia is mainly based on radicalisation of Islam and its followers.

● (1150)

Given that Motion No. 103 provides no definition of the term “Islamophobia” itself and given that promoted definitions interchange the Islamic faith with individuals who practise it, as opposed to a sole focus on preventing discrimination against Muslims as individuals with individual rights, it is preferable for Parliament to condemn discrimination and racism using the terms set out in the motion before us today because it gives clarity.

Why is this important? The ability to criticize the religious teachings and practices of a faith is a cornerstone of our democracy and our pluralism. Had we not been able to question religious teachings on sexuality, same-sex marriage would not be legal in Canada today. Moreover, the ability to question and speak against the edicts of religious leaders allows us to combat hate and oppression. This is why I will be voting against Motion No. 103 and supporting the motion before us today.

Business of Supply

Today's global community has many nations that have enshrined in their laws severe penalties, including death, for the act of speaking against the Islamic faith. This is wrong. If we in Canada claim to have any moral fibre embedded in our foreign policy, we must speak against these laws because they lead to gross human rights violations. In some Islamic nations, LGBTQ are executed in the name of Islam as sanctioned by the state. This is wrong. In some Islamic nations, women have virtually no rights in the name of Islam as sanctioned by the state. This is wrong.

It is also very disturbingly wrong to make the assumption that all Canadian adherents of the Islamic faith share these values. This assumption is egregious and leads to a climate of hate and fear. An Islamist is an advocate or supporter of a political movement that favours reordering government and society in accordance with the laws prescribed by Islam.

To combat the spread of radical Islam and Islamism, while simultaneously protecting Canada's pluralism, all Canadians must seek understanding that there is a difference between someone who practises the Muslim faith and someone who is an adherent of radical Islam or is an Islamist.

All Canadians must also make it abundantly clear that Islamism as well as any movement to enshrine any religious practice into the governance of our state is an unacceptable practice in Canada. This includes having tough, smart conversations about what Canadians find acceptable in terms of religious accommodation and restrictions on our speech that are free from accusations of racism or violating political correctness.

All Canadians must also protect and give every opportunity to those of all faiths who vocally reject radical teachings and movements to impose their beliefs on others through the state in order for their voices to be heard above the fray of extremism.

Moreover, all Canadians must speak to peaceably co-exist with those who do not share their beliefs, but still uphold the laws of our nation. We must look to our legal system to punish those who are not.

Oversimplified and hyperbolic messages on this issue from the extreme ends of all political ideologies have begun to find fertile ground in Canada. Much misinformation coated in political gloss and feigned moral outrage has emerged from all political parties.

We must not be dissuaded from having difficult discussions in the name of political correctness, however, we must equally reject non-fact based arguments made by those who derive income or political power from sensationalism or nationalism. The supply of this garbage will quickly dry up if there is no demand for it.

If we do not do these things, the pluralism upon which our nation is built will fail and the only values that Canadians will be defined by will be arrogance and naïveté, and the false notion of our superiority.

The motion asks a parliamentary committee to conduct a non-binding review of the programs and laws we have in place to prevent acts of hate and punish those who commit them. It asks us to examine whether these laws and programs are adequate. That said, no study, law, or government will ever abdicate us from our

individual responsibility to uphold the principles that maintain our free society through our own individual actions.

In this, I encourage my colleagues to support the motion and encourage all Canadians to take a difficult inward look and measure our actions by their ability to uphold our peace rather than to destabilize it. We can all do better.

• (1155)

Mr. Marco Mendicino (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would echo some of the sentiments the member expressed with respect to inclusivity, pluralism, and diversity, which are part of the bedrock of our nation.

To pick up on the analogy the member drew to the LGBTQ2 community, I wonder whether she would tell this House if she would refuse to support a motion that made reference to homophobia, much in the same way that my hon. colleague's motion makes reference to Islamophobia. By her logic, I think that would be a motion that ought to be supported.

Hon. Michelle Rempel: Mr. Speaker, my colleague opposite has committed a logical fallacy as he did not address the rationale that I laid out in my argument, that Motion No. 103 is inadequate, because it does not define the term and relies on popular definitions which do not differentiate between the adherence to the Muslim faith and Islam, which I find inadequate.

Rather than ramping up the rhetoric on this, the member could have provided a reasoned amendment or said that he would talk to his colleague about addressing this issue.

I find this issue a legitimate concern for the reasons that I have laid out in my speech. I stand by my position.

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in the spirit of trying to find a way to come to a resolution on this situation, I wonder if the member would support the concept that was advanced by the member for Mount Royal, which is to support an amendment that defines Islamophobia. His suggestion is to add the words "a hatred or fear of Muslims, known as Islamophobia", at the end of the motion after the words "Quebec City mosque". I wonder if that is something the member would support.

Hon. Michelle Rempel: Mr. Speaker, I believe that the House should, as this motion states, condemn discrimination and racism against Muslims and adherence to the Muslim faith. That language is provided in this motion today.

• (1200)

Mr. Anthony Housefather (Mount Royal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member for Calgary Nose Hill is one of the most formidable speakers in this House and I commend her on her speech. A minute ago, the member asked why not propose a reasoned amendment, and I think I did this morning, which is exactly what my colleague from Vancouver East mentioned.

I think all it would take to have unanimity on this motion in the House, and I think it would be a great idea to have unanimity, would be to add at the end of paragraph (a), the words "which speaks to a hatred or fear of Muslims, known as Islamophobia". The reason people are not supporting the motion as drafted is that word is missing.

Business of Supply

I am asking the hon. member, who I know is a reasonable and honourable member, to consider that. Would it not be better to have a motion on this subject with unanimous, all-party support?

Hon. Michelle Rempel: Mr. Speaker, I also would like to express my respect for the member across the way. He brings many very thoughtful arguments to the House, and I find him to be very lucid.

Sometimes seeking consensus on an issue is not necessarily the right public policy outcome. In this matter, I feel very strongly, for the reasons I outlined in my speech, that the correct terminology is to condemn discrimination and racism against adherence to a faith, rather than trying to come up with a new term. That is the most expeditious, most clear, and most simple way to address this issue and move forward with this study. That is the reason our party is proposing this motion today, and in doing so, I do believe that we have presented a very reasoned amendment.

[Translation]

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the motion we are currently debating talks about Islamophobia. Indeed, we are talking about fighting discrimination against Muslim faiths, like all other religions. I think we need to be able to have this debate as rationally as possible, without letting our emotions take over.

We will not be supporting yesterday's motion, because we believe that it aggravates the problem. There is an increasing public climate of hate and fear. The motion talks about systemic discrimination. We agree that Islamophobia exists and we need to fight it. However, we think we need to do so rationally. We also need to explain that state neutrality and secularism specifically aim to fight religious discrimination.

I would like to hear my colleague's thoughts on that.

Hon. Michelle Rempel: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

[English]

I think that the rationale laid out in this motion here today, the wording of it, achieves everything that he mentioned in his statement. I have tried to present a very dispassionate and rationed argument around this .

At the end of the day, I realize these are my final words on this topic. My encouragement to all of my colleagues here is that we can do better, and I think this motion reflects a step in that direction.

Mr. Raj Grewal (Brampton East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Edmonton Centre.

I am honoured to rise today to speak to the issue of systemic racism and religious discrimination. This conversation is vital to ensuring that all Canadians feel safe, welcomed, and at home here in Canada.

For me personally, racism and religious discrimination have been a part of my life since I was a young kid. Having grown up as a practising Sikh who wears a turban, whose father wears a turban, whose friends wear turbans, the Sikh community and my family have always stood out for their identity. However, just like my Jewish friends who wear the kippah or my Muslim friends who wear the hijab, we are all proud of our identities, but all recognize that our identities also make us easy targets.

I vividly remember kids making fun of me because of my turban, or being bullied on the playground for being different. I remember being the subject of racist taunts as a young soccer player, or witnessing my dad being verbally abused shortly after 9/11. But that is not the Canada I know. Each instance of discrimination was rooted in mistrust, intolerance, and fear. Each instance was unacceptable then and is unacceptable now.

I am pleased to represent the second-most diverse riding in the entire nation. Brampton East is home to five Sikh temples, five Sikh gurdwaras, four Hindu mandirs, three mosques, and two churches. It is the definition of diversity. When we walk around Brampton, we see diversity for which the world knows Canada. We see people from all walks of life peacefully co-existing with the freedom to hold their beliefs, practise their traditions, and share their cultures. In their own way, each of them contributes to the fabric that forms our great nation.

The Prime Minister, when addressing the United Nations, stated:

Strong, diverse, resilient countries like Canada didn't happen by accident, and they won't continue without effort. Every single day, we must choose hope over fear, and diversity over division.

This government's policies over the last 16 months have been grounded in ensuring that diversity is our strength, that we are a welcoming and inclusive nation, and that we are all treated as equals, regardless of our race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, and economic status.

However, there is a harsh reality we must face. Even in 2017, racism and religious discrimination are far too often common in Canada. Posters at the University of Alberta targeting the Sikh community, taunting women who wear hijabs, anti-Islam vandalism at the Cold Lake, Kingston, and Quebec City mosques are just a few examples.

If some of our fellow Canadian brothers and sisters are worried about being attacked, whether verbally or physically, because of their identity, that makes me feel like we are failing as a nation, because that is not the Canada I know, and we need to do better.

The motion we have before us today is one that every member in the House has seen before. Just yesterday, Motion No. 103 introduced by my good friend, the member for Mississauga—Erin Mills, on December 1, 2016, was debated. These two motions have much in common.

They both recognize that there is an increasing climate of hate and fear in Canada. They both condemn all forms of systemic racism and religious discrimination. They both request that the Standing Committee on Heritage undertake a study on how the government could develop a whole-of-government approach to reducing or eliminating systemic racism and religious discrimination. Last, they both recognize that the standing committee should collect data to contextualize hate crime reports and to conduct needs assessments for the impacted communities at a local level.

Business of Supply

Like most committee studies, upon completion, the committee will submit a report and recommendations to the government, based on what it heard from witnesses, which the government will take into consideration, followed by an official government response to be tabled in the House.

When we know that in recent years hate crimes against Muslims have been increasing while hate crimes against other groups are decreasing, we cannot pretend that Islamophobia is not a legitimate concern. My personal example far too often occurs in Canada.

● (1205)

Sikhs are often confused for Muslims, and are too, in fact, victims of Islamophobia. However, it is not good enough as Sikhs to say “Don't attack us. We're not Muslims.” We are all Muslims when our Muslim brothers and sisters are being attacked for their faith. That is not just my Sikh value speaking; that is my Canadian value speaking.

The vast majority of Canadians have a long-standing tradition of rising to the occasion to denounce attacks of discrimination. That is what built our great nation. But diversity requires effort. It requires us all to have the difficult conversations at our dinner tables about treating all people with respect and compassion, regardless of their faith, race, or culture. It requires us to ask questions if we do not understand, and answer responsibly when asked tough questions. It requires us to make it known that it is not acceptable to act in a discriminatory or hateful manner toward anyone.

What makes this opposition motion so cynical is that it feeds into the very deliberate misinformation campaign surrounding Motion No. 103. Individuals have tried to spread misconceptions about how the motion could limit free speech, lead to the adoption of sharia law here in Canada, and more. I would like to take a moment to clear up some of these misconceptions. Motion No. 103 is not only about Islamophobia, but also seeks to address all forms of systemic racism and religious discrimination. Motion No. 103 does not expand or change the Criminal Code in any way. Motion No. 103 is a motion and not a bill. As such, it is not legally binding.

We cannot address a problem when we refuse to call it by its name. We cannot overcome the challenges our communities face if we refuse to name the issue, understand the issue itself, study it, and propose solutions. That is a fundamental reason our democracy has been successful.

I am pleased to be a seconder of Motion No. 103, for this is not about them or us, or all of us collectively. It is about improving the lives of a generation of Canadians until stories of racism, religious discrimination, and intolerance are rare occurrences.

I ran in 2015 to be the MP for Brampton East because I wanted future generations to have the same opportunity I did. I want the sons and daughters of immigrants and all Canadians to have the opportunity to attend some of the best secondary institutions in the nation. I want them to start new companies. I want them to pursue careers as doctors, lawyers, and engineers. I want them to change the world. I want them to pursue public service. What I do not want for them is to grow up in an atmosphere of hate, which breeds fear in our fellow Canadians. I want them to be proud of their identity. I want the saying to always be true that I am a proud Sikh, or Muslim, or

Hindu, or Jew, believer or non-believer, that at the same time, I am equally proud to be Canadian, and most importantly, that I am so proud I live in a nation that does not make me choose between my faith and my devotion to my country.

I call on all my colleagues to support Motion No. 103 and to reject the politics of fear and division.

● (1210)

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I certainly agree with many of the sentiments the member expressed in his speech. I do not know how he feels about commitment, but I hope he will commit to supporting our motion today, which clearly talks about discrimination against Muslims, Jews, Christians, Sikhs, and Hindus.

It is interesting that he talked in his speech about discrimination against Sikhs and the importance of calling a problem by its name. Our motion calls a problem by its name by speaking very specifically about discrimination against individuals. Instead, when he talks about calling the problem by its name, he wants to use a word that is actually unclear and undefined. How is it strong? How is it showing leadership to use a word for which there actually is not a clear definition?

I would remind the hon. member that it was our party that sought out amendments to Motion No. 103. We were working on trying to clarify it. This opposition day motion was necessary to clearly put it out there and give the House an opportunity to endorse something which I think we should all believe in. Therefore, why is the member not prepared to step up and make a commitment finally to vote for a great motion that I think reflects where we all stand?

Mr. Raj Grewal: Mr. Speaker, I have a lot of respect for the member across the way. He represents everything that is great about our democracy.

We can be prepared. We can do our research. We can advance an argument and have a thorough and thoughtful debate in the House. I fundamentally disagree with the member on 90% of everything he says, but I will say that he always does come prepared.

The core of the issue is simply this. I mentioned in my speech that many things in the two motions overlap. All of us in the House would agree that systematic discrimination and religious intolerance are not acceptable in Canada from coast to coast to coast. By saying that Islamophobia does not exist, by not naming Islamophobia, we cannot address the problem. We cannot refuse to call it by its name. We cannot overcome the challenges our communities face if we refuse to name the issue, which clearly is Islamophobia, and understand the issue. Motion No. 103 proposes sending this issue to a committee for further study. I would encourage my colleague to convince all of his colleagues to support Motion No. 103.

I also want to take this moment to congratulate the member across the way for all of the great work he does on human rights.

Business of Supply

●(1215)

Mr. Wayne Stetski (Kootenay—Columbia, NDP): Mr. Speaker, constituents of my riding of Kootenay—Columbia and I personally very much support multiculturalism, and yet there have been a number of concerns expressed to me by constituents about today's motion and Motion No. 103 as well. I believe their concerns are based on misinformation.

I would like the member to tell the people of Kootenay—Columbia and the rest of Canada why they should take comfort from these motions rather than be concerned about them.

Mr. Raj Grewal: Mr. Speaker, it is clear that there has been a campaign of fear and division from some members who sit in this chamber to really instill fear in Canadians when it comes to Motion No. 103. I too have received countless emails in an organized campaign, but they will not change my perspective but rather strengthen my resolve. We can take an opportunity to clear up some of the misconceptions. Motion No. 103 is not only about Islamophobia, but it seeks to address all forms of systematic racism and religious discrimination.

It is important for all Canadians to remember that Motion No. 103 is a motion that says that Islamophobia and all forms of religious discrimination are not accepted in Canada. We would like to send the issue to a committee for further study. One of the most important things about the motion that Canadians should understand is that it encourages a committee to collect data and to present that data in a contextualized manner, so we as members of Parliament elected to this chamber can study it and propose laws that would help to strengthen the concept of free speech and ensure that throughout this nation our fellow Canadian brothers and sisters are not living in a society of fear but are proud of their identities, can worship peacefully, can go to mosques and pray peacefully, and not be afraid of being targets of hateful speech.

When we are talking about religious discrimination, oftentimes we become really passionate. There are competing views on all sides of the political spectrum, but we should all be able to agree that Canada's strength is its diversity.

Mr. Randy Boissonnault (Edmonton Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise in the House today to speak to this opposition motion regarding religious discrimination. I will start by noting that I do not specifically oppose the content of the motion. The motion recognizes senseless acts of violence perpetrated several weeks ago at a mosque in Quebec City. The horror and sense of loss of this attack is shared by all members of the House, as is the condemnation of this violence. Also all members of the House take heart in the outpouring of support for the Muslim community that has come from Canadians from coast to coast. We have seen images of Canadians of all faiths locking arms around mosques to create a safe space for prayer. It is truly an inspiring sight.

These are serious issues that continue to face our Muslim community. While hate crimes in Canada are on the decline, hate crimes against Muslim Canadians have more than doubled since 2012. That is why this is a community that our government believes is sincerely in need of support and protection.

The second piece of today's motion condemns all forms of systemic racism, religious intolerance, and discrimination against

Muslims, Jews, Christians, Sikhs, Hindus, and other religious communities. Again, I support such condemnation. There is no place in this country for discrimination against individuals for their deeply held religious beliefs. We are truly blessed to live in a pluralistic society where people of all faiths and people of no faith at all are welcome to live their lives in a manner that they choose and where we respect each other's sincerely held beliefs. Our customs and beliefs may differ, but we can celebrate those differences together as one community.

[*Translation*]

Lastly, this motion calls for a study by the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage to focus on developing a whole-of-government approach to combat discrimination.

[*English*]

However it is important, for those watching at home and for the record, to expand on the context in which this motion has come before the House and my reflections on the arguments we have heard surrounding this discussion.

Last night, the House debated Motion No. 103, brought forward by the member for Mississauga—Erin Mills. It is a motion that members will, no doubt, notice is very similar to the one we see before us today. Like today's motion, it noted and expressed concern for recent religious-motivated violence. Like today's motion, it condemned all forms of systemic racism and religious discrimination. Like today's motion, it called for a study of how to combat discrimination in a whole-of-government approach. The two motions are, in fact, almost identical, except for one detail.

Motion No. 103 called particular attention to the issue of Islamophobia. That one word rendered Motion No. 103 anathema to the official opposition. We cannot, the House was told by members opposite, support a motion that singles out one faith. We were told by candidates for the leadership of the official opposition that Motion No. 103 would undermine the freedom of speech in this country and that it is unacceptable to name one faith without naming others.

The member for Simcoe—Grey told us that Motion No. 103 would afford “special privileges” to one religion, because it brought attention to one form of discrimination, and yet the list we see in today's motion is hardly exhaustive. I see no reference to the Druze community, the Mormon community, the Buddhist community, or any reference whatsoever to the traditional spiritual teachings of indigenous peoples. If the opposition is to be believed, then surely singling out only five religions and not others is no better than putting emphasis on just one.

I also find it curious that no member who has expressed a concern about singling out seemed the least bit concerned about supporting a 2015 motion about anti-Semitism, a motion by the Hon. Irwin Cotler that received the unanimous support of the House. It is perplexing that my colleagues opposite seemed so opposed to casting light on just one form of discrimination and yet they supported that motion. Let me be clear: so would I have done, had I been in the House at that time.

Business of Supply

Members of the LGBTQ2 community will never forget the courage and solidarity of Jewish Canadians, whose national organization was the first civil society organization, other than LGBTQ2 organizations, to intervene with us in court to pursue equal marriage. When asked why, the response was that, unless all of us share human rights equally, then we are not equal before the law; equal we are and equal we must be.

We have been told that Motion No. 103 would threaten freedom of speech. The member for Regina—Qu'Appelle told us that Motion No. 103 would be “a step towards stifling free speech and legitimate criticism”, and yet somehow this nearly identical motion is no threat at all. I wish I could say that I am surprised by these double standards and empty arguments. However, they are nothing new at all.

It is the same argument used by the Conservative Party to oppose protections or support for the LGBTQ2 community. It is the same argument that told our community that they could not get married because somehow it would harm other people's marriages. It is the same argument that told our community that they could not be protected from being fired or kicked out of our homes because that would create “special” privileges. It is the same argument that says we cannot single out murdered or missing indigenous women and girls for investigation. It is the same argument that continues to oppose needed protections for the trans and non-binary community, because to prevent discrimination is to threaten others' freedom.

● (1220)

It is little surprise that we see these kinds of arguments brought out yet again to demean our Muslim community. They come from the same party that proposed the shameful barbaric cultural practices hotline, inciting neighbours to spy on neighbours, and rather than apologize to Canadians, its members continued to double down on fomenting division and distrust between communities in Canada.

Whether it is cultural values from the member for Simcoe—Grey, or family values from the member for Saskatoon—University, whether it is promises to assimilate first nations reserves from the member for Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, or opportunistic flip-flops on LGBTQ2 rights from the member for Beauce, there is no minority too vulnerable for this opposition to not villainize or vilify to attract headlines. It is very easy to use buzz words, double standards, and alternative facts to try to scare people into thinking that defending one group will hurt another. However, when we look at the facts, when we call out the falsehoods, it becomes very easy to see why these arguments have failed again and again, and why the long arc of history inevitably bends toward justice, equality, and progress.

Today's motion is nothing more than a watering down, and a gutting, of the motion proposed by my esteemed colleague from Mississauga—Erin Mills. It is a mean-spirited attempt to demean and erase the hard work of my colleague, designed solely to deny our Muslim brothers, sisters, and friends an expression of solidarity and support from this House. I will have nothing to do with it.

Human rights are not pieces of pie. We do not run out of pieces by serving them to everyone equally. We do not run out of human rights when they are extended to and enjoyed by everyone. In fact, we strengthen them for all. Human rights are fundamental, inalienable,

indivisible, and universal. That means they apply to everyone. When a particular group has been made vulnerable and fearful because of hatred toward it, that is when we can and must shine light on that community, that is when we must stand up and be counted, and that is when we must lead and support each other. In this case, it is the Muslim community that is being targeted and being made to fear because of intolerance, hatred, and violence. That is why today we say that enough is enough. That is why we are standing up to be counted. That is why we are speaking and acting in solidarity.

● (1225)

[*Translation*]

That is why we are standing by our fellow Muslim Canadians who feel targeted and who are afraid of their neighbours and people in society who are driven by hate, violence, and intolerance.

[*English*]

This is why our government and I will vote against this spurious opposition motion and will enthusiastically be supporting Motion No. 103. It is the right thing to do.

Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his passionate remarks and his many times restated commitments to human rights. I wonder if he could tell me how he would respond to the former Liberal justice minister and human rights champion Irwin Cotler, who said quite clearly and directly that he would advise and prefer that the keynote word in Motion No. 103 be replaced with “anti-Muslim”.

Mr. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his work, and his commitment to human rights as well.

What is important to know in this country is that, when we face a problem, we must call out that problem. The problem and the challenge we face as a Canadian society is to call out the fear and vilification that the Muslim communities are facing. The term that we are using is “Islamophobia”. We take into full account the advice from the Hon. Irwin Cotler that terms can be clarified. In this case, we are naming the situation for what it is. How else do we name the fact that hatred and hate crimes against Muslims have more than doubled since 2012, while hate crimes in Canada have been going down? The term “Islamophobia” needs to be used and needs to be addressed.

I say this for my hon. colleague. Why can we not use the term? Why do we use a term like “homophobia”? We do not tolerate the intolerance of gay, lesbian, trans, and queer people, yet somehow members in this House seem fully prepared to tolerate Islamophobia?

Business of Supply

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for Edmonton Centre for his passionate speech to end violence against people who struggle and feel marginalized.

There is a story in the *Alberni Valley News* that I want to share with the House. Angela Brown was called outside by her husband this weekend to discover that someone had drawn a swastika on the back of her brand new car with a permanent marker while it was parked overnight. Currently Brown is a student. She works at the local school. Her husband is a firefighter. She said, “We found it really disheartening...It’s taken the wind out of our sails, for sure”.

People like Angela, people who are feeling attacked, feel like the wind has been taken out of their sails by this very argument and debate. We should be united in supporting Motion No. 103. We should be united in supporting the Conservative motion. Talk about taking the wind out of our sails, we need leadership right now. I call on all members to support both motions.

The member said that the Conservative motion only identified five religious groups, while Motion No. 103 talked about one religious groups. Why are we not supporting any discrimination against all those religious groups, and broadening it even further? That is important. People like Angela are counting on us. They are looking for leadership from all of us.

I hope the member will reconsider his decision to vote against the Conservatives' motion and vote with them and show the leadership that Canadians are counting on right now.

Mr. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Speaker, we want all Canadians to feel safe and to live their lives in the way they want to in our pluralistic society. It is critical that we take this opportunity and that we demonstrate leadership as a government for people in our society who feel the most marginalized. Right now members of the Muslim community, from coast to coast to coast, need this attention on this issue.

In my riding of Edmonton Centre, I am ashamed to share with the House public information about a man at an LRT station who approached two women in hijabs and took out a piece of rope, tied it in a noose and said, “This is for the two of you”. Fortunately, security was there, the man was detained, and charges will be pending.

That is the kind of fear, that is the kind of racism, that is the kind of Islamophobia that Motion No. 103 seeks to address, and the political gamesmanship on the other side seeks to dilute.

• (1230)

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as someone whose faith is at the very core of who I am and influences all of what I do in this place, today's motion is of great importance to me. This is the same for many Canadians. Their faith shapes them, and it is very important to their everyday life.

Places of worship, traditionally seen as sanctuaries, are also places for peace, contemplation, and fellowship, all of which makes the heinous attacks that took place in Quebec City just a few weeks ago that much more disgusting. This is why it is important for members of the House to stand together in support of today's motion, which

condemns such hatred in Canada and strives to work toward collectively fighting for the freedoms enshrined in our constitution.

I neglected to mention, Mr. Speaker, that I will be sharing my time with the member for South Surrey—White Rock.

The rights enshrined in our Constitution in section 2 of our charter clearly state that everyone has the following fundamental freedoms:

- (a) freedom of conscience and religion;
- (b) freedom of thought, belief, opinion and expression, including freedom of the press and other media of communication;
- (c) freedom of peaceful assembly; and
- (d) freedom of association.

Whether it be the most recent attack on Muslims in Quebec City, the drawing of hateful images on Jewish synagogues in Ottawa, or the persecution of Christians in many regions of the world, these acts of hatred toward one another need to be stopped, and it is up to us as elected officials to stand up to this destructive climate.

It has long been stated that freedom of religion is one of the most basic freedoms a society can give to its citizens. The United Nations has enshrined this freedom in its Declaration of Human Rights. Article 18 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 alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.

It is also important to note in the context of today's debate that article 19 goes on to state:

Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.

I had the opportunity to visit Egypt and Tunisia with several colleagues from this chamber over the winter break. I was very encouraged to see the concerted effort that the president of Egypt, Mr. el-Sisi, a devout Muslim himself, was making to bring people of different faith communities together, and it is not just words. He is taking action to lead the way for his people.

It is particularly regrettable that the Liberal government chose not to extend the funding and strengthen the mandate of the ambassador and the Office of Religious Freedom in budget 2016. Canada's voice on issues of religious tolerance in an increasingly intolerant world is now severely diminished. It was our party that established the Office of Religious Freedom, under the leadership of Dr. Andrew Bennett, in 2013. The creation of this office was very important, and it was done in an Ahmadiyya Muslim mosque, a minority sect of Islam that is persecuted around the world.

Canada's commitment to religious freedom and tolerance both at home and abroad was advanced greatly by the previous government, particularly by the Office of Religious Freedom.

Business of Supply

The mandate of the office had three broad components: first, defend religious communities and monitor religious freedom through country strategies and analysis, interventions in support of communities at risk, and strengthening the capacity to monitor and promote religious freedom through specialized training; second, promote religious freedom as a key objective of Canadian foreign policy through domestic advocacy and outreach, international advocacy and outreach, and whole-of-government coordination; and third, the Office of Religious Freedom led the way internationally to protect freedom of religion and belief as well as to promote Canadian values of tolerance and pluralism.

This office stood up for the rights of all people. Its external advisory committee included representation from many communities, such as atheists, Muslim, Sikh, Jewish, Hindu, and Baha'i. Its ability to work with others earned it great esteem internationally and within diaspora communities in Canada.

• (1235)

Though its mandate focused primarily on situations abroad, the office clearly had an effect at home, in Canada, with many minority communities that felt that this office was a beacon of hope to those who felt marginalized and persecuted.

Dr. Andrew Bennett recently appeared at the Senate Standing Committee on Human Rights, discussing some of the accomplishments that this office made during his time as ambassador. He said:

Under the office's Religious Freedom Fund, which represented \$4.25 million of our annual \$5 million envelope, we sponsored over 20 projects that supported activities, addressed some of the root causes of religious persecution and also helped those directly persecuted in over a dozen countries. We introduced training for Canadian diplomats on religious freedom and the role of religion in international affairs, a necessary component of our work.

We engaged our allies in defending religious freedom internationally through the United Nations, such as the Human Rights Council, through the Special Rapporteur on religious freedom and also through the Third Committee of the General Assembly, and through a unique initiative that the Office of Religious Freedom brought forward, and that is the International Contact Group on Freedom of Religion or Belief, which brought together over 20 like-minded governments committed to advancing religious freedom.

These were not just our traditional like-minded governments. We also reached out to other countries such as Jordan, Morocco, Tunisia, Cameroon, Senegal and Indonesia, who demonstrated a desire to improve the status of religious freedom in the world.

Let me share another quote from our former Ambassador Bennett, which I feel is at the very heart of today's motion and is powerful in combatting this growing hatred in Canada for people of all kinds of faiths and traditions. He said:

Freedom of religion, as indicated in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and in many other documents, is often placed as a first freedom, or we might say a foundational freedom. Why is this? I would argue that it comprehends that without recognizing the metaphysical need present in each of us to contemplate who am I, who am I in relationship to you, who am I in relationship to the world in which I live, and who am I in relation to God or to a particular philosophy I choose to follow, without recognizing that metaphysical need embedded within freedom of religion, we cannot then move on to give utterance to our beliefs — freedom of speech — gather with others to share those beliefs — freedom of assembly — or form groups of our fellow human beings who share similar beliefs so as to advance the common good.

I truly believe this is the end goal of every member in the House, to help advance the common good. I look forward to taking on this endeavour with colleagues from all parties.

Therefore, let me remind all members, indeed all Canadians who are watching today, of the inclusive nature of the motion before us today. Today's motion reads:

That the House: (a) recognize that Canadian society is not immune to the climate of hate and fear exemplified by the recent and senseless violent acts at a Quebec City mosque; (b) condemn all forms of systemic racism, religious intolerance, and discrimination of Muslims, Jews, Christians, Sikhs, Hindus, and other religious communities; and (c) instruct the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage to undertake a study on how the government could (i) develop a whole-of-government approach to reducing or eliminating all types of discrimination in Canada, while ensuring a community-centered focus with a holistic response through evidence-based policy-making...

The motion goes on, but I see my time is up. I urge all of my colleagues to support the motion. It is in the best interest of all Canadians, including all faith groups that are represented in Canada.

Mr. Omar Alghabra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs (Consular Affairs), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have known my hon. colleague for many years, and I know he is an honest and candid member of Parliament. I want to ask him this question. In October, he and his party voted along with the rest of the House of Commons to condemn all forms of Islamophobia. Could the member share with us now why the Conservatives are allergic to that word, when they voted for condemning it in October?

• (1240)

Mr. Harold Albrecht: Mr. Speaker, the member, and all members in the House, know that there are many techniques used to get the passage of certain bills and issues in the House. He says that we voted unanimously for the motion, and that is technically correct. However, he will know that very few members were in the House that particular day.

I am not here to speak on behalf of other parts of this community. However, when we look at the term "Islamophobia", today alone we have heard three different supposed definitions of it. There is no agreement on how to define that word.

The big eye-opener for me was about a week ago, when I attended a seminar put on by a group of Ahmadiyya Muslims here in Ottawa, in the parliamentary precinct. They pointed out to me that a Muslim sect in a Muslim community in Pakistan is under severe persecution. How in the world could the term "Islamophobia" honestly be used with integrity to describe a situation like that, where a Muslim government is persecuting its own Muslim minority within its own country?

The term "Islamophobia" is misleading. It is not well defined. It is important that we follow through with the motion our party has put forward today, because it includes all faith groups, including Muslims.

As has been pointed out today, and yesterday, when we were debating Motion No. 103, our job is to protect the faithful. The government's job is not to protect or promote a particular faith but to protect the faithful. That is our goal with this motion.

Business of Supply

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I know the Conservative Party, certainly under prime minister Brian Mulroney, took great leadership in fighting hatred, divisiveness, and persecution around the world. He showed great leadership in South Africa in ending apartheid. Given our role internationally and historically, and with the troubling rhetoric and the shift in humanitarian policies in the United States under the new administration, does the member acknowledge that these developments actually help embolden those hateful views here in Canada?

Does he agree that the government should speak out against these discriminatory policies, given our role and our influence as leaders in the world in fighting hate, divisiveness, and the persecution of groups that face challenges, as we are seeing right now here in Canada?

Mr. Harold Albrecht: Mr. Speaker, I was elected by the people of Kitchener—Conestoga to represent them. That happens to be a riding within Canada. I do not presume to tell other nations how they should direct their foreign policy.

I want to thank my colleague and his party for agreeing to support this very important motion, this inclusive motion, which would address the issue before us today. However, I would remind him that while I agree that we need to be at the forefront of this, which is precisely why our party brought this motion forward to the House of Commons today, we include all faith groups. They are all included here. No, they are not all named, but it says “other” religions. It includes them all.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, in reading this motion, it seems to me that it goes more broadly than protecting all religions. I support a broad approach. It says “reducing or eliminating all types of discrimination in Canada”. Should there be discrimination against atheists, and they are targeted and discriminated against, would this motion not also cover that kind of hate?

Mr. Harold Albrecht: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question, because I was hoping to work that into my speech, but I ran out of time.

There are those who argue that atheism itself is a faith system. I mentioned Dr. Andrew Bennett. He made a statement on May 14, 2015, in which he clearly called out the discrimination and murder of an atheist blogger in Bangladesh. He said:

I am deeply troubled by the recent targeted killing of atheist blogger Ananta Bijoy Das in Bangladesh. Canada condemns this murder and calls on authorities to protect the rights and the lives of all Bangladeshis.

I could not agree more.

• (1245)

Ms. Dianne L. Watts (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House to speak to this opposition motion, which states:

That the House: (a) recognize that Canadian society is not immune to the climate of hate and fear exemplified by the recent and senseless violent acts at a Quebec City mosque; (b) condemn all forms of systemic racism, religious intolerance, and discrimination of Muslims, Jews, Christians, Sikhs, Hindus, and other religious communities; and (c) instruct the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage to undertake a study on how the government could (i) develop a whole-of-government approach to reducing or eliminating all types of discrimination in Canada, while ensuring a community-centered focus with a holistic response through evidence-

based policy-making, (ii) collect data to contextualize hate crime reports and to conduct needs assessments for impacted communities; and that the Committee report its findings and recommendations to the House no later than 240 calendar days from the adoption of this motion, provided that in its report, the Committee should make recommendations that the government may use to better reflect the enshrined rights and freedoms in the Constitution Acts, including the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

I believe that every member of Parliament, on all sides of the House, recognizes and would agree that attacks on people based on religious belief, such as the recent attack on Muslims at the Islamic Cultural Centre in Quebec City, have absolutely no place in Canadian society or any society around the world. Places of worship are meant to be safe havens for peaceful personal reflection and faith. They are meant to be places where individuals can practise their faith of choice without fear of harm or discrimination or repercussions.

As parliamentarians, we must do everything to safeguard the right of all Canadians to this vital freedom of expression and faith. Violence against any religious group is a direct attack on the rights and values that all Canadians enjoy and respect and that we as parliamentarians strive to uphold. We must protect these rights for all Canadians. It is important to highlight this, because there is a perception by many that Canada is immune, or has been immune, to the kinds of hate crimes and violence against religious groups that have been witnessed around the world. We saw tragically, only a few weeks ago in Quebec City, an act of violence that has changed us forever.

I believe that Canada must always stand firmly behind the principles of religious freedom, be it the Jewish, Muslim, Sikh, Christian, Buddhist, or Hindu faith, or whatever faith or non-faith one chooses to follow. Violence against any religious group is an attack on the universal values all Canadians cherish and protect. We must continue to do all we can to safeguard the expression and practice of faith in Canada and around the world.

This issue is not new to the House. Freedom of expression and freedom of religion have been a priority for the Conservatives. Under our government, there were 15 different motions tabled before the House of Commons that related to religious identity and religious issues by all parties in the House. Several of these bills and motions passed unanimously over the years.

To help, assist, and support all religions and religious communities in Canada, in 2012 the office of religious freedom was established by the Conservative government to monitor religious persecution and to protect freedom of religion internationally. The mandate of this office was to protect and advocate on behalf of religious minorities that were under threat, to oppose religious hatred and intolerance, and to promote Canadian values of pluralism and tolerance abroad.

• (1250)

In fact, in June 2015, the international contact group on freedom of religion was initiated by Canada, and the inaugural meeting was chaired by the ambassador of religious freedom, Andrew Bennett, in Brussels.

Unfortunately, in the 2016 budget, the Liberals chose to shut down the office of religious freedom, and I would encourage them to rethink this decision.

Business of Supply

As Conservatives, we have never hesitated to denounce religious discrimination in all its forms. We have always been a party of freedom of expression, of human rights, of equality, and of freedom of religion. In fact, the precursor to the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms was the original Canadian Bill of Rights that was enshrined in Canadian law by Conservative prime minister John Diefenbaker in 1960. This piece of legislation cemented the definition of freedom of speech, expression, association, and religion in Canadian law and in Canadian society.

I could go on about the great work that has been done by all parties in this House. However, as members of Parliament, it is our first responsibility to represent each and every one of our constituents, regardless of race, religion, or sexual orientation. We need to ensure that all Canadians of all ethnicities, religious beliefs, and cultures feel welcome and included in our communities, where they can live in peace and raise their families, free from acts of hatred and discrimination.

Today's motion underlines our duty as parliamentarians to develop legislation to guard against hate-motivated crime and discrimination against race and religious beliefs. As legislators, we need to ensure that our policies protect the most vulnerable and protect those who are targeted because of their race or religion.

Throughout history, and even in the world today, we have seen genocide and atrocities perpetrated on our fellow human beings. As Canadians who value peace and freedom and embrace tolerance, there is no place for such acts in our Canada, and we should do everything in our power to protect the innocent from these atrocities as they occur, whether it is within our own country or abroad.

I encourage all members of the House, from all sides, to join me and my colleagues in voting in favour of the motion.

As I conclude, I just want to say this, as a Buddhist for over 20 years: remember to have reverence for all sentient beings, and do no harm.

Mr. Robert Oliphant (Don Valley West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will start by saying that contrary to what we might hear in today's debate, I do not think this side of the House, or even that end of the House, has any monopoly on care and concern for human rights and justice for all people.

I want to begin by acknowledging that I actually find myself in a difficult position on this motion, because as I read the motion, I would find it very easy to support. My question is about the timing of the motion. The difficulty I have in supporting it has to do with the fact that it could usurp another motion that is being considered by the House, which we also consider important.

Would it perhaps not be better to deal with one motion and then consider a broader motion at another time, because two studies would then not collide with each other?

Ms. Dianne L. Watts: Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that the studies are symbiotic. Coming out with something all Canadians can support is the genesis of what we should be doing, bringing everyone together and making sure that no one, regardless of race, religion, or sexual orientation is discriminated against. We see that far too much.

As parliamentarians, I believe it is our duty to make sure that in our communities, everyone is safe. If there is something going on, if people are being anti-Muslim or anti-Jewish, we have to protect people. I think we are all in agreement.

• (1255)

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I enjoyed previously spending time on a committee with the hon. member.

I am becoming very puzzled by these motions, today's opposition motion and the Liberals' motion, Motion No. 103.

We are already missing out some religions, and I thank her for mentioning Buddhism. What troubles me is that some of my colleagues are mentioning indigenous faith, yet both motions deal only with religions not faiths. It is becoming now so broad as to become almost senseless. Are we proposing that the committee study this for the next five years in order to cover everything that is supposed to be in there?

It is important for us to keep in mind what Islamophobia means to some, and that is a severe fear of the Islamic faith and it is that level of severe fear that is driving people to do not just hateful but very dangerous and life-endangering activities. That is what is spurring the need for a discussion. It may be when we talk about those kinds of incidents against those in the Islamic faith, and in my city also a history of actions toward those of the Jewish faith, we need to look at whether our institutions are capable of responding appropriately and preventing these measures. However, I am worried about this becoming a partisan debate between parties about who has the best motion.

Surely, as many have said, can we not come together and amend this motion so we can just move forward with both and get down to the crux of this? That is for people in all of our communities who are fearful for their lives because of this hate-mongering activity.

Ms. Dianne L. Watts: Mr. Speaker, the member's comments and question are exactly what I was saying. If there is an issue in any of our communities, if there is hatred perpetrated upon the Islamic population, or if there is hatred perpetrated upon the Jewish population, it is incumbent upon all of us to deal with those issues. We look at our first nations, and it is absolutely correct.

From a holistic perspective, we have to look at our communities in context and really have measures in place where we can assist those people who are vulnerable. In my community, 95 languages are spoken. My community has had discrimination that has been perpetrated upon the Sikh population. We need measures in place to assist those people.

It is not about one or the other. It is about all of us in the context of dealing with the issues and their root causes of hatred and discrimination. That is what our job is and that is what we should do.

Mr. Ali Ehsassi (Willowdale, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Brampton North.

It is a great honour to rise again in the House to discuss the Conservative motion put before us today.

Business of Supply

As the member of Parliament for Willowdale, I am fortunate enough to represent one of Canada's most richly diverse ridings. Willowdale is home to Muslims and Jews, Christians and Atheists, Sikhs and Hindus, and in many ways it represents a beautiful microcosm of Canada. It stands as a proud testament to the success of Canadian pluralism.

Canadians have placed a great deal of trust in all of us. They expect us to focus on emerging challenges and demonstrate clarity of purpose and advocate on behalf of the issues that matter most. They expect us to be vigilant in protecting our core values and never forget that we are all tasked to make an even more perfect union. They expect us, in other words, not to succumb to cynical political manoeuvring, not to grandstand when many real issues are at stake.

For that very reason, I am very much opposed to the Conservative opposition motion, which I will be voting against. Instead, I am proud to stand staunchly with my caucus in support of the original Motion No. 103.

I am afraid that today's motion abdicates the sacred responsibility we all share to take a firm stand against the very real threat of Islamophobia. The Conservatives' motion represents a cynical attempt to distract us from their own aversion to demonstrate leadership on this significant issue.

This debate, of course, takes place under unique circumstances. Not only are we debating the motion in light of the more appropriate motion put forward by my colleague from Mississauga—Erin Mills, but also in the tragic aftermath of last month's shooting in Quebec City and a growing and unmistakable atmosphere, both in Canada and globally, of increased bigotry and closed-mindedness.

Since coming to power 16 months ago, our government has constantly and proudly advocated for Canadian diversity, tolerance, and multiculturalism. We must remember, however, that these values which we hold dear did not simply come into being. They were the direct result and the forceful articulation of a uniquely Canadian approach to nation-building. Similarly, we cannot take these ideals for granted. It is important we always remain vigilant in defending these core values and in condemning any attempt to weaken or discredit them.

When any community in Canada is made to feel unsafe or unduly and unfairly persecuted, made in other words to feel un-Canadian, this represents an attack on all of us. It is times like these that we have no greater responsibility than to stand in solidarity against hate, against racism, and against discrimination.

The esteemed House of Commons has done so in the past in denouncing anti-Semitism and homophobia, and all other forms of discrimination. Doing so again now will not only demonstrate much needed leadership for members of our Muslim community, but with Canadians of all faiths who wish to live in a peaceful and modern society where freedom of religion is truly allowed to flourish.

The motion before us today is, in its very essence, a watered-down version of a similar motion put forth earlier this week by the Liberal caucus. The Liberal motion, in turn, was the logical extension of a petition and motion tabled this past fall, which condemned all forms of Islamophobia.

It is worth remembering, despite the opposition's attempts to distance itself from this fact, that the motion was unanimously approved at the time by all parties. It is worth asking, therefore, what has changed since then? Why is the opposition now opposed to a worthy ideal it once supported? The answer, as it all too often does, lies with crude political calculations and blatant partisanship. Rather than standing up to hate and in defence of tolerance and diversity, the Conservative Party has decided that condemning religious bigotry does not pass its internal values test. This stance, aided and abetted by an orchestrated campaign of misinformation, innuendo, and alternative facts, may be politically expedient in some circles but it is wrong.

● (1300)

By playing politics with an important motion, by deliberately diluting its most important elements, by glossing over the very real threat of Islamophobia, by refusing to call out racism and bigotry for what they are, the motion before us today does us all a great disservice. This is rank political posturing at its most cynical and counterproductive.

The events of January 29 at the Islamic cultural centre of Quebec City will forever stand as an incredibly dark chapter in our nation's history. The victims of that cowardly attack are not abstractions. They were brothers and sons, fathers and husbands. They were grocery store owners and professors, pharmacists and civil servants. They were all Muslims, shot in the back while praying in a place of worship.

Events such as these do not simply happen; they are the direct result of fear, hatred, and discrimination. They are symptoms of a much larger epidemic.

Islamophobia, whether we care to admit it or not, is very real. Denouncing Islamophobia for what it is, an affront to Canadian values, does not threaten equality, but reinforces it. Admitting that a problem exists does not confer special status on any particular or specific group. Rather, it ensures that all Canadians receive equal access to and equal protection of an essential right.

When the federal government committed \$300 million to the victims of the Fort McMurray wildfires, we were not prioritizing one region of the country over the other. We were standing in solidarity with our fellow Canadians. When our government introduced a plan to combat the growing opioid crisis, we were not diminishing other very real public health needs. We were proposing a concrete solution to an obvious problem. The motion introduced by the Liberal Party earlier this week provided clear language and forceful leadership on an issue of vital national importance.

The Conservative motion before us today weakens and waters down Motion No. 103 to the point of irrelevance. The Conservative motion, pardon my language, represents parliamentary malarkey. For that reason, I am proud that my caucus, rather than simply curse the darkness represented by the Conservative motion, has chosen to light a candle and combat Islamophobia head on.

Business of Supply

•(1305)

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have listened very closely to the debate today, and the majority of it has been good debate. However, what I heard just now was deplorable and very disconcerting to me as a member of Parliament representing the people of my riding. Believe me, their concerns are valid to me. They were not part of some kind of organized activity to shut down a Liberal motion.

People across our country are deeply concerned about the term “Islamophobic”, which was not defined in Motion No. 103. That is very important to the reason the Conservatives are choosing to say that every Canadian matters. Over and over again, we have said in the House that what happened in Quebec City was deplorable. What is done to any person because of his or her faith should not and cannot happen in Canada, and we have laws and rights in our country to protect us.

Islamophobia would impact my children if that terminology were in reference to hate or fear of a religion. We taught our children, children of a Christian home whose father is a minister, to honour, understand, and embrace the Christian faith. However, something my husband does at all times is stand in front of his congregation and children and says, “Do not believe simply because I am standing here telling you. You check it out for yourselves. You check out other faiths, know what it is they believe, talk to them, debate with them”.

This is a right we have in Canada, to debate and disagree. That is what Canadians are concerned about with Motion No. 103. That is why they are thrilled to hear a more reasonable and responsible response coming from this side of the House.

Mr. Ali Ehsassi: Mr. Speaker, I obviously understand the sentiments that are animating my good friend across the aisle. However, it seems pretty clear to me that as members of Parliament we are supposed to actually bring clarity to issues. We are supposed to try to identify those issues that demand leadership and to elevate the discussion.

What we have seen over the course of the past two years is something truly jarring. The member knows full well about the torching of a mosque in Peterborough in late 2015. She knows full well about the arson that occurred at a mosque in Hamilton in September 2016. She knows full well of the horrific incident in Quebec City. She knows full well about the Statistics Canada study which was published, which demonstrated very clearly that the incidence of hate crimes against Muslims has doubled over the course of two years.

The question before us is clear. Are we supposed to demonstrate leadership, identify the problem, have the department simply undertake some research on an issue which is significant to Canadians, or are we going to play politics? Are we just going to engage in the type of behaviour which actually obfuscates the issue rather than clarifies it?

•(1310)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for my colleague across the aisle.

Would he like everyone to stop playing political games on such a delicate and serious issue? If the official opposition agreed to support your motion, would you agree to support theirs?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): I would remind hon. members that they must address their comments to the Chair and not to other members directly.

The hon. member for Willowdale.

[*English*]

Mr. Ali Ehsassi: Mr. Speaker, obviously, all of us as members of this House would like to see collective attention brought to this issue. If there was consensus that there is the issue of Islamophobia, that it is an issue we have to take seriously, that it is an issue that we have to examine, and that it is an issue that we have to treat as incredibly important in terms of the terrible distress it causes for the members of our Muslim community, then yes, I would be very much in favour of that.

Ms. Ruby Sahota (Brampton North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I rise against the opposition's motion that was introduced by the member for Cypress Hills—Grasslands. This motion looks to gain the support of this House to require the government to recognize the increasing public climate of hate and fear across Canada, condemn all forms of religious discrimination and systemic racism, and to request that the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage conduct a study.

The current motion has a different motive. This came in response to Motion No. 103 introduced yesterday. It essentially reformulated the motion introduced yesterday with one significant and notable difference: the word “Islamophobia” is removed from the Conservative motion.

The Conservatives claim to want to have a mature debate but fail to recognize and make the effort to learn what Islamophobia is. They fail to understand what the word means to Muslims living in Canada. They fail to show leadership in the face of a growing wave of hate and irrational fear of Islam and Muslims. They continue to allow the extreme views of people who perpetrate racism and discrimination against people of different faiths. This motion holds little weight when the Conservative Party leadership hopefuls are joining protests of racist and xenophobic groups.

Let us be clear. Much of this directly relates to the recent petition e-411, signed by more than 69,000 Canadians, asking the government to denounce Islamophobia. This petition received broad support from Canadians because people of different faiths in this country are facing systemic racism and religious discrimination every day.

Business of Supply

A few years ago, in my city of Brampton, flyers were being circulated against the Sikh community and immigrants asking, “Do you really want Sikhs and immigrants to be living among us in Brampton?” We see swastikas printed on Jewish synagogues here in Ottawa and across Canada, racist graffiti against Sikhs in Edmonton, and anti-Muslim protests at the University of Calgary. A mosque in Calgary was vandalized and left with a burned copy of the Quran and a threatening letter. We can never forget the tragic and horrific terrorist attack on the mosque in Sainte-Foy. That attack was a result of the divisive rhetoric used by leaders of government, political parties, media personalities, and other public figures. When public figures use hateful, discriminatory, and divisive language, it gives legitimacy to those who feel it is acceptable to perpetrate racism and discrimination against people of certain religious groups.

What we read and hear about in the news does not even include the countless daily discriminatory and racist attacks that people face on buses, on sidewalks, at schools, and at work.

As much as I have been loved and accepted by many Canadians, I too have been a victim of racism. Imagine a young girl in middle school isolated in an elevator and her hair being set on fire as she was being called a “Paki”. That happened to me. Imagine what kind of fear and mental anguish one would go through in life when one realizes that adults could perpetrate such hate toward a child. We cannot allow ourselves to let this continue, especially if the government can do more to help people who are marginalized because of their faith. This Conservative opposition motion should be seeking to get the heritage committee to study the rising tide of fear and hate against people of the Islamic faith and all other faiths.

• (1315)

However, eliminating the word “Islamophobia” waters down original Motion No. 103. In order to have a proper understanding and study on the issue, we must name that issue. We must call it what it is and we must have a focused study.

Denouncing Islamophobia is not prohibiting respectful criticism of Islam or any other faith as that is allowed by our country's Charter of Rights and Freedoms. What is not acceptable is categorizing Islam as a religion of evil and violence, and painting all people of the faith with one brush.

People in this country have called for targeted attacks against people of the Muslim faith. Motion No. 103 does limit the study to be done and provides for all Canadians who want to practise their faith without the fear of discrimination and being marginalized by others. The opposition motion is asking the committee to conduct a study on racism and religious discrimination that exist in our country, but it eliminates once again the word “Islamophobia” which is a very real issue in this country today.

The motion could do more by asking for the condemnation of Islamophobia and all forms of discrimination against people of any religion.

To ask the government to condemn Islamophobia is not without precedent. In a previous Parliament, former Liberal member Irwin Cotler received unanimous consent to his motion which called for the government to condemn anti-Semitism, stating that discrimination against Jews is an insult to our shared democratic values and for

the government to work with community stakeholders to help combat all forms of anti-Semitism.

The context is similar when it comes to anti-Semitism and Islamophobia. Both are terms used to describe the action of discriminating against Jews and Muslims respectively on the basis of their religion. If that motion was acceptable in a previous Parliament, then seeking the condemnation of Islamophobia and all forms of systemic racism and discrimination against other religious groups should be treated the same.

It is important that we define what a phobia is. The definition of a phobia is “an extreme or irrational fear of, or an aversion to, something”. Therefore, Islamophobia is by definition “an extreme or irrational fear of, or an aversion to, Islam”. That is a very simple and clear definition of what Islamophobia is.

Islam is a religion of peace, harmony, and community. Canadian Muslims are peaceful, respectful, and essential members of our community along with other Canadians. For those of this faith or of any other faith, or for those without faith that are not peaceful and respectful, we have the Criminal Code to deal with that. The actions of so few extremists that have made Islamophobia so prevalent in today's society has made this fear a reality in our country.

Just like any hateful and violent actions committed by someone from a certain community, it does not mean everyone from that group is the same. When people have a problem with Islamophobia being listed specifically to be condemned by the government, that implies it is okay to have an irrational fear of Islam.

It is ironic that those who want that word removed called for the removal due to freedom of expression, but those people are directly trying to block that freedom of expression by removing that word from the motion. Those are far from the truth about Islam and should not be used in categorizing a religion that is followed by over one million Canadians.

• (1320)

This Conservative motion comes after the terror attack in Sainte-Foy and after every party in the House has agreed that the hateful and divisive rhetoric used by people against Muslims in Canada cannot be ignored anymore. If we do allow it to continue, we are allowing more Canadians to think it is okay to marginalize and discriminate against one group of Canadians. We cannot repeat the mistake of letting Islamophobia and systemic racism persist.

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to acknowledge my hon. colleague for sharing what I can only imagine being a horrific incident in her youth. Bullying and racism have no part in our schools. I wish I had been there. I would have been her bodyguard. It is absolutely unacceptable, and I appreciate her sharing that.

My hon. colleague mentioned a former member of Parliament, Irwin Cotler, who suggested that the word “Islamophobia” be removed and substituted with “anti-Muslim”.

Business of Supply

We see acts of racism and hate crimes throughout our country. Indeed, if members Google “hate crimes in Canada”, it comes up with attacks against Sikhs, attacks against first nations, and attacks against the Jewish community as well.

During the summer, I went to Punjab, India, and visited the Golden Temple so that I could better understand that religion, and I am offended by the comments by government members that somehow we are racist, by putting forth this motion that mentions that we condemn all forms of systemic racism, religious intolerance, and discrimination against Muslims, Jews, Christians, Sikhs, Hindus, and other religious communities. This is not a watered-down motion. It is simply capturing and standing up, as leaders, as we should all be doing.

I believe our hon. NDP colleague mentioned that we should be standing together. How is this motion going to protect one person? As a matter of fact, those in the Islamic community within my riding have said that this would draw more unwanted attention to them.

I challenge the member opposite to review this and withdraw the comments that this is a watered-down attempt, which is painting us as racists. I am not a racist.

Ms. Ruby Sahota: Mr. Speaker, I recognize that pointing out systemic racism among all groups, which the original Motion No. 103 does do, in fact, is noble in its intent. However, the removal of the word “Islamophobia”, to me, in itself shows that there is something that is worth fighting for in our current climate in Canada. It shows that there is an extreme fear against calling a person or an act Islamophobic. It does not limit freedom of expression, which a lot of critics have said. I believe that is a misrepresentation.

Yes, systemic racism against all faiths does occur in this country. I am a witness to that, and many in this House probably are, but the current climate in Canada calls for us to take some bold action against what is happening. So, yes, we should call it what it is. We should have no fear against the word “Islamophobia”. Let us use it, let us figure out what it means, let us figure out why this current climate and temperature is occurring in our country.

• (1325)

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, when we talk about Motion No. 103 and its importance when we are seeing a huge spike in hate crimes toward people of the Islamic faith and Muslims in our country, I think it is very important that we support the motion and the intent of it. However, I think the Conservative motion should also be supported. It is important that we focus on the spike in hate crimes and the attack on Muslims, in particular, but we should also be supporting this motion.

I am hoping that the member will show real leadership, which is voting for both motions, as that would bring people together and represent all people in our country, because we need to move forward. It is going to take someone from one of these parties to actually bring us together by taking the lead and saying that they are going to commit to vote for both motions. I hope this member will be the member to take that lead.

Ms. Ruby Sahota: Mr. Speaker, as I said before, there is no ill intent in the Conservative opposition motion. However, the original Motion No. 103 was worked on for a long time by a member of the House, and that motion in itself was a terrific motion.

There is nothing wrong with studying systemic racism among all communities and focusing particularly on Islamophobia. It is what society in Canada calls for today. It is what we should call out and focus on.

Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek.

I rise today to speak in support of the motion put forward by my colleague the member for Cypress Hills—Grasslands.

I have been very impressed by much of the tone of today's debate, by the respect shown across party lines from all quarters of the House and by some of the very touching personal stories that have been offered to us to persuade us to reason, reconciliation, and recognition of what we all recognize as a continuing challenge to our country and our society, to fight hate and discrimination in all of its forms.

I am afraid I must say that, given the attempts by some Liberal MPs to misrepresent both the content and the motivation of the motion, it is worth revisiting the text. The motion reads:

That the House: (a) recognize that Canadian society is not immune to the climate of hate and fear exemplified by the recent and senseless violent acts at a Quebec City mosque; (b) condemn all forms of systemic racism, religious intolerance, and discrimination of Muslims, Jews, Christians, Sikhs, Hindus, and other religious communities; and (c) instruct the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage to undertake a study on how the government could (i) develop a whole-of-government approach to reducing or eliminating all types of discrimination in Canada, while ensuring a community-centered focus with a holistic response through evidence-based policy-making, (ii) collect data to contextualize hate crime reports and to conduct needs assessments for impacted communities; and that the Committee report its findings and recommendations to the House no later than 240 calendar days from the adoption of this motion, provided that in its report, the Committee should make recommendations that the government may use to better reflect the enshrined rights and freedoms in the Constitution Acts, including the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Conservatives are fully committed to freedom of religion and freedom of speech. We condemn, in the strongest possible terms, any and all acts committed against religious communities, including at places of worship.

In my riding of Thornhill, I have two mosques, dozens of synagogues, dozens of churches, a Buddhist temple, a Hindu temple just adjacent, and until constituency boundaries were redrawn in 2015, a Taoist temple. More than 100 mother tongues are spoken in my riding.

As Canadians struggled to come to terms in the days after the tragic, hateful terror attack on the Sainte-Foy Islamic cultural centre, I was invited to participate in a commemoration service at the largest mosque in my riding, the Jaffari Community Centre. It was a terribly sad but defiant gathering.

Business of Supply

Representatives from across faith communities, from congregations across Thornhill, came together to pledge a shared commitment to the fundamental right of all Canadians in our homes, our workplaces, the public spaces we share, and particularly our places of worship, to enjoy and share all of the freedoms of this wonderful country in peace and safety. The names of the six murdered men in the Quebec attack were read into the record: Abdelkrim Hassane, Khaled Belkacemi, Boubaker Thabti, Azzeddine Soufiane, Mamadou Tanou Barry, Ibrahim Barry. Those names cannot be said too often. Those names are forever inscribed in a terrible moment in our shared Canadian history.

However justice may be eventually dispensed, this tragedy demands of all of us a renewed commitment to reject prejudice, fear, bigotry, and hate.

● (1330)

We must mourn, we must reflect, but we must also go forward as friends, neighbours, and respectful, loving fellow Canadians.

As I have said repeatedly in the House since I was first elected in 2008, I am passionately in favour of the legal protection of all Canadians from discrimination in any of its forms; I am passionately in favour of the legal protection of all Canadians from hate crimes; and I am proud of the laws that have evolved over the years and the reality that Canada is recognized around the world for our recognition of diversity and equality.

I am proud that the current Canadian Human Rights Act defends the principle:

all individuals should have an opportunity equal with other individuals to make for themselves the lives that they are able and wish to have and to have their needs accommodated, consistent with their duties and obligations as members of society, without being hindered in or prevented from doing so by discriminatory practices based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, age, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, family status, disability

The Conservative Party has long been the party of free speech and free expression. Conservatives do not support restrictions on legitimate freedom of speech, and we strongly support the fundamental right to freedom of expression. We must remember that it was the Conservative government that established the office of religious freedom under the leadership of Dr. Andrew Bennett in 2012. That office led the way internationally, as well as promoting Canadian values of tolerance and pluralism.

Regrettably, as we know, the Liberal government chose not to extend and strengthen the mandate of the office and the ambassador of religious freedom in budget 2016. As a result, Canada's voice on issues of religious tolerance in an increasingly intolerant world has been severely diminished.

Just as I said that I believe that eternal vigilance is the price of freedom, so too is eternal vigilance essential in the fight against discrimination, hate, and fear. Many motions put before the House over the years have pledged to recognize that Canadian society is not immune to these worst tendencies of human nature and urged efforts to reduce or, ideally, eliminate all forms of discrimination in Canada. Again, as the motion before us stipulates, we must “condemn all forms of systemic racism, religious intolerance, and discrimination”. As well, the motion directs the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage to study how the government might develop a whole-of-

government approach to better address the terrible recurring societal disorders we have discussed today.

Reduction or elimination of all forms of discrimination is a massive challenge, but we cannot give up. We must not stop trying. This motion just might move our wonderful country closer to achieving the dream I know we all share in the House of a fully inclusive, respectful, and loving society.

● (1335)

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the member for Cypress Hills—Grasslands and the member for Mississauga—Erin Mills for doing something that I have not been able to do in 20 years; namely, get a debate on the floor of the House of Commons about the religious currents in our society, some of which are, frankly, quite negative.

I am actually kind of disappointed, though, ultimately, in the debate. This is an issue involving religion, which, of course, creates all kinds of differences among people, as well as bringing them together. It is extremely important that the chamber bring people together. How it is done is a matter of technicality. It is not really an issue whether it is done by simultaneous votes, as suggested by the NDP member, or some amendment to the motion. The issue is that it is more important to bring us together on this motion than the content of both motions.

The argument that Islamophobia does not exist is just nonsense. I could give chapter and verse from my own riding. It is an important thing to say, and it is important that we deal with it. It is also important that we, as a chamber, bring together the people of Canada so that we can have a rational, coherent discussion about the impact of religion in our society.

Hon. Peter Kent: Mr. Speaker, I have always enjoyed working with this member, on the defence committee and now on the foreign affairs committee. I would respectfully disagree with regard to his belief that there is a single definition to the keynote word in the Liberal Motion No. 103.

We have heard a number of interpretations, of definitions, of what it means to different people, what it means to Muslims, and what it means to non-Muslims. It is not a precise word in any sense of the definition of a word. We cannot find it in a dictionary. It is a confected word. It does send a powerful message, but it also, if adopted, would undermine and compromise the essential message, that this House I know believes in, about systemic racism, hate, discrimination, bigotry, and fear. It is that single word that stands between some of the members on that side of the House; while not all because I know there are many members on that side of the House who disagree with that word as well as on this side of the House. I would hope that in the hours ahead before we vote on this motion and in the days ahead before we vote on Motion No. 103, all members will reflect on what words mean and the power of words.

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as this debate continues I am forever hopeful that maybe there is a way to square the circle because I do think that the importance of this debate merits all of us to put our best foot forward and to try to find a resolution here. It seems to me that the issue that the Conservative members are having trouble with is the lack of a definition of Islamophobia and the members want it to be clarified.

Business of Supply

I had heard from the member for Mount Royal who actually made a pretty good proposal, and maybe there is a space where we can find agreement. His proposal was to add the words, “which speaks to a hatred or fear of Muslims, known as Islamophobia”, to be added somewhere in this motion. I wonder whether this could be entertained. Is there not some way that we can find a way to make this work? I do think that the importance of the issue trumps, pardon the word, I really dislike that word, or makes it so that it is incumbent upon us to rise above this and to find a way to make it work. Is there some way that we can make this work?

● (1340)

Hon. Peter Kent: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member's efforts in crossing back and forth across the floor of the House today, as a number of fellow colleagues have done seeking a way to find acceptance of both motions. On issues of human rights, I always look for advice at some point or another to the former Liberal justice minister, to the human rights champion Irwin Cotler. On this issue and on Motion No. 103, I take his advice where he says he would prefer that keynote word be taken from the motion and replaced instead by “anti-Muslim”.

Mrs. Kelly Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, CPC): Mr. Speaker, before I begin, I want to express my deepest sympathies to the families and friends of those killed and injured in the attack at the Quebec City Islamic centre. It cannot be overstated that this attack is an affront to the religious freedom of Canadians. Places of worship are meant to be havens for personal peaceful reflection and faith. Violence against any religious group is an attack on the universal values that all Canadians cherish and seek to protect.

It truly is a privilege to speak to the motion introduced by colleague, the member for Cypress Hills—Grasslands. He has been a mentor to me through the incredible work he has done over the years advancing the issues of freedom of religion and freedom of speech in Parliament, and I want to acknowledge his efforts.

We truly are fortunate to live in Canada. Often, we take our freedoms for granted, like the freedom of religion, the freedom of speech, and the freedom of association. These foundational democratic principles were first enshrined in Canadian law by Conservative Prime Minister John Diefenbaker, in 1960. His definition of what a Canadian is has never been better stated and has stood the test of time, “I am a 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.”

These are Canada's values.

As someone whose faith is integral to my life, I am grateful for and believe very strongly in the religious freedom we enjoy here in Canada. That freedom, which includes protection against discrimination based on one's faith, is a right for all Canadians regardless of their religion.

A number of weeks ago, I met an incredibly brave young Christian woman in my riding. She fled her country as a young adult because she was the very real target of attacks from those who did not approve of her choice of faith. Today, she cannot be on Facebook or Instagram because she remains concerned that her family, still in her country of origin, could be targeted because of her choices.

When I sat down with her and listened to her tell her story, it was impossible not to grasp the real fear that she feels as a target of attack because of her religious beliefs. This young woman came to Canada because she believes in the words and the spirit of former Prime Minister Diefenbaker's declaration. Nobody should be forced to choose between their faith and their personal security.

Os Guinness, in his book, *The Global Public Square, Religious Freedom and the Making of a World Safe for Diversity*, identifies the need to “restore the primacy and high priority of establishing freedom of thought, conscience, religion and belief for people of all faiths and none, both for the sake of individual human persons and for the common good of humanity itself.”

Making free speech and freedom of faith a priority is paramount to our democracy and our success as a nation. These are the values that, for over a decade, informed the previous government's foreign policy.

Unfortunately, with the abolishing of the office of religious freedom, one of the most visible vehicles for the promotion of freedom of religion is now gone. Through this office, under the very capable leadership of Dr. Andrew Bennett, Canada worked with like-minded partners to speak out against violations of freedom of religion, denounce violence against human rights defenders, and condemn attacks on worshippers and places of worship around the world.

This office led the way internationally to protect freedom of religion and belief, as well as to promote Canadian values of tolerance and pluralism.

Free speech and freedom of belief are fundamental. Without them, there can be no exchanging and evaluating of ideas. If we are unwilling to challenge each other, then we leave ourselves vulnerable to having our beliefs set by others.

● (1345)

If British society had not challenged the monarchy, the bill of rights of 1689, which is the foundational document of Canada's democracy, would not exist.

Free speech is what allows us to advance as a country. When the state determines what is right and what is wrong, societies are doomed to become less prosperous and less free, as we have observed in Venezuela or North Korea.

Free speech is also our first and ultimately our only durable defence against tyranny. It has been well documented that the monstrous regimes of the 20th century gained and held power by taking control of the press and silencing all of their critics. Free speech was stifled, competing views put down, often violently.

The Soviet Union was the first state to have the objective of eliminating religion as a means of consolidating power. The state, or a central authority that derives its power from the state, cannot unilaterally decide what is right to say and what is wrong to say or think. Trying to shut down debate on a point of view that is not mainstream almost inevitably leads to unintended consequences.

Business of Supply

Over the past few years, we've seen campus clubs shut down, government not releasing certain information because it could be incendiary or certain persons not being able to hold events in certain forums. Because a debate may be divisive is precisely why it's important to have it.

It's impossible to find common ground or a way forward on an issue unless the proponents of both sides of that issue can share their points of view and the reasons behind their contentions. If that does not happen, the silos of thought that are so devastating to the advancement of a prosperous country become more and more entrenched. An informed citizenry is the check against an abuse of power by the state or its most powerful individuals.

Freedom of religion also serves as a bulwark against totalitarianism. Pope John Paul II has been well recognized as playing a major role in ending Communist rule in his native Poland and eventually all of Europe.

Beyond supporting the motion, all of us here can take a role supporting religious freedom, which brings me to the International Panel of Parliamentarians for Freedom of Religion or Belief. Established in Oslo, Norway in 2014, the panel's activities have been opened up to all members of Parliament. All participating parliamentarians are committed to accomplishing the shared goals of advancing freedom of religion or belief.

This is done by promoting freedom of religion or belief for all persons through their work and respective institutions; enhancing global co-operation by endeavouring to work across geographical, political, and religious lines; and undertaking efforts to jointly promote freedom of religion or belief, share information, and mobilize effective responses. The experiences of one country can inform how another country views its situation. I recommend that MPs from all parties participate in this international panel.

To conclude, last week, I welcomed my seventh grandchild into the world. I consider it my responsibility as a federal legislator to work every day to help keep Canada a place where my grandchildren will be able to worship as they choose, a place where they will be able to speak out for what they believe in, and where they are able to live without fear of being the target of hate-based attacks because of those choices. That is my priority as a member of Parliament. It is my sincere hope that all members will support the motion.

• (1350)

Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage (Multiculturalism), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for her comments and her passion on this issue.

I will confess that we on this side of the House find it a bit confusing that the term, "Islamophobia" can have such extensive semantic debate in this chamber and cause such confusion to our friends opposite when our friends opposite themselves consented unanimously to a motion that reads:

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

The term was clear to the Conservatives on October 26 last year. Why is it no longer clear now?

Mrs. Kelly Block: Mr. Speaker, I recognize that there was a motion passed unanimously on October 26. I recognize what that

motion was, but obviously, the member of the governing party who introduced the motion in December thought it warranted even more discussion and sought to clarify what she would like to see discussed in her motion.

I believe that the motion we presented today provides even more clarity in that conversation, which is why I am supporting the motion we introduced today.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend, the hon. member for Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, and congratulate her on her seventh grandchild. I know she is a great mom and a great grandmother.

I really find it perplexing that there is in this House today the pretence that there is a conflict between Motion No. 103 and the motion put forward today by the hon. member for Cypress Hills—Grasslands. They stand side by side, focused largely on the same concerns. I think we are having a false debate, which is not going to be helpful to Canadians.

I note that on Twitter today, former prime minister Stephen Harper's communications director, Andrew MacDougall, is basically pleading with Conservatives to say that Motion No. 103 is not a source of concern. To him it makes sense. It is a small measure of a statement of concern in the wake of killings at a mosque.

Could the hon. member not see her way clear to supporting both motions?

Mrs. Kelly Block: Mr. Speaker, if anything has become clear to me throughout last night's debate and the debate today, it is that there are dissenting views on whether these motions conflict with one another.

I believe that the motion put forward by my colleague is more inclusive and provides more clarity. It speaks to the concerns that have been raised with me hundreds of times in the last number of weeks by constituents I am here to represent.

• (1355)

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask my colleague a question based on the confusion it seems the member for Parkdale—High Park has about the opposition day motion today and Motion No. 103.

I want to thank his colleague, the member for Mississauga—Erin Mills, for taking my call on this subject. What I am confused by are the PMO talking points we hear from that side today about confusion, which seem to conflict with the evidentiary record of the committee on human rights of this Parliament. The first time the member for Mississauga—Erin Mills used the term "Islamophobia" as a member of Parliament, it led to a comment by the witness, Hossein Raeesi, who said that the definition can change, depending on where one is in the world.

What we are talking about is a reasonable debate to ask for some certainty. That is what I suggested to the member for Mississauga—Erin Mills, to clarify that there was no conflict with free speech provisions. It is unfortunate that the PMO would not allow her to make a slight amendment.

Statements by Members

I wonder if my colleague has any comment on the testimony heard that day, including by those members, on the issue of this definition on a global basis.

Mrs. Kelly Block: Mr. Speaker, I cannot do that question justice. I would simply point out that again today, and even last night during the debate, there have been different definitions of the word thrown out. There have been suggestions that we can figure it out as we go, which does not do a service to all Canadians.

Ms. Iqra Khalid (Mississauga—Erin Mills, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank all colleagues in the House for the great passion and support they have shown on this very important issue. When I tabled Motion No. 103, I approached everyone. I approached grassroots organizations, civil society, and Canadians at large to see how they felt about an important issue that affects all Canadians: systemic racism and religious discrimination, including Islamophobia. The amount of support I have received from the House and from Canadians at large has been overwhelming.

As is part of my collaborative nature, I went across the aisle to seek support from members in opposition. I received tremendous support from members of the NDP caucus, and it was amazing to see. I approached members of the Conservative caucus, and I felt division among them, and it astounded me. I could not understand why they were so divided on this issue. Where one member proposed that “Islamophobia” be removed and replaced with “anti-Muslim discrimination”, another member proposed that the whole reference to e-petition 411, which was signed by 69,000 Canadians, be removed. There were other members who had not even read the text of the motion but were still opposed to it, based on I do not know what.

I really tried to build consensus in the House to raise awareness on this very important issue and to shed light on the more than one million Canadians who suffer because of Islamophobia, who are victimized on a daily basis. It astounds me, but I am very flattered that the opposition has used one of its very precious opposition days to continue the debate on this very important issue.

I believe that my time is up, and I will be continuing my speech after question period.

The Speaker: The hon. member for Mississauga—Erin Mills will have seven and a half minutes to complete her speech following question period.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

• (1400)

[*Translation*]

SEASONAL WORK

Mrs. Marilène Gill (Manicouagan, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on the North Shore, the fishery and forestry sectors provide thousands of jobs for Quebecers. Thousands of families back home live from the sea and the forest.

Seasonal work is nothing new. No one has ever gone fishing in February and crops have never been planted in March, which means

that there are people who work for the better part of the year, but who have to rely on employment insurance to fill the gap.

The spring gap, that time of year when neither income nor EI benefits are received, is 14 weeks. Fourteen weeks without a decent income is just terrible. Back home people are forced to leave the region, go into debt, or rely on the community's generosity even though they do work that is essential to Quebec's economy. The spring gap is 14 weeks. Ottawa is hindering regional development, contributing to the exodus from the regions, and leaving people in misery. It is disgusting.

The House can be sure that the Bloc will always be there for the unemployed in our regions who have been abandoned by this heartless government.

* * *

VAL-MARTIN INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECT

Mrs. Eva Nassif (Vimy, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I would like to inform the other members of the House about all the work that has been carried out by various levels of government and has led to a decision that will help many people in my riding of Vimy.

On January 16, 2017, \$18.2 million in federal funding was allocated for the first phase of the Val-Martin infrastructure project to renovate 124 social housing units in Vimy.

This significant investment in Quebec shows that Canadians' priorities are respected and that we are following through on our commitments.

I would like to thank everyone at the provincial and federal levels who worked on the long negotiation and planning process for this massive investment. This is a giant step that will help the most vulnerable people in Vimy gain access to affordable housing.

* * *

[*English*]

PHOENIX PAY SYSTEM

Mr. Blake Richards (Banff—Airdrie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada is known globally for its natural wonders, and people from all over the world come to experience our national parks. In my riding, millions of visitors come to Banff National Park every year. Banff is Canada's first national park and the crown jewel of the parks system. With free admission this year for Canada's 150th, more visitors than ever are expected to come see the beauty of Banff National Park.

Unfortunately, there are many Parks Canada employees who work in Banff who are not being paid their proper salaries, or even being paid at all, due to the issues with the Phoenix pay system. These employees help to make Banff National Park the top tourism destination it is. However, many of them are being forced to leave to take other jobs so they can finally receive a paycheque.

First, the government forced the implementation of the Phoenix system, despite warnings that it was not ready to go, and now it is dragging its feet while thousands of employees are struggling to make ends meet.

Statements by Members

I stand today to acknowledge the hard work of these employees and to demand that the government come up with a fix immediately for this pay fiasco.

* * *

SURREY—NEWTON CONSTITUENCY YOUTH COUNCIL

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal (Surrey—Newton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate the impressive youth who attended the Surrey—Newton constituency youth council meeting this past Saturday. Over 60 young people of different ages, cultural backgrounds, educational pursuits, and political beliefs gathered to launch this initiative. Their ambitions include discussing public policy issues, advancing them through organizing events that will help to better integrate and involve youth within our local community, and most importantly, working together to make a positive impact for the residents of Surrey—Newton. Their enthusiasm is contagious, and their many ideas are exciting.

This is just the first gathering of this group, and I am very much looking forward to continuing to work with them over the coming months and days.

I thank all members of the Surrey—Newton constituency youth council.

* * *

MOOSE HIDE CAMPAIGN

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, February 16 marks the sixth annual gathering of men who belong to the Moose Hide Campaign. The Moose Hide Campaign is a grassroots movement of aboriginal and non-aboriginal men who are standing up against violence towards women and children. It was started by Paul Lecerte and his daughter Raven in response to Canada's missing and murdered indigenous women. Today there are 300 men on Vancouver Island fasting to demonstrate humility, sacrifice, and their determination to effect change.

The cycle of violence against women must stop. I am proud to wear the moose hide pin in support of the campaign, and I invite all members to do the same. Wearing this moose hide signifies a commitment to honour, respect, and protect the women and children in our lives and to work together with other men to end violence against women and children.

It is critical that we engage men and boys in our strategies to end gender-based violence. The Moose Hide Campaign is exactly the kind of leadership we need.

* * *

• (1405)

LOUIS RIEL

Hon. MaryAnn Mihychuk (Kildonan—St. Paul, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on Monday, Manitobans remember our founding father, Louis Riel.

Born in Winnipeg in 1844, he studied for the priesthood and law in Montreal. In 1868, he returned to the Prairies, and like his father, became a Métis leader.

He fought for all Manitobans. He was the head of our provisional government, which negotiated the Manitoba Act that established the Province of Manitoba. He was elected three times to the House, but was unable to take his seat. He believed and fought for bilingualism and multiculturalism. He is a hero to the Métis and all Manitobans. He is a father of Confederation.

Manitobans will remember him as a hero on Monday. In 1885, on the way to the gallows, he said, "I have nothing but my heart and I have given it long ago to my country."

* * *

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Hon. Michelle Rempel (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in a few short days, four months will have passed since the government agreed to bring Yazidi sex slave survivors to Canada. Yet, today, the government has brought zero, none, not one government-sponsored Yazidi refugee to Canada.

The international community is watching what Canada does on this issue. NGOs are waiting for the government to engage with them. I have a feeling that the government's inability to prioritize genocide victims as refugees to Canada, or to do anything to help them, is going to become the shame of our country.

Every one of us should be ashamed of the fact that there has been no action taken to date on this file. I implore the government to put partisan politics aside, to stand and actually do something, as members opposite laugh on this matter. We need to act now.

* * *

BITTER HARVEST

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj (Etobicoke Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to inform the House about the long-awaited motion picture premier of *Bitter Harvest*, on February 28, at the Canadian War Museum. This film was inspired by one of the most harrowing genocides of the 20th century, the Holodomor, or genocide by famine, planned and executed by Soviet dictator Stalin against the Ukrainian people in 1932-33.

Bitter Harvest is the compelling story of dignity, rebellion, and the power of love in the midst of horrific evil as seen through the eyes of a young couple caught up in the midst of Stalin's genocidal policies. It features such talented Hollywood actors as Terence Stamp, and Canada's own Barry Pepper. It is directed and co-written by Canadians George Mendeluk and Richard Bachynsky-Hoover.

The principal producer of this epic, Ian Ihnatowycz, is a constituent and successful entrepreneur, as well as generous philanthropist.

I encourage all members of the House to attend the premier of *Bitter Harvest* on February 28. I congratulate Ian without whom this motion picture would not have been possible.

* * *

CONSERVATIVE AND LIBERAL HOCKEY TEAMS

Mr. Kyle Peterson (Newmarket—Aurora, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, tonight an event of epic proportion will take place at 8 p.m. at the Canadian Tire Centre, home of the Ottawa Senators.

There is a buzz all across the national capital region. For the first time in years, the Conservative and Liberal hockey teams will face off for hockey supremacy. Two teams will compete, but only one will lift the trophy after the match.

I am not one to make predictions, and I will not attempt to do so today. I hear the Conservative team has some strong right-wingers, but our team has the ability to move from left to right, to left to right, which will come in very handy tonight.

Tonight's game is in support of the Terry Fox Foundation. Admission is free and donations will be accepted at the gate.

I urge every member of the House, especially those in the Ottawa area, to attend and to encourage their constituents to come out to support a great cause and to see, hopefully, a good game.

* * *

DEFIBRILLATORS

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston, CPC): Mr. Speaker, statistics from Canadian police forces show that one life is saved every year for every 17 installed defibrillators in police cruisers. Thus, placing defibrillators in the trunks of all 5,600 RCMP cruisers would save 320 lives per year.

This was true when I raised this matter in the Commons three months ago. In the interim, 80 Canadians have died whose lives could have been saved. It was also true a year ago when I first raised this issue in the House. Since then, 320 Canadians have unnecessarily died.

Since the present minister in charge of the RCMP took office in October 2015, 420 Canadians have died. Of course, introducing defibrillators could not have been done with a snap of the fingers. However, with the passage of time, that excuse is no longer available to the minister, and the blood of most of these dead Canadians, enough to fill every seat in this room, is on the minister's hands.

* * *

• (1410)

[Translation]

WINNIPEG WINTER FESTIVAL

Mr. Dan Vandal (Saint Boniface—Saint Vital, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, tomorrow, the Festival du Voyageur will be celebrated in the streets and restaurants by residents of Saint-Boniface—Saint-Vital.

The Festival du Voyageur takes us back to the days of the voyageurs and the fur trade at Fort Gibraltar.

[English]

The Festival du Voyageur's Fort Gibraltar, official sites and trading posts await us. In addition to amazing fiddling and jigging, there are also a winter fashion show, a new wood sculpting competition, and an incredible international snow sculpting symposium.

[Translation]

On February 20, we will celebrate Louis Riel Day, in honour of a Canadian whose vision is particularly relevant today.

Statements by Members

[English]

His vision is one of inclusion of all cultures and all religions.

[Translation]

I invite everyone to attend the Festival du Voyageur being held in the heart of the continent at Saint-Boniface and St. Vital.

Some hon. members: Hey ho!

* * *

[English]

SHEILA GERAGHTY

Mrs. Sherry Romanado (Longueuil—Charles-LeMoine, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my community is remembering the love and life of Mrs. Sheila Geraghty who passed away last Saturday.

Sheila was a close family friend as her husband John and my father both served in the Greenfield Park fire department together. Like all department families, we grew up together. Sheila always had a smile on her face and greeted everyone with positivity and warmth.

She loved her husband, John, and daughters, Summer and Chelsea, immensely and enjoyed spending time in her garden. While fighting cancer for the past few years, she maintained a positive outlook and continued to participate in community activities.

John, Chelsea, and Summer are in our thoughts and in our hearts. I am sure Sheila is watching us from that big garden in the sky. Sheila will be missed.

* * *

STUART MCLEAN

Mr. Chris Warkentin (Grande Prairie—Mackenzie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday Canada lost a brilliant storyteller. Stuart McLean had a lengthy career in radio, but it was as the creator, author, and performer of *Vinyl Cafe* that Canadians from all walks of life came to hear his greatest works and meet the characters who quickly became part of our families: Dave, Morley, the kids, and the neighbours.

Years ago around Christmas time, my wife Michelle and I discovered the story "Dave Cooks the Turkey". It has become a Christmas tradition in our household, as important as any other festive preparations, to listen to the fictional account of Dave forgetting to buy the family Christmas turkey. Those who know Stuart's work know and only can imagine the hilarity that follows.

Today we share our deepest sympathies with Stuart's family, colleagues, and friends. May they be comforted in the knowledge that Stuart's stories that drew us together all these years will continue to bring joy for years to come.

* * *

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND CHILDREN

Mr. Michael McLeod (Northwest Territories, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today indigenous and non-indigenous people are pledging to help end violence against women and children.

Oral Questions

For the last six years, the Moose Hide Campaign has organized an annual gathering in Victoria. Many across B.C. and Canada affirm their commitment to the movement by fasting in solidarity with those in Victoria and wearing a square of moose hide.

The campaign began when a father and daughter were moose hunting near the Highway of Tears and were inspired to make squares out of the hide. This would become a symbol of involvement in the movement to end violence toward women and children.

I encourage all men to take action and speak out that violence against women and children is not tolerated in their communities. I hope everyone joins in this effort to stand up to inequalities and ensure women and children live free from violence.

* * *

• (1415)

STUART MCLEAN

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is with incredible sadness that we learned of the passing of Stuart McLean. He was my friend and nothing less than a Canadian treasure, a beautiful soul whose stories became a part of our lives.

We listen to the story of Dave cooking the turkey, while driving on through the snow on Christmas Day, laughing hysterically and then welling up, touched by the humanity and love that he always captured, but that was Stuart. He also knew how to make us cherish the moments of joy and laughter in our daily lives.

Our sincere condolences to Amy and to all his family and loved ones.

I would like to end by reading something that Amy posted last night, “We will have a tribute for him this summer. Via canoe, as the sun goes down, when the loons call. When he was happiest of all. I’ll just leave this here. He loved to call for them, and every once in a while, they called back”.

I thank Stuart.

* * *

NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL DAY

Mr. David Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today is National Agricultural Day, a day to celebrate farming in Canada.

Agriculture has played a critical role in our country since its founding 150 years ago. For many of us, it has been our living and our lifestyle, and we have much to be proud of.

We are the fifth largest agricultural exporter in the world. We are the single largest exporter of major commodities, including wheat, canola, and lentils. Our meat industry is world class. We are leading the way environmentally, constantly implementing new technologies in order to farm smarter and greener.

Canadians depend on agriculture not only for their food, but for jobs across Canada. Our agriculture industry employs more than 2.1 million people, accounting for 6.7% of the country’s GDP.

Canadian consumers should be very proud of the hard work farmers and ranchers do for them every day. They are here year after year providing safe and affordable food for Canadian families.

Agriculture in Canada has a bright and promising future.

* * *

STUART MCLEAN

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Spadina—Fort York, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, no three words could stop spring cleaning or quiet a car full of nine year olds quite like Dave and Morley.

Stuart McLean was one of Canada’s great storytellers, and he passed away yesterday. People did not need to be near a radio to hear this news. The story spread across the country in the most proper way to define this man, person to person to person.

When Stuart McLean started a story, people were never quite sure if they were going to burst out laughing or shed a tear. He made the characters of Dave and Morley, Stephanie and Sam, and Arthur the dog so real that we felt like they lived around the corner.

Stuart gave voice to this country. He shared our music with us. He shared my hometown with others and others with mine.

As a former colleague, as one of my former constituents, and as a neighbour, I have lost a friend. Our country has lost a gentle soul. His family has lost so much more.

The *Vinyl Cafe* may be dark today, but Stuart McLean’s stories will be told forever more in Canada.

To quote Stuart, “So long for now”.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, millions of Canadians depend on NAFTA to put food on the table and pay their bills. They get worried when they read reports about tweaks or renegotiations. Yesterday, Canada’s ambassador to the U.S. said the Prime Minister has about half a dozen things with the NAFTA that he wants to change.

Can the Prime Minister please share with Canadians exactly what those half a dozen things are?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to say again that this past Monday was an extremely important day for Canada and for the United States. We reiterated the importance of our trading relationship. We reiterated the importance of that relationship for jobs on both sides of the border, for two and a half million Canadians who rely on jobs that are exporting to the United States and for nine million Americans who rely on jobs through exports to Canada.

We will continue to make sure that we protect those jobs, we will continue in our discussions to ensure that we work to improve lives here in Canada, and we will, when NAFTA comes up, talk about that.

* * *

TAXATION

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the U.S. is dramatically cutting taxes and red tape, with the explicit goal of taking jobs away from countries like ours. Yesterday, the head of the Business Council of Canada, John Manley, sounded the alarm. In a letter to the Prime Minister, he said that tax hikes are a threat to Canada's economy and that the Prime Minister needs to change course so that we can compete. This is about people's livelihoods.

Will the Prime Minister listen to this good advice, or will he keep on with his tax and spend agenda?

• (1420)

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in Canada, we have a competitive business environment. In Canada, we have a competitive tax situation in comparison with the current United States tax situation or with OECD countries. We will continue to focus on how we ensure that the Canadian economy is competitive, providing good jobs for middle-class Canadians and a good future for our country.

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Well, Mr. Speaker, all we have to do is look at Kathleen Wynne's Ontario to see what will happen if the Prime Minister does not change course soon and abandon the carbon tax. After more than a decade of Liberal rule, only a quarter of Ontario companies are confident about their province's economy. Half of them say that energy and electricity costs are crippling their businesses.

Will the Prime Minister continue to spread Kathleen Wynne's failed model to the rest of Canada or start to listen to people who know how to create jobs, and abandon the carbon tax?

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, unlike the party opposite, we understand that the environment and the economy go together. I will actually quote some job creators. We can look at the CEO of Imperial Oil, who stated, "The most effective policies in our minds would be those that place an economywide, uniform and predictable cost on carbon". Teck Resources said:

...we believe that it can be one of the most effective ways to incentivize emissions reductions—ensuring sustainable resource development continues to support jobs, economic growth and produce the commodities the world needs....

* * *

[Translation]

DAIRY INDUSTRY

Hon. Denis Lebel (Lac-Saint-Jean, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I asked an important question yesterday, but of course I did not get an answer from the government. The Speaker of the United States House of Representatives, Paul Ryan, indicated that he had spoken with the minister about improving access to the dairy market. Did the minister put supply management on the table? Can the government

Oral Questions

please stop repeating its talking points and finally give Canadians a real answer?

[English]

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate my hon. colleague's question.

As my hon. colleague is well aware, we have consulted dairy farmers across this country. We have put a program in place worth \$350 million: \$250 million so the farmers can modernize and \$100 million to make sure that the process is modernized. This government has supported and will continue to support and protect supply management.

Hon. Denis Lebel (Lac-Saint-Jean, CPC): I would appreciate an answer, too, Mr. Speaker.

Will the minister put supply management on the table, yes or no?

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, about all I can do is tell my hon. colleague what this government has done and what this government will continue to do. We are the party that put supply management in place. We are the party that will protect and take care of supply management. We are the party that put a transition fund in place to make sure that the supply management sector in the dairy industry is modernized. We put money in place to make sure that the processing sector is modernized.

This government and this party will take care of supply management.

* * *

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, every day there are more stories about refugees trying to cross the border into Canada from the U.S. These individuals are desperate, fleeing a country that is no longer safe for refugees. They know that the world has changed since the election of Donald Trump, and they are willing to risk their lives for a more secure future here in Canada. In these circumstances, why does the Liberal government insist that it is business as usual?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have proven to be a compassionate government when it comes to welcoming those fleeing war and persecution. We have a system in place that is one of the most compassionate refugee systems in the world. The U.S. executive order has had no impact on domestic asylum policy. Each and every eligible asylum claimant has access to a fair hearing, and each case is assessed on its merits.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, except that there is a safe third country rule that says that, if they are coming from the United States, they are coming from a safe country and they cannot be treated as pure refugees as they normally would. That is the problem. Why does the government not see it?

Oral Questions

● (1425)

[Translation]

With President Trump's order, the number of people seeking refuge here in Canada continues to grow, particularly because of the smuggling ring at the border, in Montérégie.

What practical measures will this government take to help these people and to support the communities that are taking them in?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we expect travellers to be treated respectfully and according to the law, on both sides of the border. Officers from the Canada Border Services Agency and U.S. customs and border protection are in regular contact on this issue, and the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness will personally discuss the issue with his American counterpart, Secretary Kelly, in the next few days.

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*[English]***ETHICS**

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the NDP has written a letter to Elections Canada asking for an investigation into the Liberal Party accepting donations that would violate elections law. Once again, there are ethical questions swirling around the governing party that promised to be the most ethical government Canada has ever seen. My question for the Liberal government is simply this. Under the law, what is the maximum donation they can legally accept?

Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada has strict rules when it comes to fundraising and political fundraising. In fact, it is because of these rules that parties report all contributions they receive to Elections Canada. All parties in the House have received over-contributions this year, as was the case in previous years and, as such, all parties in the House have repaid their over-contributions. I look forward to bringing forward legislation to continuously improve, to make our fundraising more open and more transparent.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the problem is that the Liberals have not and they have broken the law.

[Translation]

It is a matter of ethics. Canadians rejected a Liberal government and its sponsorship scandal, and then they rejected a Conservative government and its Senate scandal.

Do the Liberals really believe that, if they continue to deny the evidence of their turpitude, in the end, Canadians will believe them? That is highly unlikely.

[English]

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as has been said in the House many, many times, the Prime Minister will answer any questions that the commissioner has. The Prime Minister has taken unprecedented levels of consultations and engagement with Canadians. This government is both approachable and reachable. That is why we will continue to respond to the very real challenges that Canadians are facing.

TAXATION

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals say their carbon taxes are revenue neutral. Look at B.C., they say. Today, the Fraser Institute released proof that, over the next five years, B.C.'s carbon tax will collect \$865 million more from British Columbian taxpayers than they will get back in tax relief. That is \$728 per family of four. The federal Department of Finance has data tables showing exactly how much people will have to pay by income indicating the impact on the poor and middle class.

Will the government release those data tables now?

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will once again explain why pricing pollution makes sense, because it is pricing what we do not want, which is pollution, and it is fostering what we do want, which is innovation and cleaner technology—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please.

I realize everyone wants to take part in question period, but not everybody can. Everybody has to wait their turn until they have a chance to do so. I ask members to try to be patient, whether that turn comes today or another time, but to wait their turn and not interrupt and not speak when they do not have the floor.

The hon. Minister of the Environment.

Hon. Catherine McKenna: Mr. Speaker, we understand that putting a price on pollution will actually drive innovation and grow our economy, and as the former governor of the Bank of Canada said, now governor of the Bank of England, there is a \$30-trillion opportunity, and we're going to take advantage of that in clean technologies.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, they are not talking about putting a price on poverty. They are talking about putting a price on the poorest Canadians. They are the ones who will disproportionately pay the most because they spend a disproportionate amount of their income on the things that will be taxed, all to fund things like \$150,000 Teslas here in Ontario, which I guess the government believes are affordable and in reach of the middle class and those wishing to join it.

When will the government put an end to the process of taxing those with the least to give to those with the most?

•(1430)

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am always happy to stand and explain why it is important that we take serious action on climate change, not only because it is the right thing to do for the future of our children but also because it is going to make us more competitive, not less. We have created a scheme where we put a price on pollution. It is revenue neutral. It goes back to the provinces, and it is up to them to determine the best way to move forward.

The Speaker: I encourage the member from Banff—Airdrie, and others, to listen quietly during question period and wait their turn, as I was saying.

The hon. member for Parry Sound—Muskoka has the floor.

* * *

SMALL BUSINESS

Hon. Tony Clement (Parry Sound—Muskoka, CPC): Mr. Speaker, here is the reality. Times are so tough for small businesses that Dave Purdon, a Gravenhurst butcher in my riding, was recently forced to sell off frozen meat at cut-rate prices just so he could pay his hydro bill. The Wynne Liberals are literally turning the lights out on small businesses, while their Liberal friends here in Ottawa are upping payroll taxes and dumping a carbon tax to boot.

It is clear the Liberals have no regard for our small businesses. When will they wake up and stop hurting our greatest job creators?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know that having a competitive and effective business community is critically important. We know that the most important thing for businesses, large and small, is an economy that is successful. What we have done is help middle-class Canadians so they can buy things that they need and want. What we have done is help those most vulnerable so they can buy things for their families.

Importantly, we are making investments in our economy so we can actually grow the economy in the future, which will help small, medium, and large businesses to be better and to help our economy.

* * *

TAXATION

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren (Chatham-Kent—Leamington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in my riding of Chatham—Kent—Leamington, greenhouse growers met Sunday to discuss their survival under the new Ontario cap-and-trade program. One owner said his electrical bill rose from \$19,000 in December to over \$40,000 in January. This new tax is forcing small family businesses to either shut down or leave town. Greenhouse growers are now talking about moving their operations to the United States.

How can the Prime Minister justify imposing a carbon tax, and follow down the same disastrous path of his mentor, Kathleen Wynne?

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again, I want to explain how carbon pricing works. We are putting a price on what we do not want, which is pollution, and putting a price on what we do want, which is good jobs in the economy of the future. We are going to

Oral Questions

take advantage of these opportunities. We are going to create a cleaner future, because that is the smart thing to do, and it is also the right thing to do.

* * *

INFRASTRUCTURE

Ms. Dianne L. Watts (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, close to a billion dollars in infrastructure funds will lapse this year. The Liberal election platform stated, “We will make sure that no money intended for investment in communities is allowed to lapse”.

The Liberals promised that any lapsed money would go directly to communities through the gas tax fund. However, only 4% of the \$800 million is going into that fund. Will the Liberals commit to flow the entire \$800 million in lapsed funding to communities, or is it just another broken Liberal promise?

Hon. Amarjeet Sohi (Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are delivering more infrastructure for Canadian communities to grow the economy and create jobs for the middle class. Since taking office, our government has approved more than 1,200 projects, with a combined investment of more than \$14 billion.

The member opposite knows very well that money committed to specific projects continues to be available for those projects. They may not happen this year; they happen in the next year. We are delivering on commitments, and we will continue to do so.

[Translation]

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, new information is confirming what the parliamentary budget officer said and what everyone here in the House has been saying over and over again for months now.

The minister is late in distributing infrastructure funding, and this poses a huge risk to our country's economic growth. The Liberals promised that any lapsed money would go directly to municipalities all across Canada through the gas tax fund.

Can the minister assure us here today that he intends to keep the Liberal promise to redirect the \$800 million to the gas tax fund, or is he going to break yet another Liberal promise?

•(1435)

[English]

Hon. Amarjeet Sohi (Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member very well knows that once we approve the project, then money is attached to that particular project, and all the project components are reimbursed when we receive the invoices for them.

Oral Questions

We do transfer money through the gas tax. That is surplus money. We have done that. This year, \$30 million was transferred through the gas tax to the municipalities.

Let me tell the hon. member that we are actively supporting the projects for all municipalities that are currently funded through infrastructure dollars.

* * *

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Ms. Tracey Ramsey (Essex, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today the Prime Minister told Europeans what he has yet to admit to Canadians that concerns about trade deals like CETA are valid. He said, “Some people are worried that the current system only benefits society’s narrow elite. And their concern is valid.”

Does the Prime Minister realize that not everyone will benefit from CETA? Does he realize that it is estimated to cost 23,000 jobs in Canada alone? Canadians deserve to know what specifically the government will do to address job losses in Canada and the increased inequality that will be generated by this deal.

Ms. Pam Goldsmith-Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the Prime Minister said in his address to the European Parliament, CETA is a modern, forward-looking agreement that reflects a truly progressive agenda, which means societies have the ability to promote the public good. As well, CETA will create jobs, will increase our share of prosperity, and will help to grow the middle class.

We have put the interests of workers and consumers at the centre of our trade discussions so that Canadian companies from all regions and all sizes may have unprecedented access to 500 million people in the European Union.

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[*Translation*]

DAIRY INDUSTRY

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau (Berthier—Maskinongé, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am very proud to rise in the House today to mark Canada’s Agriculture Day for the first time.

However, the Liberals have every reason to feel a little uncomfortable, considering the 17,700 tonnes of fine cheeses entering Canada from Europe, the completely inadequate compensation, and some very troubling signs regarding our supply management system. This is an extraordinary and special day for our farmers.

Is the minister going to repeat the same old tune or is he going to announce an outstanding, solid plan for dairy producers?

[*English*]

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think my hon. colleague is fully aware that CETA will benefit the agricultural sector by \$1.5 billion a year. I think she is also aware that this government put a transition plan in place for the dairy sector of \$350 million, of which \$250 million is to ensure that the dairy farmers—and I know what it is like to be a dairy farmer—have transition funds, and \$100 million is to make sure that the processing sector has transition funds to ensure it—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Red Deer—Lacombe.

* * *

ETHICS

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians deserve answers. The Prime Minister is not fooling anyone. It is not like he can just whip out his Challenger and land it wherever he wants. There is planning, scheduling, and security assessments that need to be done.

The Conflict of Interest Act is clear. The Prime Minister claims that he has read it. If that is true, then he knows that it is illegal for him to accept travel on private aircraft.

Will the Prime Minister confirm that he was advised by his officials in the Prime Minister’s Office or the Privy Council Office that he would be breaking the law by taking this trip?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what is also clear is that the Prime Minister has stated time and time again that he will respond to any questions that the commissioner has.

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals are embarrassing. Day after day, the Prime Minister refuses to stand in this House and answer the questions that Canadians have. Instead, the government House leader makes a mockery of this House by responding to our questions by saying that the Prime Minister will respond to our questions. Where is the answer?

Canadians deserve better. They deserve an answer. I will ask the Prime Minister again: Did anyone at PMO or PCO advise him that it would be illegal to travel on a private aircraft for his island vacation, yes or no?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister and this government are committed to responding to the very real challenges that Canadians are facing, unprecedented levels of consultation and engagement with Canadians, listening to Canadians so that we can put measures into place to respond to the challenges that they are facing.

This government will continue to work hard for middle-class Canadians and those working hard to join it. This government will continue to respond to the very real challenges they are facing. The member knows very well that the Prime Minister will respond to any questions the commissioner has.

* * *

● (1440)

GOVERNMENT APPOINTMENTS

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Mary Ng, who was the partisan Liberal PMO director of appointments, is running to be the Liberal candidate to replace John McCallum, whom the Liberals just appointed to China. All diplomatic appointments would have gone through Ms. Ng and the PMO for approval.

Oral Questions

Given that Ms. Ng would have been directly involved in the appointment of John McCallum as ambassador to China, and given she is now a candidate for a Liberal nomination in John McCallum's seat, can the Prime Minister tell us what discussions Mary Ng had with him about convincing John McCallum to resign his seat?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member shall be reminded that every exempt staff hired knows full well the responsibilities they must respect both during their hiring and following their hiring. I have no reason to doubt that the rules have been respected.

While the member opposite is concerned about whatever she might choose to do, this government is committed to responding to the very real challenges that Canadians are facing. This government will continue to work hard for Canadians so that we can help make investments to create the conditions for growth so that Canadians can succeed.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is not me who needs to be reminded about the rules.

The timing of this situation is more than a little suspicious. John McCallum resigned for an appointment, and days later the Prime Minister's director of appointments announced that she's running in his seat.

Given the Prime Minister's long list of broken promises and ethical failures, how can we be assured that the Prime Minister's Office did not intervene to give Mary Ng the inside track?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will take this opportunity to talk about the new government-wide appointments process that is more open, transparent, and merit-based, which this government introduced. Our approach will result in the recommendations of highly qualified candidates who achieve gender parity and truly reflect Canada's diversity. We are proud on this side of the House of Canada's diversity.

The new selection process reflects the fundamental role that many Canadians play in our democracy as they serve on commissions, boards, crown corporations, agencies, and tribunals across the country. All opportunities to serve are currently disclosed—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. The member for York—Simcoe and others need to show more respect for this place.

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[*Translation*]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Beloeil—Chambly, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the government released the data about its national security consultation. It comes as no surprise that most Canadians are still waiting for the government to deliver the Bill C-51 reform it promised during the last election campaign.

Canadians have reason to be concerned about their privacy and Bill C-51's evisceration of their rights.

[*English*]

Now that the consultations are over and the government no longer has an excuse to delay, will it do what it should have done 15 months ago and repeal Bill C-51?

Mr. Mark Holland (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are absolutely committed to making sure that our national security framework keeps Canadians safe and puts safeguards in place to protect rights and freedoms.

I am a little bit confused by the question, because right now the committee is looking at the security intelligence framework. We are awaiting its report. I would think that the member who sits on the committee would want us to listen to that report, consider its recommendations, and incorporate them into our action.

* * *

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, almost a year ago, I stood with the government and celebrated the introduction of Bill C-16, which would extend the same rights and protections enjoyed by other Canadians to those in the trans community. Now this government bill stands stalled in the Senate. It has been over six years since this legislation was first passed in this House, but still transgender Canadians are told to wait even longer, to go on waiting for their rights.

What are the Liberals doing to get Bill C-16 passed into law? Has the minister communicated the urgency of this bill to senators, or will they let trans rights die in the Senate for a third time?

Hon. Jody Wilson-Raybould (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again, I would like to thank the hon. member across the way for his tireless efforts in terms of getting us to this place where I was proud, based on his work and the work of many before him, to introduce Bill C-16. I am following this piece of legislation. I think it is incumbent upon all parliamentarians to do what they can to ensure its expedited passage so we can ensure that individuals, all Canadians in this country, are free to be themselves. It is imperative that we move this bill forward.

* * *

• (1445)

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Mr. Bob Bratina (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, between 2012 and 2015, hate crimes against Muslims in Canada doubled, reaffirming the need for this House to take a stand against Islamophobia.

In my own city of Hamilton, there was an arson attack on a mosque last September. While some members of this House would like to believe that by not naming it, the problem ceases to exist, we know that is not true.

Would the Minister of Canadian Heritage tell us why it is important to stand up against Islamophobia and call it by its name?

Oral Questions

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, words matter. Let us talk about Islamophobia and the troubling rise in hate crimes against the Muslim community across the country. It is real; it can be defined, and it has no place in Canada. Neighbours, friends, co-workers of the Muslim faith endure systemic racism and religious discrimination here in Canada.

[Translation]

Islamophobia is real. Recognizing it is the first step toward fighting the climate of hate and fear surrounding the Muslim community.

* * *

[English]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, stationed in Kuwait, Canada currently has one refuelling aircraft, two surveillance aircraft, and over 300 aircrew. Canadians have conducted over 3,000 sorties over top of ISIS territory. In 2014, a Jordanian pilot was captured and burned to death by ISIS.

Even though Canadian aircrews are contributing to air strikes against ISIS on a daily basis, the Liberals are cancelling their danger pay. Will the defence minister show some leadership, do what is right for our troops and their families, and reverse this cold-hearted decision?

[Translation]

Mr. Jean Rioux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

We will always look after our troops. Last year, during his first visit to Kuwait, the Minister of National Defence was made aware of these inequities. He asked the chief of the defence staff to look into the matter.

An interdepartmental team is handling it. We have specific rules. We will move this file forward, and we will work with the appropriate organizations to build on all relevant recommendations.

* * *

[English]

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Hon. Michelle Rempel (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the deadline that the Liberals agreed to for bringing Yazidi refugees to Canada expires next week. In four months, the Liberals have done nothing. Zero government-sponsored refugees have arrived from the Yazidi community. I worry that this is just another Liberal broken promise, but this is a broken promise that will cost lives. Canadians will not let them get away with betraying a promise to victims of genocide and failing to protect the most vulnerable.

After four months, in the same time the government brought in 25,000 refugees, how many government-sponsored refugees from the Yazidi community will the government be bringing to Canada next week?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government has proven time

and time again that we will welcome those fleeing war and persecution. We are proud of the fact that members of this House voted and expressed their support to resettle victims and survivors of Daesh into Canada. We fully committed to meet that goal. We have an operation that is already under way. I will be providing details in the near future.

* * *

JUSTICE

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Niagara Falls, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the government put the blame on everybody else for court cases not being heard: it is the provinces, the courts, or even the criminals who will be facing prison time if they are convicted of their crime.

Is it not time the government faced the fact that it is not making the required judicial appointments? I ask the minister, is it possible for her to approach the Prime Minister and tell him that judicial appointments should be a priority to make the criminal justice system work?

Hon. Jody Wilson-Raybould (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to stand up in this House to mention the 39 superior court justices I have appointed as well as 22 deputy judges across the country.

To confirm and reiterate, we have introduced a new appointments process. We will continue to be diligent in the appointment of judges under this new process, which will ensure that the diversity of Canada is reflected in the judges who sit on our superior courts.

● (1450)

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Justice boasts about the reconstituted judicial advisory committees, yet months after they were announced, nearly half of the spots are vacant, with not a single person being appointed in New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Manitoba, or Saskatchewan.

How is the minister going to fill 60 judicial vacancies when she cannot even fill the committees responsible for vetting judicial applicants? When is the minister going to stop dithering and start doing her job?

Hon. Jody Wilson-Raybould (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I take it incredibly seriously in my job to appoint judges in this country, and to ensure that the complement of judges who sit on the superior courts reflect the diversity of our country and are responsive to the individual diversity that exists across it. That is why we introduced a new judicial appointments process, including judicial advisory committees with which we are in the process of ensuring the full complement to enable the judicial advisory committees to go through the application process, so that we can expedite the appointment of additional judges.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

HOUSING

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development recently announced the creation of an advisory committee on homelessness in support of the renewal of the homelessness partnering strategy. This expert panel will have eight to 10 members.

The last time I checked, Canada had 13 provinces and territories and they have very different realities. For example, Quebec advocates a general and community-based approach that is adapted to our needs.

What will the minister do to ensure that Quebec's concerns are heard at this committee?

[English]

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing and Urban Affairs), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, homelessness is a reality in Canada for far too many Canadians. We recognize this is a challenge for Canadian communities right across the country.

The critical issue here is to make sure that we get good advice from across the country, including the provinces and the communities identified by the member opposite, and compose an expert panel to give us that advice so that we can move forward on a new national housing strategy.

This government has not waited for that strategy. We have already invested an extra \$111 million in homelessness services, doubling the amount that was there previously. We will move forward to make sure that people in this country get the housing they need and the representatives of that committee will help us.

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INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Romeo Saganash (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today, along with other indigenous MPs, I call on the government to rename the building that houses the Prime Minister's Office. Langevin was one of the architects of the Indian residential school system. An apology means nothing if action does not remedy the injustice.

Every day as I walk by that place, I am reminded of the man who dreamed up the school where I was sent purposely to sever the connection to my family, to my people.

Will the government commit today in the House to change the name of this building?

Hon. Judy Foote (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is no relationship more important to our government than the one with indigenous peoples. Our government is fully committed to implementing the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's call to action. This includes developing a reconciliation framework for Canadian heritage and commemoration. Any decision will be made in full partnership with indigenous peoples.

[Translation]

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today is Canada's Agriculture Day. On this side of the House, we are proud of what the previous Conservative government accomplished by signing free trade agreements all around the world. These agreements are vital to Canada's economy.

Will the government commit to defending every sector of Canadian agriculture and not sacrificing some of them for the sake of signing future free trade agreements?

[English]

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would remind the member that we have just signed CETA, which provides \$1.5 billion of exports for our agriculture sector.

The member is also fully aware that we put a \$350-million transition fund in place for the dairy industry, which I know he supports. There is \$250 million to make sure our dairy farmers have a transition fund and \$100 million to make sure our processors have a transition fund.

This government has supported and will continue to support our farmers across this country.

Mr. David Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Grain Commission has built up a surplus of \$100 million by charging farmers extensive user fees. The commission is supposed to be a cost-recovery operation and not making a profit off the backs of farmers. Has the agriculture minister instructed the chief commissioner to reduce these fees and to immediately return this surplus to grain farmers?

● (1455)

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague is of course fully aware of who set the fees to provide this amount of money in the fund. It was his former government that set the fees. I have met with the commissioners and this issue will be dealt with fairly, to make sure the grain farmers in this country are treated fairly.

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TAXATION

Mrs. Kelly Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, CPC): Mr. Speaker, prairie grain farmers have some of the longest hauls in the world to get their product to market, so when the cost of transport increases, farmers immediately feel the pinch. The carbon tax could be renamed “the farm tax” for the overwhelmingly negative impact it will have on our producers. Does the minister understand the impact this new tax will have on agriculture? Has she met a prairie farmer who supports this new tax?

Oral Questions

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are very pleased that we worked with the provinces and territories so that we could bring in a carbon pricing plan that works for Canadians. We are working with provinces and territories. Our government is committed to returning all the revenues to the provinces and territories and it is up to them to determine how to address the situation in their provinces. They can make it revenue-neutral and return the revenues to farmers and to different groups.

We believe it is very important that we move forward, that we tackle climate change, and that we position ourselves for the future clean economy.

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AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Mr. Doug Eyolfson (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today is Canada's Agriculture Day and there is no better day to emphasize how much our government supports our world-class Canadian farmers, ranchers, and growers from coast to coast to coast. Our government's support for our farmers helps them with market development, research, and advocacy and it puts more money in the pockets of farmers. Can the Minister of Agriculture tell us about his recent announcement in Winnipeg at the CropConnect conference?

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on Canada's Agriculture Day and every day, this government is extremely proud to support our farmers across this country. Canadian farmers produce the best products in the world, and our government is committed to helping them develop new markets, both at home and abroad.

Not only did we pass CETA this week, but yesterday at the CropConnect conference I was proud to announce more than \$2 million in funding for the crop sector, which will put more money in the pockets of farmers, create new jobs, and help grow the middle class.

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[Translation]

TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in January, when he was in Sherbrooke, the Prime Minister told the people of Lac-Mégantic, "Together with the Minister [of Transport], I am committed to expediting the process to the extent possible in order to help you." Yesterday, one month later in the House, the Minister of Transport said, "it is important to expedite the process, and we are working as a team to figure out how to do that."

We do not need a study to expedite the study. With all the resources available to Transport Canada, can the minister perhaps tell us why he has not yet found a way to move more quickly?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said, and the member did quote me properly at the beginning, this work is done together with the Province of Quebec; AECOM, the company that conducted the study; and also with the town of Lac-Mégantic and Mayor Cloutier. We have begun this work. We want to do it in a responsible manner.

We understand the situation in Lac-Mégantic. I visited the town three times. We want to expedite the process and we are doing everything we can to do so.

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INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals are nowhere near the head of the class when it comes to international aid.

The government keeps saying that it is overly ambitious to dedicate 0.7% of our GDP to development aid, even over 10 years.

However, all stakeholders expect the federal government to increase funding for international assistance in order to give Canada some credibility in meeting sustainable development goals.

Will the minister show some ambition and commit to increasing international aid investments in budget 2017?

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of International Development and La Francophonie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his interest in international development.

As everyone knows, my mandate involves refocusing Canada's development assistance on helping the poorest, the most vulnerable, and fragile states. We conducted extensive consultations with 15,000 people from 65 countries. I can assure the House that we are going to have a policy that leverages Canada's strengths and focuses on areas where we can make a real difference. Canadians' money will be put to good use and will provide leverage to seek out additional partnerships. We will engage in development innovation and we will make a big difference while providing meaningful leadership.

* * *

● (1500)

[English]

RAIL TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, having the fifth busiest VIA station in Canada, the constituents of my riding of Kingston and the Islands value the passenger service VIA Rail provides in the Windsor-Quebec City corridor and want to make sure that it is properly maintained.

Could the Minister of Transport please explain what the government is doing in helping VIA Rail's corridor infrastructure remain safe and secure while improving the passenger experience by making it more accessible and efficient for everyday Canadians?

Oral Questions

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we in this government are committed to improving passenger rail service to make it safe, secure, efficient, and reliable. That is why we are investing in infrastructure for VIA Rail, like \$1.6 million for Kingston station, where my hon. colleague comes from, \$2.5 million for the train stations in Sarnia and London, \$15 million for the maintenance centres in Toronto and Montreal. Anybody who goes to the Ottawa train station, where I take the train every week, will see that there is—

* * *

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals believe it is more fun to spend someone else's money than their own.

I was shocked to learn in an email from the Minister of International Development that as part of refocusing international assistance, the Liberals consulted very few Canadians. They hosted more than 300 consultations in 65 countries but they only met with Canadians on nine occasions in five locations across our country.

Why is the Minister of International Development prioritizing the views of non-Canadians on how to spend our international aid money when it is Canadians who are paying the bill?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of International Development and La Francophonie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, 15,000 people participated in those consultations and most of them were Canadian. I personally participated in nine consultation sessions and round tables here in Canada. I had help from my parliamentary secretary. Many department officials participated in the round tables. All of our partner organizations participated and contributed. They submitted hundreds of briefs. We mostly heard from Canadians. I am pleased to tell the House that women and girls are going to be the focus of our new policy.

* * *

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Motion No. 103 suggests that a climate of hatred and fear now permeates Quebec society. To suggest such a thing is to engage in overblown rhetoric and hype. What we witnessed after the tragic attack in Quebec City was solidarity, forgiveness, and love, not hatred and fear.

Does the Minister of Canadian Heritage think that a climate of hatred and fear has pervaded the population?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as we have said many times, our diversity is our strength. Members across the aisle are refusing to admit that Islamophobia is real.

We condemn fearmongering and misinformation campaigns. We condemn policies that seek to divide us. I am proud to say that we have taken a strong stance on this issue. We will fight all forms of systemic racism and religious discrimination, including Islamophobia.

Mrs. Marilène Gill (Manicouagan, BQ): Mr. Speaker, for the past 10 years, Quebecers have been debating secularism and integration as well as how to ensure social peace in a society in a period of transformation, taking into consideration the diversity, beliefs, and non-beliefs of modern-day Quebecers. It is entirely legitimate, and healthy even, for a society to have these debates. It is about reflecting, having a dialogue, coming up with solutions, and wanting to improve the quality of life of everyone. It is about asking tough questions. I repeat, this is healthy for a people.

Now, can the minister tell us how, exactly, without playing politics—

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Canadian Heritage.

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I agree with my colleague.

It is important to have these difficult conversations in our society. The problem of Islamophobia exists, and refusing to give it a name will not make it go away. The first thing we need to do to fight the phenomenon is to name it, to identify it.

I am glad that my colleague from Mississauga—Erin Mills has taken a leadership role on this issue and that the parliamentary committee will study it if we support the motion. This issue needs to be examined.

* * *

● (1505)

BRITISH HOME CHILDREN

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I wish to seek consent for the following motion, which is seconded by the member for Humber River—Black Creek, the member for Chilliwack—Hope, the member for Vancouver East, and the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands.

That the House recognize the injustice, abuse and suffering endured by the British Home Children as well as the efforts, participation and contribution of these children and their descendants within our communities; and offer its sincere apology to the former British Home Children who are still living and to the descendants of these 100,000 individuals who were shipped from Great Britain to Canada between 1869 and 1948, and torn from their families to serve mainly as cheap labour once they arrived in Canada.

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

Hon. members: Agreed.

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

Hon. members: Agreed.

Business of Supply

(Motion agreed to.)

* * *

[English]

POINTS OF ORDER

ORAL QUESTIONS

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Members of Parliament are elected. There are 338 members of Parliament who are elected to be the voices of our constituents. We are given S. O. 31s on a quarterly basis to make announcements or to pay tribute to fallen members of our community but also to talk about causes we champion.

Earlier today, our hon. colleague from Calgary Nose Hill stood to talk about the plight of Yazidi women who are being raped, tortured, murdered, and imprisoned. She rose to speak about this. She has been a tireless champion on this. Throughout the member's speech, as she was again bringing awareness to the fact that the current government's inaction has not brought one Yazidi woman here over the course of four months, I witnessed shameful behaviour by the members for Eglinton—Lawrence and Spadina—Fort York. They not only laughed but also shouted insults across the way at our hon. colleague from Calgary Nose Hill.

We can all agree that given the debate that is going on today in this House, tolerance is so important. I call on you, Mr. Speaker, and implore you to ask the members for Eglinton—Lawrence and Spadina—Fort York to withdraw their comments and apologize.

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Spadina—Fort York, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in response to the point of order, I will acknowledge that during the S. O. 31 by the member opposite, I did respond, but it was in exasperation and in frustration. My seatmate just yesterday spoke about landing a Yazidi refugee in his riding, and I was simply bringing it to the attention of the members opposite. Perhaps—

The Speaker: I think we are into debate now. Unfortunately, we got into debate, but I would encourage all members, when a member is speaking, whether it is in statements by members or at other times in the House, to show the appropriate respect to each other.

Mr. Marco Mendicino (Eglinton—Lawrence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in response to the point of order, all I would say is that I was listening attentively to my colleague across the way and made no comment at all whatsoever during her S. O. 31.

Hon. Mélanie Joly: Mr. Speaker, this morning I presented an amendment to the Conservative motion. My hon. colleague from Cypress Hills—Grasslands did not accept the motion, because he said he had not seen it. As my hon. colleague has had a generous amount of time to reflect, I would like to seek once again unanimous consent for the following motion.

That, the motion be amended by deleting the words “the House: (a) recognize that Canadian society is not immune to the climate of hate and fear exemplified by the recent and senseless”—

• (1510)

The Speaker: Is there consent?

Some hon. members: No.

Mr. Tom Kmiec: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The Minister of International Development gave me an answer that contradicts an email I received on February 6 at 11:50 a.m., entitled “*semaine du développement international* International Development Week”. It is in French and English. I am seeking the consent of the House to table this, even though it contradicts the minister's—

The Speaker: There is no consent.

The usual Thursday question, the member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes.

* * *

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Gordon Brown (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, would the Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons please inform us of the business of the House for the rest of this week and for next.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this afternoon we will continue to debate the Conservative opposition motion. Tomorrow we will commence debate on Bill C-18 concerning Rouge Park. My hope is to finish third reading debate on Friday. If debate is not completed, we will call it again on Tuesday morning, with Bill C-23, preclearance, as a backup. We will continue with Bill C-23 debate on Wednesday and Friday as well.

I remind the House that we adopted a motion to have Monday sitting hours next Tuesday, February 21.

Finally, next Thursday, February 23, shall be an allotted day.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—SYSTEMIC RACISM AND RELIGIOUS DISCRIMINATION

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

The Deputy Speaker: When the House last took up debate on the question, the hon. member for Mississauga—Erin Mills had seven and a half minutes remaining in her time.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Mississauga—Erin Mills.

Ms. Iqra Khalid (Mississauga—Erin Mills, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I forgot to mention earlier that I will be splitting my time with the member for Louis-Hébert.

Quoting, using my full name, this was said in a chilling YouTube video that was shared widely, and this is just the tip of the iceberg:

Business of Supply

“[She], the terrorist, the terrorist sympathizer, the terror inducer, the disgusting human being, this little girl with very little intelligence, no personality, no strength in character, with no brave bone in her body. That idiot, that scum bag, The guys out there are not going to debate you. You are going to see what the uncivilized Canadians out there take exception to. I'm not going to help them shoot you. I'm just going to be there to film you on the ground crying. Ya, I'll be there writing the story with a big fat smile on my face. “Ha ha ha ha, [the member] got shot by a Canadian patriot”.

I have received more than 50,000 responses, many of which were direct hate, direct discrimination, and direct threats. I have asked my staff to lock the office behind me, as I now fear for their safety. I have asked them not to answer all phone calls, so they do not hear the insults, threats, and unbelievable amounts of hate shouted at them and myself.

Nonetheless, I am flattered to see that the Conservatives have decided to use one of their very limited opposition days to bring a full day of debate on this issue. Looking at this opposition motion, I agree with 98% of it. Why? Because I wrote it. I am appalled by the cynical divisive tactics on the Conservative side to try to start a fake frenzy around the word “Islamophobia”, instead of tackling the actual issue at hand, united with all other parliamentarians.

I would like to correct the record. I spoke to Professor Irwin Cotler, and he supports Motion No. 103 wholeheartedly. He had not even seen the Conservative motion until today.

Islamophobia is real. My family, friends, neighbours, fellow MPs, and Canadians across the country have faced Islamophobia. These are real stories, and real people are affected by it. It is not just an imaginary statistic. I am sickened that the party opposite has decided to deny comforting all those Canadians who feel vulnerable and attacked by taking the word “Islamophobia” out of this motion.

I would like to read some of the messages I have received: “No need to debate her. Simply remind her that she is merely a woman and she needs to sit the [blank] down and shut the [blank] up. She has to comply according to Sharia; kill her and be done with it; I agree she is here to kill us, she is sick and she needs to be deported; Real Canadians will rise up and get rid of the nasty muzzie stench in Ottawa they should all the [blank] back to your [blank] hole where you belong; We will burn down your mosque diaper head Muslim; Why did Canadians let her in!!!!?? Ship her back; Why don't you get out of my country, you're a disgusting piece of trash and you are definitely not wanted here by the majority of actual Canadians; [Blank off] Pakistani tali-bani. go [blank] yourself and go back to your [blank] hole of a country where you [blank] come from ugly; If I want to call a Muslim a piece of [blank] terrorist I will. Go back to the [blank] hole country where you came from [blank] hole; So the little [blank] is whining about [blank] go home you Muslim...You're not home [blanking] stupid sand [n word]. You're a cultural Marxist inclusivity [blank] trying to ruin Canada; [Blank] you gently with a chainsaw, you camel humping terrorist incubator [blank]; and shoot this [blank]”

Although the hate was overwhelming, the messages of hope and support were coming in the thousands. Allow me to read a couple of them.

One states, “These hateful comments just prove how much Islamophobia there is and why M 103 is needed. ...So grateful to all those who have shown support and want to end hate”.

● (1515)

Another one states:

Thank you for bringing forward a motion that defends all religions and races. This is the Canada I am so proud to call home. We are all immigrants. Some, like me, immigrated many generations ago and it is important to know that...our government, will stand up for what is a truly Canadian value. This is exactly what we need - to defend our citizens, permanent residents and refugees from Islamophobia and all religious and racial discrimination.

With all of that said, I will not be voting for this watered-down version of Motion No. 103. I will be working tirelessly to communicate what Motion No. 103 is about, which is to stand against all forms of systemic racism and religious discrimination, including Islamophobia.

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for being brave enough to read some of those passages of horrific hate speech, which I think every member of the House of Commons, regardless what side of the House, condemns. In fact, in some cases, they would appear to violate Criminal Code provisions on hate speech, absolutely.

I appreciated the member taking my call to discuss her motion and the e-petition. While I am concerned that this issue has been politicized, perhaps the wider debate is a good one. It is good for us to have these debates in a country where debates can take place like this in our Commons, where free speech is embraced.

I got the sense during our conversation that the member understood some of the points I made. In her first reference to this issue at committee, when a witness talks about how this definition of Islamophobia could be taken in some countries to mean one thing and in regimes to mean another, is it not fair to say that there might be some concern about the term and that it does not then mean people are xenophobic or racist, but means we should have a talk about the term in the context of the debate today?

● (1520)

Ms. Iqra Khalid: Mr. Speaker, after I spoke to the member and upon reflection of the words we shared, I was disappointed that he wanted to ignore and denounce the signatures of over 69,000 Canadians who signed a petition to condemn Islamophobia and asked our government to take action on it. Could the member please respond to that?

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her comments, which clarify what some members have difficulty understanding. They tend to put on blinders or to get stuck on words, even though, according to the member's comments, it is obvious that Islamophobia exists in Canada.

I would like to know whether all the messages she received and the comments she just shared have strengthened her resolve to study this issue in the House or in a parliamentary committee in order to identify solutions.

*Business of Supply**[English]*

Ms. Iqra Khalid: Mr. Speaker, when I was receiving all of these messages over the span of a number of weeks, it only strengthened my resolve. It helped me to understand the irony of it, that while Motion No. 103 sought to tackle issues of systemic racism and religious discrimination, including Islamophobia, the motion itself was highlighted by all these hateful comments against the Muslim community and myself, with the personal attacks and threats. It really strengthens my resolve.

I had hoped that we, as parliamentarians, could acknowledge an issue as it exists today, work on it together as a whole of government, and not use an issue that is so troubling, that exists in Canada to play divisive politics and fundraise off of the fear of Canadians.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I also want to commend the member for her courage and advocacy for the things she believes. I also deplore the comments that she has read out.

I have a very specific question that would be worth the member answering. Why does she insist on characterizing the ask for clarity as a watering down? It is not a watering down to amend a motion to provide a definition. It is not a watering down for Canadians with legitimate concerns about knowing what we mean when we use this word to ask the member to provide a clear definition, not just verbally but in the context of the motion.

The motion we have actually has clarity to it. The member could amend her motion to add more clarity. Why is there an opposition to clarity and the constant characterization of that ask for clarity as somehow a watering down?

Ms. Iqra Khalid: Mr. Speaker, this has been a great debate on issues that the Muslim community really tackles on a daily basis, and has tackled for a number of years. However, it is not just about the Muslim community; it is about all Canadians.

In October of last year, I was happy to see the House unanimously condemn Islamophobia. Since then, nothing has shifted to what “Islamophobia” means. I find it very interesting that the members across the way are now using the definition of Islamophobia as the reason why they cannot stand up for the Muslim community, recognize the issue as it is today, and do the right thing.

• (1525)

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have never been any prouder to speak after one of my colleagues in the House, the member for Mississauga—Erin Mills. I commend her for her courage. She is an inspiration to me, and I think to a lot of people across the country.

[Translation]

It is with reluctance and regret that I take the floor today. Three weeks ago, on January 29, 2017, my community was the target of one of the worst hate crimes, one of the worst terrorist attacks in the history of our country, an attack specifically targeting our Muslim community in its most sacred place, the mosque.

The day after the attack, I was overwhelmed by great anger and profound sadness, a sadness I saw reflected in the eyes of the people in my community, of all faiths, all origins, all political allegiances.

Having seen the worst that mankind is capable of when people let hatred gnaw at and ultimately destroy them, I also saw all the beauty and all the goodness people are capable of when they offer their hand and seek out in others the humanity that unites them rather than the differences that separates them.

I saw it at the vigils where thousands of people came together in solidarity with the families of the victims and with the Muslim community. I saw it in the hundreds of messages of love and sympathy that were received. I can say that I was proud of my community, of Quebec City and of Louis-Hébert, of its people, who have class and heart and who are open people with resilient hearts, men and women of good will whom I saw and heard in my community and from coast to coast.

Inside me there sprouted a hope, a hope that to ignorance we would oppose knowledge, hope that to hatred we would oppose brotherhood, hope that consciences would awaken and rise up, hope above all that the tone might change and that we would finally turn the page on the politics of fear and division.

[English]

I realize today, however, in light of this debate about Motion No. 103 and of all the hate that my colleague has received, that the road ahead will be long and that, sadly, the destination remains uncertain.

I would like to rewind the tape a little bit, because whatever specifically caused January 29, whatever motivated this lost soul to act, it is to some extent irrelevant and immaterial; because we have had a problem with Islamophobia in this country long before that; because Canada is not immune to what we have observed in recent years around the western world; because I believe that we are an open and tolerant people. We too have these demons within our societies, and we must address them.

When a mosque gets burned in Peterborough, when a pig's head is thrown at the mosque's doorstep in my riding, when women wearing the hijab in Toronto get assaulted, when we see hate crimes diminish in Canada for all religions but double for Muslims, we have a problem that we must address. It is called Islamophobia, and the first thing we have to do is acknowledge it, because we cannot change what we do not acknowledge.

I believe that what we must do first is to ask ourselves how we got here. How did we let these demons grow and this ignorance, this fear, and too often this hatred take hold in the hearts of some?

When I was a kid, there were no Muslims where I grew up. There was my friend Rafik; there was my soccer coach Mr. Bougouss; there was my best friend's father Ammar; but they were just that, friends, neighbours, members of our community. Some I got along with, others I did not, just like anyone else. However, over the years, for some among us, they became Muslims through the lens of the prejudices that we have been fed.

Business of Supply

Boy, have we been fed. We have been fed on social media, by some politicians, and by some in the media who have preyed on that fear with a passion, who have provided simple answers to very complex questions, who failed to say that Muslims are by far the first victims of terrorism, who have failed to say that those who commit senseless acts of terror in the name of Islam make a perversion of their faith and by no way, shape, or form represent Muslims, just like the shooter in Quebec City does not represent Quebecers or Canadians.

● (1530)

[Translation]

If it is true that a tiny minority is trying to use the peaceful religion that is Islam for political purposes, by trying to force a confrontation of civilizations and thereby taking hostage the 1.6 billion peaceful Muslims of the world, it is also true that if we respond to their rhetoric of fear and division we risk losing what is best in Canada, namely our openness and our inclusiveness.

[English]

There is a path forward and it calls for all men and women of goodwill to speak up and to condemn Islamophobia and all forms of racism and religious discrimination. This is what Motion No. 103 is about.

It is not about free speech and does not even come close to restricting free speech. Two weeks ago, I said in the House that if words have consequences, so do silences. Well, here is a good opportunity to speak up, to correct the record, as some have done in the House across all party lines. Beyond that, I call on all members' higher selves, to tone the rhetoric down and to start writing a new chapter in our collective history.

[Translation]

As for the opposition motion that is before us today, I will be very honest: I am in agreement with every word. When I was younger and my mother was sick, my adoptive father was Jewish. I have Muslim friends and I am a Christian. Last year I discovered some Sikh colleagues who are ministers and MPs, of whom I am extremely fond.

Yes, we have to combat religious discrimination, of whatever sort. Yes, we have to combat discrimination full stop. However, I am deeply disappointed, for I clearly see signs of a great cynicism hiding behind this motion, and I think we can do much better. I think that we can do more than just play politics here.

I was born under the rose, in Toronto, and I was raised under the lily, in Quebec City. The linguistic and cultural duality that characterizes Canada is an intrinsic part of me. However, I also grew up in an apartment building in Sainte-Foy, alongside families of Romanian, Haitian, African, Brazilian, Arabic, Bosnian and of course Quebec origins. I had the chance to be around them every day.

Also part of me is the openness and inclusiveness that characterizes us, but that we cannot take for granted and have to fight for.

I will close by saying that something has definitely changed in me since January 29, 2017. From now on I care nothing for following

trends, provided I am going in the right direction. I wish the same for all of my colleagues.

[English]

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, again I want to say I have appreciated the opportunity we have had today to debate this topic. I really appreciate what we heard from the individual who presented this motion, and the anger and abuse that she has faced. I can also say that, with my private member's bill, I am aware of what that feels like to some extent. Perhaps that is a direction we need to go in, dealing with some of the opportunities individuals have to express statements like that, which should not be allowed because it is, in my view, criminal. I have heard over and over again that freedom of religion, of speech, and of expression are not on trial here.

I want to ask the member who just spoke very eloquently if he heard the member for Brampton North when she spoke today. She said:

Denouncing Islamophobia is not prohibiting respectful criticism of Islam or any other faith as that is allowed by our country's Charter of Rights and Freedoms. What is not acceptable is categorizing Islam as a religion of evil and violence, and painting all people of the faith with one brush.

Whether one agrees with that statement or not, there was a debate similar to our Munk debates, an Intelligence Squared debate titled "Is Islam a Religion of Peace?" Two Muslims spoke for the motion. Ayaan Hirsi Ali, who is a Muslim, and Douglas Murray, who is an atheist, spoke against it. That was—

● (1535)

The Deputy Speaker: Sorry, we are running out of time. We only have five minutes for questions and comments.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Joël Lightbound: Mr. Speaker, in Canada freedom of speech is enshrined in our charter. I will always stand for freedom of speech and to have these debates. However, with freedom of speech comes the responsibility to make sure that our speech is responsible, that we are not fostering fear and ignorance and hatred in the hearts of others. When we talk about freedom of speech, we too often forget about the responsibility that should come with it all the time. Therefore, I would say that these debates should be allowed for sure, responsibly.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Mr. Speaker, given the systemic racism and discrimination against indigenous people completely under the control of the federal government for the last 150 years, does the member agree to work in solidarity in every way he can in the spirit of this motion and last night's motion to stand up and resolve the discrimination against murdered and missing indigenous women, to get out of the courts and not fight victims of the Sixties Scoop, and to stand up for truth and reconciliation with indigenous people in every way possible?

Business of Supply

[Translation]

Mr. Joël Lightbound: Mr. Speaker, in response to the excellent question from my colleague, I will say that before being a politician, I am first and foremost a humanist. Now, as a humanist, I think that we have a responsibility toward all oppressed people. Furthermore, one of our ambitions is to restore a good relationship with the first nations and to combat the discrimination that they too are facing.

[English]

Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage (Multiculturalism), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to ask my colleague a bit about something that exists in both the opposition motion and in Motion No. 103, which is the climate of hate and fear. Could he comment on policies that we have seen in the past: two-tiered citizenship, barbaric cultural practices hotlines, niqab bans? Could the member comment even on the rally yesterday, where further fear and disinformation were spread in Toronto and which two members of the Conservative Party leadership race attended, and how that fuels the climate of fear and hatred that we are trying to address with these motions?

Mr. Joël Lightbound: Mr. Speaker, there are some politicians, but other people as well outside of politics, who have definitely fuelled that fear and that anger.

[Translation]

They have been stoking the fires of intolerance for too long. I would rather not point the finger at anyone, for I believe that all Canadians should spend some time examining their consciences to consider the climate that may have been created by their actions, words, and silences, or by policies they tacitly supported, directly or indirectly, and how that climate may have developed over recent years.

[English]

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to rise in the House today, and I will be sharing my time with the member for Flamborough—Glanbrook.

The tragic violent acts at the Quebec mosque were deplorable, and we must do everything we can to ensure that all Canadians are free to pray and worship in safety.

Much of my discussion on this motion here today will be with regard to freedom of religion and what that means both to me and to Canadians across the country.

I believe that freedom of religion is one of the fundamental pillars of both our democracy and our society. Canada is a country of diversity, but more than that, Canada is a country of acceptance. Our guaranteed rights and freedoms apply to and protect each and every Canadian, regardless of age, gender, culture, or faith. I am very proud to stand in the House today and defend the right to freedom of religion for every Canadian.

I will read the words from our charter, with which we are likely familiar:

Fundamental freedoms

2. Everyone has the following fundamental freedoms:

- (a) freedom of conscience and religion;
- (b) freedom of thought, belief, opinion and expression, including freedom of the press and other media of communication;

(c) freedom of peaceful assembly; and

(d) freedom of association.

I remain firmly committed to ensuring that freedom of religion and freedom of speech for all individuals granted under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms continue to be protected and upheld in our country. I will continue to defend the rights of Canadians of all religious backgrounds, and I will continue to do everything in my power to ensure Canadians all feel safe and welcome in our country.

The diversity of religion and thought in our country is impressive. According to the 2011 Statistics Canada results, just over two-thirds of Canadians self-identified as Christian. Approximately 22 million Canadians were in this category. Muslim, Hindu, Sikh, and Buddhist Canadians made up the second largest group, counting approximately 2.4 million Canadians, or 7.2%. The largest of these religions was that of the individuals identifying as Muslim, representing just over one million Canadians and 3.2% of the nation's population. Some 1% of Canadians identified as Jewish, while almost 65,000 Canadians affiliated themselves with traditional aboriginal spirituality. Nearly 7.9 million Canadians had no religious affiliation at all.

• (1540)

[Translation]

All Canadians, whatever their religion, are protected by the charter and deserve to feel safe in our country. Immigrants and refugees from all over the world have contributed enormously to Canada and helped shape the society we know today. Their contributions to our country are countless; immigrants and refugees have contributed hugely to the success and prosperity of Canada. Our immigration policy is a hallmark of Canadian history that we as a country must continue to encourage.

[English]

That said, we must also not abandon our heritage and history. The fathers of Confederation named this nation the Dominion of Canada based on Psalm 72: “He (God) shall have dominion from sea to sea and from the river to the ends of the earth.” It should be okay to talk about our spiritual heritage.

Let us not forget that those who were here first have deeply held spiritual roots and practices. Canada is better for our diversity, but we must not take it for granted.

[Translation]

We are incredibly lucky to have the freedoms and protections we enjoy here in Canada. Violence based on religious belief is evident throughout the world. Even if they are personally affected, Canadians have demonstrated once again that they are resilient. From the systematic persecution of the Baha'i in Iran to the persecution of Christians, Hindus, Buddhists, and Shiite Muslims by Daesh and the persecution of the Coptic Christian minority in Egypt, our world is full of violence and hatred. However, Canada can live in relative peace and growing prosperity thanks to our cultural and religious mosaic.

Business of Supply

[English]

It was a shame to lose the office of religious freedom that was brought in under our previous government, because in addition to the great work it was doing around the world, it would have been helpful here at home as well. Currently, we are seeing several gaps in our ability to preserve the freedom of religion and freedom of speech under the charter.

There is growing intolerance that I find disturbing. Even here in the House of Commons I have witnessed members standing up and expressing religious sentiments in their S. O. 31 statements or in their speeches, and I have witnessed the reaction from other members of angry tones, disrespect, or insulting body language. I have seen this when Christians have spoken out. I have seen it when Jews have spoken out. I have seen it when Muslims have spoken out. This should not be so. If we are really promoting freedom, then we must lead by example in welcoming all expressions of faith, or lack thereof, equally in this House.

I wish I could say that in my riding of Sarnia—Lambton everything is perfect. There was a super show of solidarity in response to the Quebec shootings, and over 200 members across all faiths in my community gathered at our mosque. I condemn the attack at the mosque in Quebec City, and I am horrified to think that innocent Canadians were killed in their place of worship. Still, in my own riding, I do receive emails that indicate to me that fear, mistrust, and disharmony still exist in many areas.

What about the relationship of freedom of religion and freedom of speech in Canadian law? Certainly, we can see the definition of where free speech becomes hate speech. Our law defines that hate propaganda means “any writing, sign or visible representation that advocates or promotes genocide or the communication of which by any person would constitute an offence under section 319”.

Subsection 319(3) states that an accused is not guilty of hate speech:

- (a) if he establishes that the statements communicated were true;
- (b) if, in good faith, the person expressed or attempted to establish by an argument an opinion on a religious subject or an opinion based on a belief in a religious text;
- (c) if the statements were relevant to any subject of public interest, the discussion of which was for the public benefit, and if on reasonable grounds he believed them to be true; or
- (d) if, in good faith, he intended to point out, for the purpose of removal, matters producing or tending to produce feelings of hatred toward an identifiable group in Canada.

From this we must be clear with Canadians that they are free to publicly disagree with any faith and that this does not constitute hate speech. This should go a long way to alleviating some of the concerns that have been expressed. Acts of harassment, vandalism, violence or hate crimes are already clearly illegal.

● (1545)

[Translation]

Religions that promote discrimination and are in conflict with our charter cannot be permitted to promote such views in Canada.

We battled a long time for the equality of women. The days when women were not allowed in nightclubs or had to use a separate

entrance are long gone. That sort of discrimination cannot be permitted in Canada.

Earlier in this Parliament we saw a motion concerning the BDS movement, which was allowed to encourage discrimination in Canada against the state of Israel, a Jewish state. This movement is contrary to our freedoms under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, because it has consequences for our Jewish Canadian friends and because it promotes discrimination.

When I was in the business world, I travelled to many countries around the world, and it was clear that when I was in those countries, I had to obey their laws. The same principle holds in Canada, but I think we should do more to ensure that our laws are respected.

[English]

Many parliamentarians have also expressed a desire to have a standing committee undertake a study on how the government could approach issues surrounding systemic racism and religious discrimination. Although I do believe a study should be conducted, I believe that Canadians of every faith face racism and discrimination and as such, a proposed study should not single out a specific group.

Finally, I think we as Canadians need to have more love and a lot less hate. A great writer once wrote, “perfect love casts out fear”. If we had more love for one another and more value for our differences, we could be an example to the world of a place where everyone of any faith, or none at all, can live in peace and harmony.

Ms. Kamal Khera (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I fail to understand why the Conservatives are so afraid to call out Islamophobia for what it really is.

There was a tweet that was targeted toward my Muslim colleague which said, “You are not home. Muslims will never get a hold in Canada. We will fight back and there will be bloodshed”. This exists in our communities. We need to take action now.

When is it going to be enough for the Conservatives to call Islamophobia for what it is and stop playing the politics of fear and division that Canadians rejected in the last election?

Ms. Marilyn Gladu: Mr. Speaker, I am extremely sorry the member is experiencing these kinds of hate tweets and posts. When I was running my campaign, I also received a huge number of hate tweets and hate posts on Facebook, to the point that I had to shut down both my Facebook and Twitter accounts because I was being attacked for being a Christian.

My point is that hate crimes and these attacks are happening across different faiths. I talked in my speech about the BDS movement and its attack on Jewish people. That is why we brought our motion today, because I think that we have to up the love and down the hate in our country. If we are going to do a study, we should be studying across all the faiths that are represented. A member from the NDP talked about the discrimination that exists against aboriginals and the things that they believe. I think we need to broaden the discussion.

Business of Supply

• (1550)

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech in this debate. However, I still do not understand the Conservatives' argument, which seems to be based on a campaign of falsehoods.

The Conservatives would have Canadians believe that adopting a motion that talks about systemic racism and that calls on a committee to examine the issue is going to somehow undermine freedom of speech. I still do not understand how they made that connection when the motion simply asks a committee to examine an issue.

Could my colleague enlighten us as to why certain members of her party, some of whom are running for her party's leadership, are spreading misinformation by claiming that freedom of speech will be undermined if the House adopts a motion like Motion No. 103, which we debated yesterday evening?

Ms. Marilyn Gladu: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

[English]

When it comes to the Conservative Party leadership race, I want to be clear with everybody. Conservative Party leadership candidates are able to distinguish themselves and take up policy views that are not necessarily those of the Conservative Party and so I cannot speak on their behalf. I can only speak on my own behalf.

I feel very strongly that we have to have equality and freedom of religion in our country. I do not want to see us focus more effort or give more rights in one place than another, especially when it is clear to me that there are systemic racism and religious discrimination issues across the faiths.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there was an attempt by the government to put forward an amendment in which all members of this House would be happy to get behind emphasizing. I want to highlight one part of it. The amendment would add after the words "all types of discrimination" the words "including Islamophobia".

Islamophobia is something that is so sensitive. It is an issue on which this House is trying to send a very strong message, along with the many other aspects that have been talked about today and yesterday.

Why does the member believe that the Conservative Party is having so much resistance to that particular word?

Ms. Marilyn Gladu: Mr. Speaker, basically, when it comes to the definition, we heard earlier the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan talk about how we need to have clarity because the definition of Islamophobia is different across the world. I myself am not sure what people mean by that. If I think of myself, I am afraid that if ISIS jihadists came over, they might cut my head off and rape me. Is that Islamophobia? I do not know. I have also travelled extensively to countries that were predominantly Muslim, and I get concerned about the erosion of the rights and equality of women that we have established in our country over time. That is why for me it is important to have clarity in the definition.

The member who brought forward Motion No. 103 did not provide a definition, was asked to provide it, and was unable to provide it. I think we have seen evidence that there are more extreme and less extreme definitions, and we need to be clear about it before we can discuss it further.

Mr. David Sweet (Flamborough—Glanbrook, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour for me to rise today to speak regarding a principle which I value greatly and which I think most people in the world value greatly and that is religious freedom. The only dark part of today is that one of our members has been the receiver of so much hate over social media and that I sincerely regret. I work with that particular member on the Subcommittee on International Human Rights and nobody should have to endure that.

Arguably, religious freedom is one of the most important freedoms for from it cascades the freedoms of assembly, of conscience, of worship, of speech.

The member for Cypress Hills—Grasslands deserves our sincerest thanks for his tireless work with respect to human rights and religious freedom and for moving the motion that we are debating today.

The member's motion asks the House of Commons to agree on three points: first, that we recognize Canadian society as not immune to a climate of hate and fear that leads to violence; second, that we condemn all forms of systematic racism, religious intolerance, and discrimination; and third, that the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage undertake a study on how the government can reduce or eliminate all types of discrimination in Canada and table its recommendations in the House. The motion is succinct, inclusive, comprehensive, and timely in the light of recent events.

On January 29, Canadians were shocked to learn of the hateful shooting in a Quebec City mosque that targeted Muslims who had gathered there to pray. Killing someone when the individual is in the submissive position of prayer adds to the heinousness of this act of terror. The lives of six men were taken that day, leaving their families without husbands and fathers and without brothers and uncles. A total of 15 children were left fatherless. Many of the other victims are still suffering today and struggling with their wounds.

From what has been reported, all of this pain and suffering comes because of the hatred within one man for one particular community of faith, in this case Muslims, which was allowed to fester and grow to the point of violence. This murderous act was an affront to the values we hold dear as Canadians. Hatred and violence against anyone, be they Muslim, Christian, Jew, Baha'i, Sikh, Hindu, Zoroastrian, Buddhist, or any other is reprehensible and unacceptable.

Prime Minister John Diefenbaker perfectly articulated the freedoms we cherish and provided those freedoms with legal protection in his signature piece of legislation called the Canadian Bill of Rights. The words enshrined within the Bill of Rights have stood the test of time. For the purposes of today's debate, it is appropriate to read some of Diefenbaker's text into the record:

In Canada there have existed and shall continue to exist without discrimination by reason of race, national origin, colour, religion or sex, the following human rights and fundamental freedoms, namely,

- (a) the right of the individual to life, liberty, security of the person and enjoyment of property, and the right not to be deprived thereof except by due process of law;
- (b) the right of the individual to equality before the law and the protection of the law;
- (c) freedom of religion;
- (d) freedom of speech;
- (e) freedom of assembly and association; and
- (f) freedom of the press.

While these freedoms have been enduring, we must continue to be vigilant to protect them.

I have served on the Subcommittee on International Human Rights for more than a decade. During those years I have heard troubling testimony of grave human rights abuses, be they acts of genocide, terror, sexual slavery, rape as a weapon of war or torture, just to name some. More often than not, these actions are perpetrated deliberately and systematically against minority, ethnic, or religious groups.

While we have been blessed in Canada where hateful violence often does not take these extreme forms, we need to recognize that we are not immune to this type of hate, as evidenced by the travesty in Quebec City.

I do not need to look any further than my city of Hamilton for further examples of acts that threaten our religious freedom. It is unacceptable that Jewish students at McMaster University would feel threatened on campus. It is reprehensible that swastikas were painted on garage doors in Dundas. The Jewish community should not have to feel the need to have police cruisers provide security at synagogues during high holidays in Hamilton.

In the riding I represent, Flamborough—Glanbrook, in the wake of the terrorist attacks of September 11, a Hindu temple was mistaken for a mosque and was firebombed. Fortunately, this attack at the Hindu Samaj Temple led to the creation of several dialogue groups and organizations to increase peace and understanding among our diverse religious and ethnic communities. Yet, recently a mosque in downtown Hamilton had a fire purposely set at its door which fortunately did not consume the building. Still, this crime shows us that more work needs to be done.

● (1555)

In fact, people from across the country, from a variety of faith backgrounds, have reported discrimination of some kind within the last year. This is a disturbing trend that must be stopped.

I have had the opportunity on several occasions now to visit Yad Vashem, the Holocaust museum in Israel. People who go there enter the building that shows the timeline of anti-Semitism, how it grew, how it became socially acceptable, how that paved the way to allow the Nazis to take over Germany, and come up with what they called the final solution. Visiting this museum serves as a reminder to me that hate must be rooted out before it can be allowed to grow. It should serve as a reminder to us, as legislators, that we must enact policies and even the fashion of our dialogue in the chamber should be such that it breeds tolerance, acceptance, and respect for rights of all people.

The previous Conservative government created the office of religious freedom. The office existed so that Canada could have a

Business of Supply

dedicated voice on issues of religious freedom, a voice that stood out in an increasingly intolerant world. Sadly, one of the first changes of the Liberal government made on the foreign affairs file was to eliminate the office of religious freedom, thus diminishing the voice of principle we once offered.

I attended with the Right Hon. Stephen Harper when he made the announcement about the opening of the office of religious freedom in a mosque in Toronto. He did so with the support of many faith groups across the country. In contrast, the Liberals closed the office coldly in the form of a budget cut in last year's budget. Perhaps, when considering a whole-of-government approach on these issues, this political and ideological decision could be reviewed.

With the overwhelming number of Canadians ascribing to some religion, it is important that the government, although desirous of maintaining a secular nature of governance, understands that those it governs are religious and desire an understanding of religious life from their representatives. I had the honour to serve as the chair of the All Party Interfaith Friendship Group for five years. This group, made up of Muslims, Sikhs, Jews, Christians, Hindus, Baha'is, Zoroastrians, and others, were always ready to provide parliamentarians with education regarding their respective communities.

As I reflect on their advice to us as members, the following themes emerge. First, all Canadians expect to live in communities free of hatred, persecution, prejudice, or violence in any form, against anyone, for any reason. Next, Canada prides itself on being a nation where peoples of any faith can and do live peaceably beside peoples of other faiths. Canadians desire legitimate and dignified debate with respect to peace, order, and good government that should include transparent and open discussion about the meaning of significant and important words. It is my hope that as this debate continues, these themes will provide a framework for the discussion of how the government can continue the work of eliminating racism, religious intolerance, and discrimination.

To conclude my remarks, let me once again quote Prime Minister Diefenbaker. He said:

I am a 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.

I encourage members from all parties to support this motion and, in so doing, the House will give fresh life and meaning to these words.

● (1600)

Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage (Multiculturalism), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have heard a lot of debate today about the term "Islamophobia", and, obviously, that is the significant difference between the motion debated yesterday, Motion No. 103, and today's opposition day motion. For a person like me on this side of the House, I do not think Islamophobia is difficult to grasp. It is not respectful of questions or criticisms of a faith, it is hatred and abuse that targets somebody because of one's faith.

Business of Supply

My question to the member opposite is as follows. If six women had died on January 29, I think we would all call that event misogyny. If six Jews had died in a synagogue on January 29, we would all clearly have called that anti-Semitism. When six Muslims die in a place of worship because they are worshipping, we believe that should be called Islamophobia. I would like to hear the member's comments as to why his opposition motion does not include that term.

Mr. David Sweet: Mr. Speaker, I have a couple of items that I would like to put on the record.

One is from a well-known journalist, Raheel Raza, who is a member of the Canadian Muslim community and published an op-ed just recently. Her words are, "If M-103 is passed, it will silence positive criticism and widen the gulf between Muslim and non-Muslim Canadians. This is unacceptable". This is a voice from the Muslim community.

Why we would call anti-Semitism anti-Semitism is because that term has been around since 1879, it has endured academic rigour, it has endured history; it is recognized by the United Nations; it was strengthened by the EUMC in 2005 and by a voluntary group of parliamentarians here in Parliament, called the Canadian Parliamentary Coalition to Combat Antisemitism, in a report in 2010.

When the term Islamophobia stands up to that level of rigour, then I am convinced that the Canadian public will accept that word as meaning hatred toward Muslims. We condemn all hatred toward Muslims and any other group and I am convinced that they will be comfortable with it. However, until then, this is the concern that Conservatives have.

• (1605)

[Translation]

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

He again repeated something that was said a number of times by some of his Conservative colleagues. He said that adopting Motion No. 103 will undermine freedom of speech. I do not understand how he came to that conclusion. How would Canadians' freedom of speech be undermined by the House adopting a motion that asks a committee to examine the issue of racism and systemic discrimination, including Islamophobia? I do not understand the logic there.

I hope my colleague will be able to enlighten me.

[English]

Mr. David Sweet: Mr. Speaker, I take it that my colleague was not inferring or putting words in my mouth or in the mouths of any of my colleagues, in regard to the words I said.

I had just quoted a Canadian Muslim journalist who mentioned that she had concerns regarding the word "Islamophobia". I was not talking about any Conservative, any member from the Liberal benches or any member from the NDP. I was talking about somebody from that community. That is the concern about the lack of specificity.

I should also let the House know that I did have a direct meeting with the member who sponsored Motion No. 103. I told her I would be glad to be a champion of that motion within my caucus if she

changed the term "Islamophobia", with which even some of the Muslim community has a problem with, to "hatred toward Muslims". That is very clear.

We stand against it. We will always stand against it and make sure we protect our Muslim community. That would have been the best course. That would have been best way to unify this chamber, and unfortunately she would not accept that amendment.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member of Parliament for Sherbrooke.

We have to combat all forms of racism and religious discrimination in order to build more inclusive communities. Canada is better when we do. Fighting against these discriminations is a means to advance the interest of peace in society, and the way to promote solidarity in our society and communities.

I want to talk more than anything about people who are working in our communities to build that solidarity. Against the backdrop of 150 years of race-based discrimination against indigenous people, I had the great honour in my riding of Nanaimo—Ladysmith of spending the first four days of 2017 with Master of Business Administration students from across the country. Vancouver Island University hosted the MBA Games, and 500 students from business schools across the country came together and challenged each other in all kinds of ways.

I am so glad that the organizing committee of Vancouver Island's MBA Games chose indigenous reconciliation as its theme. In particular, it chose the Moose Hide Campaign, #moosehidecampaign, as its charitable cause. All week long, students from across the country made videos, sang songs about ending violence against women, and spoke about the imperative for indigenous reconciliation for true a nation-to-nation relationship. They raised \$300,000 for the Moose Hide Campaign, which is a fantastic charity based on Vancouver Island where I am elected.

It was one of those great moments of knowing that these smart, effective, future leaders of our country from coast to coast are informed, engaged, and committed to this cause. That is what is going to change our country. That is what is going to bring real reconciliation, much more than a debate in the House. Members can read about it in *The Globe and Mail* business section, which carried this story on January 6.

Business of Supply

My thanks to the organizing committee of the MBA Games. When I talk with indigenous women's organizations, with the Native Women's Association of Canada, with front-line people who are doing hard work and have been pulling hard for an end to the tragedy of murdered and missing indigenous women for 10, 12, or 15 years, and for some families for decades; when I tell them that the MBA students from across the country are pulling in the same direction and are doing their work of education, fundraising, pulling in the same direction even if they are not exactly side by side, I see visible relief. We all feel the relief of knowing we have this future group of leaders who are cultivating real solutions. I thank the Vancouver Island University. It is fantastic.

Keeping with my cause and commitment to end racism and intolerance in Canada, I participated in last night's Liberal debate, and here I am participating in today's Conservative debate. I am not sure why, given the motions are virtually identical, that we needed to spend a whole day in the House debating this. I am hearing about a lot of other issues from Canadians that they need to have Parliament's action on.

I will say right up front that I am going to vote yes to both motions. Condemning racism and intolerance is about fighting hate and violence perpetrated against a specific community. Canada has already seen an increase in targeted attacks towards Muslims, such as last month's tragic and horrific attack in Sainte-Foy, Quebec where Muslims were killed on their knees at prayer. I never thought that we would ever see a story like that in Canada. It has certainly raised everybody's awareness about racial intolerance and violence, murdering people because of their race. We need to stand together. We need to combat all forms of discrimination, including Islamophobia. Therefore, I will support the Conservative motion that is on the floor today to condemn racial and religious discrimination.

However, I have to say that the conversion on the Conservative side is kind of breathtaking. I will read two quotes from people who were my member of Parliament.

In 1996, my member of Parliament, Bob Ringma, who was Reform, Alliance, Conservative said that he would fire or "move to the back of the shop" employees who were gay or ethnics, if the presence of that individual offended a bigoted customer or hurt business. This was from my MP in 1996, which was not so long ago.

● (1610)

In the year 2000, my member of Parliament, Reed Elley, Conservative Reform Alliance member of Parliament in the House of Commons, on April 10, 2000, said:

The feminist movement started a strident campaign to bring women into the 20th century. They burned their bras, demanded protection from unwanted pregnancy, spurned chastity and scorned the pro-life people.

A gradual blurring of the sexes occurred that gave young men growing up in many female dominated, single parent homes an identity crisis. This led to a rise in militant homosexuality, a coming out of the closet of gay men and women who also demanded equality. The things that had been considered improper went looking for a desperate legitimacy.

Members can see why I wanted to become a member of Parliament. We could not be represented by people who so proudly and publicly espoused that kind of misogyny, homophobia, and racism in every way.

In 2013 we had a very difficult chapter in my community, where in the name of free speech, letters to the editor were published in our local newspaper that were horrifyingly racist against indigenous people, just at a time when our community was doing some healing work in bringing cultures and communities together. The publisher chose to print those letters to the editor but refused to publish letters to the editor that challenged those negative and racist opinions.

It culminated in a particularly terrible letter that drew a protest of 300 people outside the newspaper publisher's office. Included among those 300 were Assembly of First Nations Chief Shawn Atleo; Doug White, who was the Snuneymuxw First Nation Chief; and the mayor of Nanaimo, John Ruttan, who had never been to a protest in his life. That is what brought him out to stand up against that racism against indigenous people.

The very next year, the federal Conservatives acclaimed that same man, the publisher, as their candidate. In 2014 they were happy to have people in their stable who were very comfortable expressing racist thoughts.

I do not know whether to be relieved by the motion on the floor today and to see it as a true conversion. I hope it is not just to take potshots at the Liberals, not that they need any defending, but this is too important to play politics with.

I will end by saying, like many members of Parliament, that I have had a lot of mail about the Liberal member's Motion No. 103. I have tried to write to each of these people, assuring them that the motion, which I intend to support, does not condemn free speech. It asks for parliamentary study of an important and urgent issue, and if it were a stifling of free speech, I would not be voting for it.

I want to thank the Liberal member of Parliament for Mississauga—Erin Mills. The letters of hate and attack she read in the House this afternoon are horrifying. As a House, we must find a way to root that out, to make it unacceptable for anyone to want to press "send" for such an email or to publicly post in social media the kind of hateful, sexist, racist things that were said about her. I was horrified to hear those words, and I extend my condolences to the member, her family, and her staff. This must be very hard to read.

The committee study that is going to happen, because we are going to vote in favour of this, surely, can be a great opportunity to provide context and recommendations on the state of systemic racism.

● (1615)

I hope it also gives parliamentarians a new tool with which to talk with our communities to reassure them that when newcomers enter our country, we will still fund social programs. We will still prioritize looking after working people and all Canadians. This is not an either/or, choosing immigrants and refugees or looking after long-standing Canadians. We need to do all these things together well.

Business of Supply

We must stand together against this global tide of hate. We must do what we can in this Parliament to change the tone, and I hope we can work together to that end.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate many of the thoughts the member expressed, but I have a question on the issue of Islamophobia. It is as an issue about which I believe the vast majority of Canadians are very sympathetic.

I cannot help but think that the Conservative Party has watered down a very important message that I think would do wonders for tolerance.

I used say that the best way to combat racism is through education. I think we are watering down the member's intent in the motion introduced just yesterday by taking out the word, "Islamophobia". It is a well-established phobia that exists.

Could the member provide her thoughts on whether the Conservatives should have at least allowed an amendment that would have incorporated that word?

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: Mr. Speaker, if I have the math right, that side of the House will vote in support of Motion No. 103. Probably most New Democrats will also, and Motion No. 103 will then be the direction given to a committee to study and it will bring some recommendations back.

If any members on the other side agree with me that we should support the Conservative motion, then we will have also a study at committee that talks about ending racism.

There is no loss in this. Let us get on with the work. Let us vote in favour of both motions and get down to work, as Canadians are asking us to, and show leadership and stamp racism out in every form.

• (1620)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, we do not have to go back very far to find quite outrageous things said by former parliamentarians. I would like to have seen this House in the wake of the tragedy, the murders, in Quebec City. We were quite united. We were clear, as parliamentarians, that we were denouncing the murderous acts against Muslims for the sole reason that they were praying in a mosque.

We should be united around this, and I appreciate that the NDP position is to vote for both motions. I agree, for the record. The motions, side by side, do not create any conflicts, one with the other. They can both be passed. I see nothing wrong with Motion No. 103.

The background context that poisons this debate is what is going on in social media and what is going at rallies, such as the one this weekend in Toronto. There are posters on utility poles around Ottawa this morning that call out what they allege is Christianophobia and say that Motion No. 103 will bring sharia law.

The backdrop to our reasoned debate as parliamentarians is an unreasonable campaign of disinformation that is unfortunately reaching people across Canada who honestly believe now that the completely reasonable Motion No. 103 will threaten religious freedom or bring sharia law.

That is the problem with our debate here. We are not engaging with the real problem: an anonymous plague of false disinformation.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member's reminder of the larger context here. We have recently witnessed a very high-profile American election where a sexist, racist president was chosen with fewer votes than his opponent. Nevertheless, in a broken electoral system in the U.S., that is who will now be setting the tone in the media for the next four years.

We are seeing some of the same echoes in the Conservative leadership campaign, so I absolutely share my fellow member's concern that the tone at the top is very important and that we need to speak out and condemn racism and sexism where we see it.

I certainly hope Conservatives on this side of the House will choose a leader who reflects an approach to a tolerant and diverse country and will not be swept up in some of the fanning of the flames we have seen recently, to great harm.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be able to speak to this motion of the Conservatives, who have chosen one of their rare opposition days to discuss a very important subject, namely systemic racism and discrimination.

Unfortunately, the Conservatives have decided not to specifically include the issue of systemic discrimination and racism toward Muslims in their motion. They deliberately decided to withdraw that element from the motion, obviously in contrast to Motion No. 103, which we all know, and which we debated yesterday evening in the House. We are not going to turn a blind eye today, for this is certainly why the Conservatives have decided to devote an opposition day to this topic as well, to try and short-circuit, if I may use that expression, the initiative of one of our colleagues on the other side of the House, who had very good intentions.

Unfortunately, the Conservatives seem to want to play with words and play politics on this issue. It is too bad, because this sensitive subject is extremely important. It is above all a very real phenomenon. We have seen it in the past, and unfortunately very recently as well.

The motion makes reference to the recent attack at the Quebec City mosque, which all my colleagues in the House are aware of. Following that attack, we all observed a moment of silence in the House in honour of the victims. That is clearly the context in which we are debating this extremely important and very sensitive subject today; this is something that is very real.

As I was also saying, this debate is of course taking place in the context of Motion No. 103, which is virtually identical to today's motion. The only important distinction to be made is that Motion No. 103 included a certain form of discrimination and racism called "Islamophobia". That is the only important difference. However, the motion by our Liberal colleague says simply, "including Islamophobia."

The Conservatives' speeches, however, give the impression that they think that Motion No. 103 deals only with Islamophobia and that it specifies only one form of discrimination based on only one religion. On the contrary, if Motion No. 103 is read as it should be read, it is clear that the subject is systemic religious discrimination and racism, including Islamophobia. All the same, I find it surprising that the Conservatives are in the end opposed to including a certain form of specific discrimination in the study that the committee will be undertaking on this issue.

It is also important to remember the ultimate goal of both motions, because I almost feel as though we are talking about two different issues today, when clearly the two motions are almost identical. That is why I will not be making much of a distinction between the two during my speech.

Nevertheless, this change in the Conservative motion, compared to the Liberal motion, is being fuelled by a campaign of falsehoods and fearmongering that is taking hold across Canada and that is clearly fuelled by false information. It is a campaign of misinformation, period.

The Conservatives would have people believe, and my Green Party colleague mentioned this earlier, that freedom of expression is suddenly at stake, because someone decided to include Islamophobia in a motion that calls on a parliamentary committee to study the issue of racism and discrimination in order to come up with solutions. I simply do not understand the logic in that.

How can anyone arrive at that conclusion and that twisted logic, namely, that freedom of expression is going to be jeopardized because a committee is being asked to study an issue as important as discrimination and racism, including Islamophobia? Clearly, something is wrong with this picture.

• (1625)

Unfortunately, that is the context in which we are debating this motion. There is a misinformation campaign being fuelled by certain groups in Canada.

After putting today's debate somewhat in context, I would like to talk about a very real phenomenon that I have seen in my community of Sherbrooke. There is systemic discrimination and a form of racism. It is important to use the real words and admit that this exists.

In Sherbrooke, I have received testimonials from people from different religious communities, but especially the Muslim community. People come to tell me their stories and how they feel discriminated against, especially with regard to employment, as well as in other areas and other circumstances.

This discrimination is hard to prove, but it seems to be based on religion. There are some concrete examples, such as the case of a man from the Muslim community who came to see me. He was looking for a job for a long time. I am sure I have colleagues who know what I am talking about because they may have heard the same thing. He told me he had been looking for work for years. He had all the necessary training. If I am not mistaken, he was an engineer from Morocco or one of the countries of the Maghreb. Naturally, he had an Arabic-sounding name. An engineer by training, he came to Quebec and took all the courses he needed to be up to date because the professional associations do not necessarily make it easy to bring

Business of Supply

people in. He did everything required of him to join the Ordre des ingénieurs. He looked for work for years to no avail and then one day, many years later, he finally found something in Montreal. Unfortunately, he had to leave Sherbrooke.

That is something I am all too familiar with and have heard time and time again. Immigrants in Sherbrooke end up having to leave because there is no work.

He told me that once he found work, he tried something to find out if his name was the reason employers turned him down. He changed his name on his résumé and sent it to the same companies that had not called him in for an interview. It did not take long for someone to call him back and offer him a job, or at least an interview.

I hear that kind of story all the time. That is why the issue we are debating is extremely important. I want to emphasize that this issue is very real. I have seen it first-hand, as have some of my colleagues.

That is why we have to adopt this motion and Motion No. 103. We can adopt both of them. I think it would be very useful for a House of Commons committee to study this issue and come up with some solutions. We are here not just to condemn bad situations, but to find solutions. That is what will be expected of the committee. I am heartened by the positive signals I am picking up from both sides of the House. The Conservatives certainly tried to play with words to turn this issue into a political football.

Nevertheless, this initiative is a step in the right direction. We have to examine the issue and focus on finding solutions. That is what the committee will do. It will recommend solutions and actions to the government. Those solutions will enable us to shape a nation that reflects who we are and fulfills our aspirations, a more just and egalitarian nation with opportunities for all of us. Everyone will have the same opportunity no matter where they come from or what their family background is.

I see that my time is up, so I would be very pleased to answer my colleagues' questions.

• (1630)

I urge all my colleagues to support these initiatives to discuss this issue. I will be most pleased to respond to their questions.

[*English*]

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate hearing my colleague's thoughts on our motion as well as some of the larger context.

Looking at the text of the motion, it says very clearly that we “condemn all forms of systemic racism, religious intolerance, and discrimination of Muslims, Jews, Christians, Sikhs, Hindus, and other religious communities”. Members have talked about the importance of calling out discrimination by name, and our motion very clearly does that. There is no ambiguity in our motion. That is one of the clear differences and one of those things that is particularly important.

Also, the timeline allows us to move forward earlier and more quickly with the committee study. Our motion does not just suggest a committee study; it directs a committee study.

Business of Supply

Would the member agree that those are particular strengths of this motion? Would he speak to the value of proceeding with this motion, and also the fact that even if members want to vote in favour of a different motion, that does not mean they should not vote for this motion on its merits?

•(1635)

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

Indeed, the Conservatives' motion has considerable merit, and that is why we are going to support it. That does not prevent all of our colleagues from supporting a similar motion that will certainly not hinder the work of the same committee, for even though the two motions are parallel, they give directions to the same committee. Therefore one certainly does not prevent the other.

To answer my colleague's question, this is indeed a well-drafted motion. That is why we support it, and we urge our colleagues to do the same, for this is an extremely important subject. It is a very real phenomenon that we have to address, as parliamentarians, in order to find solutions.

[English]

Ms. Filomena Tassi (Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member said that this opposition day motion had played with words, and was been playing politics. I would agree with him. The Conservatives have taken a very valuable opportunity, an opposition day motion, and have essentially duplicated a motion that we have presented on this side of the House, save and except for the fact that the word Islamophobia is used. That is really the distinguishing difference, and I think everyone in this chamber has agreed that Islamophobia does exist.

It seems to me that there is a fear of addressing this word. Do we not combat that fear by using the word? Do we not rise to that challenge by voting for the motion? In order to approach and directly confront what is happening here, we need to confront what is out there, which is Islamophobia.

Is the right response to that to vote against this motion in an effort to directly approach Islamophobia head-on, and vote only for the motion that we put forward in an effort to not play politics, to not allow that to happen, but to show Canadians our values, and that this is an important value for which we have to stand up?

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for raising this point.

Indeed, I am not afraid of talking about Islamophobia and mentioning that word, unlike some of our colleagues. That way we have a better understanding of what we are talking about and what that word means. For me, it is clear: it means fear of a religious community. No long search in the dictionary is necessary to find the definition of that word: phobia of Islam.

If we mention the word in the House and we adopt motions that mention it, that will certainly demonstrate that we are very concerned about this phenomenon and that, as I was saying earlier, it is very real.

Furthermore, I do not think that voting for just one or the other of these motions will improve the situation. To think that way is simply to play the same political game, where we want to be the one who succeeded in moving the matter forward. Both motions are moving in the right direction and, fortunately, will make it possible to address an important subject.

The Deputy Speaker: Before we resume debate, it is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Mégantic—L'Érable, Rail Transportation; the hon. member for Saskatoon—Grasswood, The Environment; the hon. member for Courtenay—Alberni, The Environment.

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to inform you that I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Edmonton Manning for this period of debate on the motion of my colleague from Cypress Hills—Grasslands.

I think it is important for those at home who have just tuned in to remember the purpose of the motion that we are discussing today in the House. I would like to read the motion because I find it to be very complete. This motion accurately reflects what we, as a society, think we should and should not do when it comes to hateful acts. My colleague's motion reads as follows:

That the House: (a) recognize that Canadian society is not immune to the climate of hate and fear exemplified by the recent and senseless violent acts at a Quebec City mosque; (b) condemn all forms of systemic racism, religious intolerance, and discrimination of Muslims, Jews, Christians, Sikhs, Hindus, and other religious communities; and (c) instruct the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage to undertake a study on how the government could...

For those who are not as familiar with the work of the House, the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage is a committee of parliamentarians from all parties that meet to discuss and debate in greater depth a subject that we often do not have time to debate in the House. Therefore, the motion would ask the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage to undertake a study to:

...(i) develop a whole-of-government approach to reducing or eliminating systemic racism and religious discrimination including Islamophobia, in Canada, while ensuring a community-centered focus with a holistic response through evidence-based policy-making, (ii) collect data to contextualize hate crime reports and to conduct needs assessments for impacted communities, and that the Committee should present its findings and recommendations to the House no later than 240 calendar days from the adoption of this motion, provided that in its report, the Committee should make recommendations that the government may use to better reflect the enshrined rights and freedoms in the Constitution Acts, including the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Despite all the speeches we have heard today, at the reading of this motion and after having heard all of today's speeches in the House, I would like to make an observation that appears very relevant to me. I cannot understand the attitude of some of my colleagues who refuse to rise above the debate, rise above certain words, and vote on each of the motions before us in turn, based on their own values and according to what we think of it.

Today, the opposition is presenting a good motion that could be unanimous because it brings us all together in terms of our values. When we vote on this motion, we will be voting on the motion before us, not on another motion that we might debate in the House. That is what I find sad. There is a motion before us that could be unanimous among all members of the House, but for a variety of reasons, some members will decide to vote against it.

Business of Supply

I invite my colleagues to look at this motion, and to vote on what it is and not what it is not, or what it does not include. As I mentioned, we will soon have an opportunity to vote on this other motion, which is equally strong. Each member of the House will have an opportunity to vote on that motion.

To be clear, I condemn all hateful comments, and all acts of hatred against Muslims. These are unacceptable. I would also like to reiterate my great sorrow in the wake of the tragic events in Québec City. In my opinion, there are no worse crimes than hate crimes against totally innocent people. My thoughts are with the families of those who lost their lives or were injured during the attack perpetrated at the Centre culturel Islamique de Québec.

This attack was an affront to the liberty and religious freedoms of Canadians. Places of worship should be havens of peace where people can engage in personal reflection and expression of their faith. Canadians, regardless of religion, race, or origin, must be able to freely express their convictions, and change their beliefs and practices without worry and without fear of coercion or violence of any kind. That is what I believe, and I think all of my colleagues agree with that.

• (1640)

I would say that sometimes, as is the case today, the example does not always come from the top. What is happening today worries me. When we want a consensus and we want to set differences aside to speak with one voice, we must focus on what unites us rather than what divides us, as we are unfortunately doing today.

I would like to talk about an example that did not come from the top, in my community of Thetford Mines. This is about the dream of a priest and singer. I can give you his name; I spoke to him today and he gave me permission to do so. His name is Robert Lebel. He managed to do something that I thought was literally impossible to achieve when I heard about it for the first time.

Mr. Lebel, a priest and singer, created a space of unity and peace in my riding, called Versant-La-Noël. What is Versant-La-Noël? It was created in 1998. It took two years of reflection before finally bringing a certain group of people together, for our priest to successfully implement his project, which has developed over the years.

In 2008, the dream became reality with the construction of an ecumenical and interfaith pavilion. The ecumenical pavilion became and remains to this day a space for unity and peace where interfaith activities are held. What makes this pavilion such an exceptional place? The building's architecture itself eloquently speaks of the desire to create a universal fraternity, and it does this in two ways.

First, it features the symbols of the three major Abrahamic religions: the cross for Christians, the star for Judaism and the crescent for the Muslim faith. When you arrive at Versant-La-Noël and you see the building and its three symbols, you cannot help but be impressed and awestruck. No one would think that these three symbols could coexist on the same building. However, this is what is happening in my community.

There are also symbols representing all the various Christian denominations, Anglican, Protestant, Catholic, or Orthodox. There

are cupolas, gables, and bell towers. In short, room has been made for the expression of all forms of faith and religion.

I firmly believe I should organize a mission to Versant-La-Noël. I would go even further to say that I think the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage, which will certainly study one of these two motions—one of them will surely be adopted—should hold at least one meeting in this haven for peace and harmony for all religions.

Once people have spent a few hours with Robert Lebel or a few hours in this really special place, they see things and others in a different light.

Today we speak of an inclusive Canada, a Canada that allows everyone to express themselves without fear. When we are able to bring all these people together so they can talk to one another, we can do some real good, without always having to speak of hate and hate crimes.

I will give a few examples of the activities held at Versant-La-Noël. There are awareness-raising sessions with the various Christian faiths in the region. For more than 10 years now, the centre has consolidated interfaith relations, particularly with Muslim immigrant families who come celebrate the festival of sacrifice and the end of Ramadan or to hold international meetings for renewal. People come from all over to visit this place.

In July, I had the pleasure of addressing some sixty members gathered for their session. Another session will be held this July, bringing together Muslims from Quebec, Ontario, France, Morocco, and Algeria.

I want to give the last word to Robert Lebel. I asked him if he believes that Versant-La-Noël can change how people see one another. He told me that it definitely has a positive impact, one he sees year after year. Various political and religious organizations have supported the centre since its inception to help it evolve and become a trusted bulwark against fear and mistrust. There has been a lot of interest in developing friendships with Muslims based on better mutual understanding of both culture and spirituality. It is a meeting place, a place for dialogue, friendship, and interfaith prayer, as surprising as that may seem.

I invite my colleagues to rise above the fray, heed the words of Robert Lebel, and support the motion. This motion has the power to unite us and none at all to divide us.

Business of Supply

•(1645)

[English]

Mr. Mike Bossio (Hastings—Lennox and Addington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member across the way likes to talk about the fear of what this will do to free speech. I would say to the member that what he is talking about is fear-mongering against what free speech is all about. There is nothing in this motion that has any impact whatsoever on the ability of individuals to speak freely. Canada's government has always had a history of shining a light on those groups that are targeted by discrimination. The motion that the member is putting, which was introduced to the House on the other side of the floor, is trying to take away that ability to shine that light on a group that is being targeted right now, and that was targeted in Quebec. We need to ensure that we shine that light and that we do not allow his motion to take away from the ability to shine a light on that. Therefore, I would encourage the member on the other side to recognize that this group is being targeted today and that the motion he is trying to introduce is trying to take away from that.

•(1650)

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Mr. Speaker, the government member should have listened to my speech. I did not talk about freedom of expression or fear. I talked about a concrete example of a community that has managed to take meaningful action to prevent acts of hatred from happening. It is unfortunate that some people are again using talking points.

I think the member talked more about the motion that we are not currently debating than our motion. He certainly did not listen to my speech, which was about unity and fraternity and the fact that different religions can coexist when we make the necessary effort and when we can achieve our dreams. That is what I talked about, and it has absolutely nothing to do with my colleague's question.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate my colleague's experience and particularly the account of the priest in his community who has managed to bring people together under one roof. They may follow different faiths, but they are driven by the same desire to understand others.

To come back to the member's question, I wonder if my colleague from Mégantic—L'Érable could explain how that member could say that we have ignored Islam, when the motion states, and I quote:

...condemn all forms of systemic racism, religious intolerance, and discrimination of Muslims, Jews, Christians, Sikhs, Hindus, and other religious communities;

How could the member have done such selective reading?

Mr. Luc Berthold: Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, I have to say that I agree with my colleague. I do not understand the question I was asked because it had absolutely nothing to do with my speech. The comments were inappropriate and I felt as though the member was speaking about a motion that I was unfamiliar with and that just did not exist.

The motion before us is one that we must all support because if we do not, it will be solely for political reasons. There is nothing in this motion that is a drawback for parliamentarians or harmful to any religion.

If we want to show that we are open-minded and put partisanship aside today, members must vote for the motion before us and not for the one that we may have to vote on another day.

[English]

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I came to Canada from an area of the world where religion is much more at the forefront than it is in our society here. It is an area where wars have been fought for centuries in the name of religion. That gives me a perspective on the issue of religious freedom and its importance that is different from that of someone who was born in this country.

In Canada when we talk about religious freedom, we are talking about an abstract, and in the House we are in agreement that such freedom is a good thing. With today's motion we have an opportunity to show leadership, to admit that our society, as enlightened as it is, is not yet perfect.

In many areas of the world the idea of religious freedom is literally a matter of life and death. There are countries where changing from one faith to another carries with it a death sentence.

What we are discussing today is not an academic exercise. It is not about different political visions. It is about how our society is different in that we do not allow our differences to divide us.

We Canadians are indeed fortunate to live in a country in which democratic freedoms, including the freedom of religion, are taken for granted. We do not face the realities of other countries where religious minorities are regularly persecuted. Many of the Syrian refugees who have come to Canada in the past year have come here to escape religious persecution.

When we talk about religious freedom, we are talking about one of our rights, perhaps the most fundamental. It is an area where we have shown leadership to the world, where we continue to lead, hopefully by example. Canada is known as a place where people are not persecuted for believing differently. Like others in the House, I came here from a different country. I became Canadian because I knew the ideals Canadians held and I wanted to share in those values. This is not a country where being a member of a minority or believing in a religion not shared by the majority inevitably leads to persecution. However, there are times when we fall short of our ideals of respect and tolerance for others. Many of our minority group members could tell so many stories.

We do get some things right. The rule of law is equally applied to all. The state does not just talk about freedoms and minority rights but actively seeks to provide protection. We really do believe in freedom of religion no matter how difficult that may be at times. It is not just polite political posturing.

There are different places in the world where governments give lip service to human rights and religious freedom while doing nothing to protect their minorities. That is not the Canadian way.

Business of Supply

As Canadians, we are aware that sometimes we fall short, and today's motion is an effort to live up to our own standards. We know we all have to do a better job at understanding our neighbours, because understanding dispels any uneasiness. People are less likely to be afraid of someone they have shared a meal with, no matter how different that person may outwardly appear.

That fear and unease is perhaps understandable at first. We humans have a tendency to be suspicious, even hostile, to those we do not know. We need to break down some barriers and get to know each other a little better. After all, religious discrimination is not directed at only one group. I am sure my Sikh and Hindu colleagues in the House could tell of how they have been at times met with suspicion, as members of the Jewish and Muslim communities could tell tales of discrimination suffered by their members in all parts of this country.

How widespread is religious discrimination in Canada? Can we as parliamentarians do more than just lead by example? That is what we are asking the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage to find out.

● (1655)

Allowing people to believe what they want and to practise that belief is a cornerstone of our society. Here in Canada we treat others with respect. That is the Canadian way. Furthermore, just treatment is enshrined in our laws. We recognize that hate for others is destructive and brings down all society, not just the person who hates. We believe in the freedom of religion. That does not mean we should all join one religion so there is no disagreement. It means we need to be able to have a civilized discussion on matters of religion. Respect for each other means we do not allow our conversation to degenerate into hate speech and violence.

While there are always those who have a fear of others, that is not true for the majority of us. We have seen that only in the past months with the tragic shooting at the Quebec City mosque. While we do not know yet what motivated the shooter, the outpouring of support for the Muslim community from across the country was an example of Canada at its best. There were vigils in all areas of the country, prayers and offers of support for Muslims and mosques, a reminder to the Muslim community that they are not alone. While the shooter may have desired to divide us by his actions, he only brought us closer together.

Conservatives are fully committed to freedom of religion and freedom of speech. The two go hand in hand. That is not always as comfortable as it seems. Sometimes we criticize the actions or theology of a particular group which can possibly cause offence, but free speech is not the same thing as promoting hatred, and we would do well to remember that.

Being a member of a minority group does not make one immune to criticism. Some seem to think that religious intolerance is on the rise in Canada. I would respectfully disagree, but that is only an opinion. Allowing the heritage committee to conduct a study would allow us to work with facts, not speculation. Supporting the motion is the right thing to do. I hope all members in this Parliament unanimously support the motion.

● (1700)

Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to ask my hon. colleague a very simple question. Why does he oppose the word “Islamophobia”?

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: Mr. Speaker, obviously I oppose anything that I do not understand. To date, I do not understand what Islamophobia means. Therefore, as a politician I need more details to understand things, to absorb things, because we represent the people, and while we do so, we have to be able to reflect on that understanding before we support or do not support anything that comes our way.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I know the member for Edmonton Manning cares a lot about this issue. We talk about the word “Islamophobia”. It is a phobia toward people of Islam. We do not need a dictionary to tell us exactly what that word means.

In their motion, the Conservatives identified five religions and they want to work on focusing on any discrimination against those five religions. The Liberals are focused on one religion. I think we should be supporting both motions. It is going to take some strong members on the Conservative benches and Liberal benches to rise up and show solidarity that we need to combat this and put these words aside and do it for the best interests of all people.

There was a swastika painted on the car of a woman in my community, Angela Brown. For her, I hope that we will come together and help support local governments which do not have the tools that we have to fight systemic racism, isolated incidents, and the spike in racism that we are seeing here in our country.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: Mr. Speaker, I agree on the unity all the way, because we are here to be united against any hate and discrimination against others. That is in our Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

This is the responsibility of the Liberal government now, because the Liberals initiated the first motion. It is their responsibility to start fixing issues and to start to come around, not to stick to their position and leave others to deal with it and solve their problems for them. When the Liberal government comes across in a decent way to agree on issues that will work for every Canadian, then we will definitely be happy to be united and unanimously support that position.

● (1705)

Mr. Mike Bossio (Hastings—Lennox and Addington, Lib.): Madam Speaker, hate crimes are declining in Canada, but they have actually doubled against the Muslim community. What does the member have against shining a light on the hate crimes and the rise of hate crimes toward Muslims? Why—

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

Mr. Mike Bossio: No, it is not. It is not at all. All you are trying to do is take away from a motion that is actually—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. I just want to remind the member that he is to address the questions and comments to the Chair. I would ask him to please get to his question so we can have somebody answer it.

Business of Supply

Mr. Mike Bossio: Madam Speaker, the question was, what do you have against shining a light—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I want to remind the members of the official opposition to please allow the member to speak.

Mr. Mike Bossio: What do you have against shining a light on Islamophobia? What do you have against—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. Excuse me. I will remind the member that he is to address the questions and comments to the Chair.

Mr. Mike Bossio: Madam Speaker, I apologize.

What does the member have against shining a light on Islamophobia? What does the member have against the Muslim community that he would want to take away from a perfectly good motion that was already presented to the House?

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: Madam Speaker, I respectfully decline to answer the question. As someone who comes from the Middle East, I understand more than you do, the Islamic culture and religion. I could teach you a lesson in that. To tell me that I have something against Islam—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. I will remind the member for Edmonton Manning to address the questions and comments to the Chair, and I would suggest that the member wrap it up soon.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: Madam Speaker, I completely reject that type of tone coming from the other side. That is not the way to talk to people. The last thing I need in life is for someone on that side to teach me about Islam and the Middle East, where I came from. Therefore, respectfully, I refuse to answer the question.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I believe that the member attributed some words and intentions to a member on my side of the House, and I am asking him to withdraw these comments, which are very inappropriate for the House.

[*English*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I wonder if the member for Hastings—Lennox and Addington would—

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, on a point of order, I have been listening to the debate all day. I suspect if the member was fair, he would recognize that there were all sorts of comments throughout the day. If we were to say the member has a point of order here, one would be able to say there would have been a point of order—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. A point of order has been raised here, so I am just wondering now if the member for Hastings—Lennox and Addington has anything to say at this point.

Mr. Mike Bossio: Madam Speaker, I will withdraw the comment.

Mr. Frank Baylis (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I find it fascinating to question ourselves. How did we get here, right here to this debate today?

In my riding of Pierrefonds—Dollard, Mr. Samer Majzoub, of the Canadian Muslim Forum, and I sat around, had a coffee, and

discussed the concerns we had about rising Islamophobia. We looked at what we could do to shine a light and speak up against it. Together with his group, he came up with this petition. I will read the wording, because it is important:

Islam is a religion of 1.5 billion people worldwide. Since its founding more than 1400 years ago, Muslims have contributed, and continue to contribute, to the positive development of human civilization. This encompasses all areas of human endeavours including the arts, culture, science, medicine, literature, and more;

Recently an infinitesimally small number of extremist individuals have conducted terrorist activities while claiming to speak for the religion of Islam. Their actions have been used as a pretext for a notable rise of anti-Muslim sentiments in Canada; and

These violent individuals do not reflect in any way the values or the teachings of the religion of Islam. In fact, they misrepresent the religion. We categorically reject all their activities. They in no way represent the religion, the beliefs and the desire of Muslims to co-exist in peace with all peoples around the world.

We, the undersigned, Citizens and residents of Canada, call upon the House of Commons to join us in recognizing that extremist individuals do not represent the religion of Islam, and in condemning all forms of Islamophobia.

That is what happened.

At the time, this petition received the most signatures ever on an electronic petition in the history of Canada. In fact, it was double the previous ones.

Based on this petition, the fine leader of the NDP put forward a motion for unanimous consent. He asked that the House join the more than 69,742 Canadian supporters of the House of Commons petition e-411 in condemning all forms of Islamophobia. He asked for unanimous consent. He asked the House for unanimous consent to condemn all forms of Islamophobia.

Can members imagine what happened? The House agreed that yes, we condemn all forms of Islamophobia. The members on this side of the House said it, and the members on the other side of the House said it. The opposition said it, and the government said it. It was unanimous.

What came of that? The member for Mississauga—Erin Mills said she would put forward a motion to study how we could work on this problem. I will read her wording.

It said that the House “take note of House of Commons’ petition e-411 and the issues raised by it; and...request that the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage undertake a study”, a study only, “on how the government could develop a whole-of-government approach to reducing”, and this is really important, “or eliminating”, and at this point she did not want to restrict it to Islamophobia, “systemic racism and religious discrimination including Islamophobia”, but it would not be limited to Islamophobia.

A petition, a motion with unanimous consent, and a study. The only thing she is guilty of is expanding it.

Today we are debating another motion brought forward because the word “Islamophobia” was in the member for Mississauga—Erin Mills’ motion. Today that word has to come out, because politics have been played, because it just cannot be.

I did not hear one member speak up, in the four months since they all agreed to condemn Islamophobia, to say that this word was terrible.

The fine gentleman, the member for Edmonton Manning, 10 minutes ago, said, "I oppose anything I do not understand".

• (1710)

I am speechless. I do not understand how a member could vote for a motion that receives unanimous consent and, four months later, say she does not understand the word. I am shocked. I have to put it down to one thing: politics. Cheap politics, shameful politics, shameful, cheap politics.

I looked up "Islamophobia". It is very simple. It means hatred or fear of Muslims. Arachnophobia is an irrational fear of spiders. If I am afraid of spiders, I am at least not afraid to say the word "arachnophobia". I am a little afraid of spiders, but I can still say the word. It is not that scary. Conservatives seem to have a problem saying the word.

• (1715)

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): It being 5:15 p.m., pursuant to order made earlier today, all questions necessary to dispose of the opposition motion are deemed put and a recorded division deemed requested and deferred until Tuesday, February 21, 2017, at the expiry of the time provided for oral questions.

Hon. Deepak Obhrai: Madam Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to see the clock as 5:30 p.m.

[*English*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Frank Baylis: Madam Speaker, I speak French and I did not understand a word. Unlike members on the other side, I need to understand what I'm voting on.

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I speak French and I understood the hon. member. I encourage the hon. member to use his earpiece.

[*English*]

The House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's Order Paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[*Translation*]

FORMALDEHYDE EMISSIONS

Mr. Rémi Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, Lib.) moved:

That, in the opinion of the House, the government should: (a) adopt regulations on formaldehyde emissions for composite wood products intended for indoor use that are sold, provided, or supplied for sale in Canada; and (b) ensure that these regulations are similar to US Environmental Protection Agency regulations enforcing the formaldehyde emissions standards in the US Toxic Substances Control Act Title VI in order to protect the health of Canadians who use these products.

Private Members' Business

He said: Madam Speaker, I hope the debate we have here this evening, or late this afternoon, will allow us to have objective discussions that are perhaps a little less animated than what we saw in the dying minutes of the past hour.

Again, I am very pleased to rise today in the House to move Motion No.102 on a subject that is very important to me. The purpose of the motion is to ensure that we adopt Canadian regulations on formaldehyde emissions.

Formaldehyde is a toxic substance that originates, for example, in composite wood products that are used indoors and causes serious health problems.

I am the father of four young boys. Obviously my children's health, and the health of my family, is important to me. I must admit that, sometimes, I tend to go a little overboard when it comes to protecting my children's health. For example, I ask them to make sure they carefully wash the fruits and vegetables they eat. I sometimes even do it myself to help them. I also ask them to wash their hands really thoroughly. I turn off the WiFi every night before they go to bed.

Obviously, for their protection, I make sure they live in a safe environment. We own a home and, over the years, I have done renovations by installing floating flooring, a new kitchen, and new cabinets. Then, on a visit to a composite wood panel manufacturing facility during the election campaign, I learned that some foreign manufacturers use formaldehyde-based resins.

I was shocked because I thought that formaldehyde had been banned from all wood composite products. I thought that Canada had regulations to limit, reduce, or eliminate formaldehyde emissions. I was therefore extremely shocked to learn that Canada does not have any regulations or concrete measures in place to eliminate formaldehyde emissions.

When I did some digging to find out more about what kind of protection was in place and how to avoid formaldehyde emissions, I came across an article about Hurricane Katrina. I learned that the 2005 hurricane had some major consequences. People in Louisiana were evacuated, then relocated and housed in mobile homes. In the weeks following relocation, as they were settling into those mobile homes, people started getting sick. They were having respiratory problems.

Finally, after all kinds of tests, it came to light that those mobile homes were made with wood composites that contained formaldehyde. All kinds of legal action ensued in pursuit of compensation from the manufacturers that produced those products and built those mobile homes. In 2012, the disputes were settled.

In 2015, the American program *60 Minutes* investigated the matter and found that foreign manufacturers of composite wood panels were selling lots of formaldehyde-containing composite products to the U.S., such as floating floors. Therefore, *60 Minutes* investigated further and found that no measures were in place to regulate formaldehyde emissions and that Americans were getting sick from exposure to formaldehyde emissions.

Private Members' Business

Obviously, the reaction of Americans was very negative. After the show aired, the U.S. government introduced very strict regulations in order to eliminate formaldehyde from composite wood products.

We are in the House today to ensure that Canada, which does not have such regulations or concrete measures to limit formaldehyde emissions, can adopt similar regulations. That is why I moved Motion No. 102. We will debate the elements of this motion.

● (1720)

As I was saying earlier, the objective of Motion No. 102 is to introduce Canadian regulations on formaldehyde emissions for composite wood products for indoor use that are sold, provided, or supplied for sale in Canada. These regulations should be similar to U.S. Environmental Protection Agency regulations enforcing the formaldehyde emission standards in the Toxic Substances Control Act, Title VI, through a certification process to establish levels of formaldehyde in composite wood products.

It is important to note that U.S. regulations introduced last year will go into force in December 2017. That is an important factor to be considered in our debate. I will repeat that the U.S. regulations will go into effect in December 2017, which is in the months to come.

Once again, formaldehyde is a colourless gas that infiltrates the air in two different ways. It can enter the air through gas emissions from construction materials or household products, or from the combustion of these products. The effects of formaldehyde on health are known, have been studied for many years, and are well documented by Health Canada.

High concentrations of formaldehyde can cause irritation of the eyes, nose, and throat; cause breathing problems; and worsen asthma symptoms in children and infants. They can even cause cancer. That is why this gas was declared toxic in the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999.

Formaldehyde is found in many construction materials made using composite panels. Composite panels are made using recycled wood residue, and these consumer products are becoming increasingly common in the everyday lives of Canadians.

These panels have many uses, including in the manufacture of furniture, desks, bookcases, kitchen cabinets, flooring, and toys. Formaldehyde comes primarily from the resin that is used as an adhesive in the manufacture of these composite wood panels and hardwood plywood.

As my colleagues may already be aware, Health Canada has developed general guidelines regarding indoor air quality in homes. Those guidelines set out maximum levels for two kinds of formaldehyde exposure: short-term and long-term exposure.

These guidelines also provide information regarding the known health effects of indoor air contaminants, sources of indoor air contaminants, the recommended exposure limits, and recommendations to reduce exposure to pollutants.

Although there is a formaldehyde emission standard for composite wood panels and hardwood plywood, CAN/CSA-0160, it is a voluntary standard. That is very important to remember. It is a

voluntary standard. Manufacturers are under no obligation to abide by it like they would be if it were a regulation arising from legislation.

It is vital that we protect Canadians from the harmful effects of formaldehyde emissions from composite wood panels and hardwood plywood. As a result, the motion we are debating today is crucial and resolves problems that are not addressed in Canadian regulations. If this regulation is not adopted, the situation that I explained earlier could get worse when the American regulations take effect in December 2017.

The motion seeks to protect the health of Canadians who buy or use these products and ensure that Canadian consumers have access to high quality building materials.

The Canadian regulations must be consistent with the American ones. Here is why. On December 12, 2016, the United States published the final version of its national regulations on formaldehyde emissions from composite wood products in order to protect the American citizens that purchase them. Once again, the health effects of this toxic gas are known and have been studied.

● (1725)

Any American or foreign manufacturer of composite wood wishing to sell or supply products to American consumers will have until December 12, 2017, to comply with the certification program and the new U.S. environmental requirements. Through these regulations, the United States has clearly indicated to manufacturers of composite panels that the health of Americans comes first.

Since the majority of Canadian manufacturers of composite panels have already made investments to ensure that their facilities meet the new U.S. standards, they will be able to continue exporting their products to the United States. Their operations will not be affected.

However, some foreign manufacturers of composite panels, who have not made the necessary investments in their operations to meet the new U.S. standards, will try to liquidate their products in countries that do not have such strict standards, such as Canada.

If that happens, the use of those composite panels, which have very high formaldehyde emissions, could obviously have serious effects on the health of Canadians who buy or use these products.

Canada needs to have a certification process that is similar to that of the United States in order to protect Canadian consumers by guaranteeing that the products they buy meet the highest standards of protection from formaldehyde emissions.

Private Members' Business

As I said, I am the father of four young boys, and their health is very important to me. Had I known that the products I bought in recent years contained formaldehyde, I would obviously have decided to buy something else.

As I said earlier, when I found out that Canada has no real measures to protect Canadians from the harmful effects of formaldehyde in the air, I decided to do something. That is why I came up with this motion and put it before the House. It is my duty as a father to safeguard the health of my children and my family.

If Canada does not adopt measures to protect Canadians from the health effects of formaldehyde, companies that manufacture composite panels that do not comply with U.S. standards could target the Canadian market to dump their products.

We must fix this problem and adopt regulations that are similar to American regulations, which are particularly strict. Once in place, those Canadian regulations will protect the health of Canadians.

By basing our standards on the American standards, Canadian regulations will limit the emission of formaldehyde, ensure that imported products meet the new Canadian standards, ensure correct labelling, ensure that all products are tested, and lastly, implement a certification process that will be done by accredited entities.

The composite panel manufacturing sector consists of 13 plants in Canada that are located in six different provinces. Seventy percent of its output is exported to the United States. This is an important economic sector that generates revenues of \$3.4 billion.

Like many others who share my objective, I am very proud to have a plant in my riding that has adopted the highest standards when it comes to protecting the people of our region and all Canadians.

To summarize, I want to commend Canadian composite panel manufacturers on their leadership; they have made the investments needed to conform to the highest standards and limit Canadians' exposure to formaldehyde emissions.

Once again, I am pleased to present and table this motion in the House to help keep Canadians safe.

● (1730)

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP): Madam Speaker, I congratulate my hon. colleague for moving this very important and useful motion that could improve the health of Canadians.

Protecting Canadians' health and environment is indeed a federal responsibility. Health Canada, or my colleague's Liberal government, tabled updated guidelines to that effect on June 16, 2015, guidelines that were rather strict. For example, the guidelines on long-term exposure talk about 40 parts per billion, while in the U.S. it is 110 parts. These guidelines are better in Canada. However, as the hon. member said, these measures are not mandatory.

I congratulate my colleague for going beyond these guidelines. However, will the government agree to go ahead and make these measures mandatory?

Mr. Rémi Massé: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague across the way for raising this question. Obviously, that is my goal. As I

said, I hope that we can adopt Canadian regulations that will limit formaldehyde emissions in order to protect the health of Canadians.

We currently have one hour to debate this motion, which will eventually be put to a vote. What I would like is to get the support of all my colleagues in the House and also of the opposition side, of the Conservatives and the NDP. That is my objective and I really hope that we can all come to an agreement.

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to point out the excellent work that my colleague opposite has done in preparing this motion. I know that he had to meet with people from the industry on several occasions. We are not used to dealing with files concerning standards, U.S. regulations, and Canadian regulations.

We are, however, familiar with the product in question. The composite wood panel manufacturing facilities in our regions and ridings are very important to us.

I wanted to ask my colleague a polite question. In the motion that he moved, he spoke about adopting standards that are similar to the American standards. Would he be amenable to talking about harmonizing the standards rather than making them similar? It is his speech. He can give us his answer shortly.

● (1735)

Mr. Rémi Massé: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague opposite for his kind words. During the 16 years that I worked for the federal government, I had the opportunity to work in the regulatory field in various departments, such as the Department of Health and the Department of Justice. I worked on developing regulations.

Obviously, when I began looking into this issue, I made sure to find out everything I possibly could about formaldehyde emissions. I wanted to draft a motion that would hold together, one that made sense, so that it would get the support of as many members of the House as possible.

The goal is clear. It is to protect the health of Canadians and recognize the work that the industry has done to meet the highest standards. I thank my colleague. Obviously there is the matter of terminology, but I think that we agree on the meaning of the motion. I am therefore going to leave it at that.

[English]

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to rise in the House today to speak to Motion No. 102.

Private Members' Business

I want to commend our hon. colleague for the incredible work in putting together this motion. I have to admit that this is an issue that came up in my riding. We have organizations that have already started taking steps to adopt these regulations or at least the processes in place, and Motion No. 102 is a great start in recognizing this problem.

Motion No. 102 reads:

That, in the opinion of the House, the government should: (a) adopt regulations on formaldehyde emissions for composite wood products intended for indoor use that are sold, provided, or supplied for sale in Canada; and (b) ensure that these regulations are similar to US Environmental Protection Agency regulations enforcing the formaldehyde emissions standards in the US Toxic Substances Control Act Title VI in order to protect the health of Canadians who use these products.

A concern we have, and industry has brought it up as well, is with the word “similar”. We recognize that this is a common-sense motion. We would like to see an amendment, as we would like to have language such as “align with” or “in alignment with”.

I received word from one of our major manufacturers of composite wood and plywood in my riding, one of the leading forestry product producers in Canada. It suggested that these regulations should be patterned on the U.S. formaldehyde emissions requirements, and more specifically patterned on California's very strict rules. I believe my hon. colleague has moved on this.

Our previous Conservative government has always taken a stance on controlling toxic substances that pose risks to human health. For example, it was a priority to pass the Canada Consumer Product Safety Act, which banned the use of bisphenol A in baby bottles.

On December 12, 2016, the American Environmental Protection Agency published new regulations to reduce exposure to formaldehyde emissions from certain wood products domestically produced or imported into the United States. The EPA adopted California Air Resources Board regulations for composite wood products to ensure a consistent regulatory framework across the U.S.

Formaldehyde is used as an adhesive in a wide range of wood products, such as furniture, flooring, cabinets, bookcases, and building materials, including plywood and wood panels, as our hon. colleague mentioned. Composite wood products are made with pre-consumer, recycled wood residuals, which utilize 95% of the whole tree and also a significant majority of wood fibre, which is locally sourced. This is important, especially in my riding of Cariboo—Prince George where we are dependent on forestry.

Exposure to formaldehyde can cause adverse health effects, including eye, nose, and throat irritation; other respiratory symptoms; and even cancer. Formaldehyde in Canada is classified as a toxic substance under the Canadian Environmental Protection Act of 1999, CEPA, and it is regulated. However, if the Government of Canada decides to adopt EPA regulations, the use of formaldehyde in wood products would be subject to stricter regulation on finished wood products, like plywood, cabinet doors, and countertops.

It is important to note that Canadian exporters of composite wood products already adhere to the American and Californian standards voluntarily through the CSA Group to export into the American market. If Canada did not adopt this regulatory change or if we refused to adopt Motion No. 102, composite wood products entering

Canada would be subject to less stringent formaldehyde regulations than Canadian exports to the United States.

This is also about jobs. It is not just a health issue, but a competitive advantage. It is about jobs here in Canada as well as products that could be flooding into our market from foreign countries, such as composite wood products from China.

I will reiterate for the record that this is a common-sense motion.

● (1740)

When we see so many topics come through the House, where the House can oftentimes be divided, this is one that hopefully will be supported by all members on all sides because it is a very common-sense motion. I want to bring it back to Canadian jobs. We need to always be mindful that it protects jobs within Canada. It also promotes jobs and job growth.

The composite panel industry supports Canadian jobs. Nearly 12,000 people across Canada are employed in this industry, many of them in rural communities like those in my riding of Cariboo—Prince George. In fact, the West Fraser production plant in Quesnel is a significant job creator and is a member of the composite panel industry and indeed one of the largest producers of this in Canada.

If Motion No. 102 does not pass, these jobs and jobs in my riding could be negatively impacted.

As members know, I am one of the fiercest proponents of getting a new softwood lumber agreement done as quickly as possible. With increasing protectionist rhetoric coming from our friends across the border, we need to do everything in our power to ensure our Canadian producers enjoy the same advantages as those who are in competition with them. If Motion No. 102 does not pass, those jobs and jobs in my riding will be negatively impacted.

Aligning Canada's regulatory framework with the United States on wood products containing formaldehyde will prevent the dumping of non-compliant EPA products into the Canadian marketplace. This will ensure Canada's wood product manufacturers maintain a competitive advantage, both domestically as well as internationally. In an ever-changing uncertain global economic environment, we need to seize every opportunity to ensure our forestry products and forestry producers remain competitive.

Here is a statistic for the House. Over 140 communities in my province of British Columbia are forestry dependent. Roughly 65,000 jobs depend on the forestry industry for their livelihoods and to put food on the table for their families. We currently do not have a softwood lumber agreement in place. This has been mentioned time and again, and I will continue to defend our forestry workers.

Private Members' Business

It is expected that tariffs will soon be levied on our Canadian producers that ship between Canada and the U.S. Prior to the Harper government coming to power, disputes on the softwood lumber had been simmering for more than 20 years. It reached a peak in May 2002 when the United States imposed duties of 27% on Canadian softwood. It was argued that Canada unfairly subsidized producers of spruce, pine, and fir lumber.

The trade war took a toll on Canadian jobs. While we like to tout our record in litigation, thousands upon thousands of people in the industry lost their jobs, including nearly 15,000 forestry workers in my home province of British Columbia.

A quote that was thrown around this chamber quite frequently was “the definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting a different result”. Instead of negotiating a new softwood lumber agreement right out of the gate, we have seen inaction on this file and the Liberal government has chosen to put it on the back burner and instead put false promises as well as false deadlines forward.

That is where we stand today, with no deal and our high-quality, well-paying forestry jobs at risk. One certainty we do have is knowing from the experiences of the last four trade wars that this one will not end well. Regardless of where we move with our softwood lumber agreement, there will be losers.

Canadians need results from the government that include protection of almost 400,000 jobs from a new softwood lumber agreement. From conversations I have had with them, Canadians are rightly worried because it is clear there is no plan to protect the high-paying jobs that are created in Canada as a result of NAFTA, including 550,000 auto sector jobs, 211,000 aerospace jobs, and our oil and gas, mining, and forestry jobs.

We need the Liberal government to start recognizing the importance of our rural economies as the backbone of the national economy. The Conservative Party stands for our hard-working families employed in the resources sector. Oftentimes these individuals are working 12 to 14-hour days doing back-breaking, labour intensive jobs in all kinds of unpredictable weather. They work hard to put food on their tables, and we stand with them.

Making a small, common sense change to tweak legislation that is already voluntarily acted upon is a good move, and that is why we will support Motion No. 102.

● (1745)

[*Translation*]

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House to speak to Motion No. 102 moved by my colleague from Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia. I will read his motion because it is worthwhile to do so:

That, in the opinion of the House, the government should: (a) adopt regulations on formaldehyde emissions for composite wood products intended for indoor use that are sold, provided, or supplied for sale in Canada; and (b) ensure that these regulations are similar to US Environmental Protection Agency regulations enforcing the formaldehyde emissions standards in the US Toxic Substances Control Act Title VI in order to protect the health of Canadians who use these products.

As my colleagues mentioned a few moments ago, the problem with the existing guidelines is that they are not mandatory and we should therefore strengthen the protection of Canadians. I will first

explain in lay terms what formaldehyde is. We do not use this word every day, but it could be useful in a game of Scrabble.

Formaldehyde is a colourless gas that is emitted primarily by household products, as well as wood products, and can be found in composite panels, for example. Certain products give off this gas, which can be toxic. It can cause a burning sensation in the eyes, nose, and throat as well as respiratory problems. Very high concentrations can even cause certain kinds of cancer. It is a toxic substance that cannot be ignored.

The problem we have had for many years now, both with the Conservative government and more recently with the Liberal government, is that they have a tendency to introduce guidelines with voluntary compliance. They bring in guidelines and advise companies to meet certain standards, but these are not mandatory.

I congratulate my colleague on his motion, because it specifies that we should have mandatory standards. We already have regulations that Canadian business owners follow. The problem is that we do not have mandatory regulations.

While a standard does exist regarding formaldehyde emissions from composite panels and hardwood plywood, it is applied on a voluntary basis only. As a result, it is not necessarily applied at all, because it is not mandatory.

Things are different in other countries, such as the United States, where careful consideration recently resulted in stricter rules. In 2007, California passed regulations to reduce the public's exposure to formaldehyde.

The regulations phased in emissions standards for laminated composite materials and flooring. The first standard, stipulating 210 parts per billion, came into force in January 2009. The second, which came into force in January 2011, allowed a maximum formaldehyde concentration of 110 parts per billion.

The United States has ramped up work on this issue. Our American neighbours recently had other concerns about products manufactured outside the U.S. that began flooding the market because they were cheap. They contained much more formaldehyde than the standards allowed.

Now all companies that want to sell or manufacture these products for American consumers have until December 12, 2017, to comply with the formaldehyde emission standards for composite wood products. U.S. regulations have clearly improved over time.

● (1750)

One might well ask whether the Canadian industry that builds these wood panels would suffer if our regulations were similar to those of the United States.

Private Members' Business

The answer is no. To continue exporting to the United States, Canadian manufacturers have already made substantial investments in their facilities in order to comply with and even exceed U.S. environmental standards. Canadian companies are already prepared to meet mandatory standards even though the standards are currently voluntary.

Canadian manufacturers are prepared. As other hon. members mentioned, we would be penalized if we did not have firm and mandatory regulations because manufacturers from other countries might export and sell their wood products here, products that would contain a greater quantity of formaldehyde than what is recommended and acceptable for health.

Canada's recommendations are much stricter than those of the United States, as I said earlier in one of my questions. For example, for long-term exposure, Health Canada recommends a maximum of 40 parts per billion, while in the United States it is 110 parts per billion. This recommendation seeks to ensure the well-being and health of Canadians.

The motion proposes that we take an approach similar to that of the United States. However, I completely agree with my colleague that we should do more than what the U.S. recommends, because Health Canada recommends 40 parts per billion, while in the U.S. it is 110 parts per billion. We could do more and have guidelines.

The fact that my colleague is introducing this bill is good news, but it is also surprising because on June 16, 2015, Health Canada issued an update to the residential air quality guideline for formaldehyde.

In fact, about a year and a half ago the Liberal government provided updates and adopted stringent guidelines that follow Health Canada's recommendations for the well-being, health, and safety of Canadians. However, they are voluntary, which unfortunately was often the case under previous Conservative governments and now under the current Liberal government.

I congratulate my colleague for this measure that goes above and beyond what the government did in 2015, which was somewhat disappointing. This approach is a step in the right direction.

I hope that the next set of regulations and changes made by the Liberal government will be mandatory and not consist of guidelines that companies may or may not follow according to the whims or goodwill of their managers or boards of directors.

Once again, I think this is a very good motion, and I will be very pleased to vote for it.

• (1755)

[*English*]

Mr. Frank Baylis: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Earlier in the debate I made a comment toward the member for Calgary Forest Lawn, which I feel was inappropriate. I would like to retract that and apologize.

Mr. Terry Sheehan (Sault Ste. Marie, Lib.): Madam Speaker, tonight I am pleased to rise in the House to elaborate on the importance of Motion No. 102. Motion No. 102 deals with formaldehyde emissions from composite wood products intended for indoor use that are sold, provided, or supplied for sale in Canada.

I was pleased earlier to hear from across the aisle that both parties are supporting this motion. It is of utmost importance, and I would like to take a moment to applaud my colleague for his great work on this.

Formaldehyde is a colourless gas that is emitted mainly from household products and building materials. Formaldehyde is an irritant, and exposure to high concentrations of formaldehyde has been known to cause burning sensations in the eyes, the nose, the throat. It causes respiratory problems and also can lead to cancer.

Composite wood products have been known to contribute to formaldehyde levels through off-gassing. Composite panels are created by binding wood particles together using adhesives that may contain formaldehyde. These panels are often used to manufacture commonly used indoor products, such as furniture, desks, shelving, cabinets, flooring, and even toys.

Health Canada has established residential indoor air quality guidelines that summarize the health risks of specific indoor pollutants. They also provide information on known health effects of indoor air contaminants, recommended exposure limits, and recommendations to reduce exposure to pollutants.

Although there is a formaldehyde emissions standard for composite and hardwood plywood panels here in Canada, it is voluntary. Since there is no enforcement or compulsory standard here, as in the case for statutory regulation and/or regulations, Canadians are not immune to the harmful effects of formaldehyde emissions from sources such as composite and hardwood plywood panels.

As noted earlier, on December 12, 2016, the U.S. government announced a final rule on formaldehyde emissions standards for composite wood products to protect against the harmful effects of this colourless gas. Since these regulations came into force, all U.S. and foreign manufacturers of composite wood products wishing to sell or make these products available to American consumers have until December 12, 2017 to comply with the certification program and new U.S. environmental standards.

To continue exporting to the U.S., Canadian manufacturers have made significant investments in their facilities to meet, and many times exceed, U.S. environmental standards, which are very tough, particularly with regard to formaldehyde emissions. Most Canadian composite panel manufacturers have already invested in their operations to meet these U.S. standards and will continue to be able to export to the U.S. after the December 12, 2017 date.

Some foreign composite panel manufacturers that have not made the necessary investments in their operations to meet the new American environmental standards will be looking to liquidate their products in countries with less stringent environmental standards, such as Canada. In that case, the use of composite panels in these countries with very high formaldehyde emissions could have significant effects on the health of Canadians who buy these manufactured products.

Furthermore, such a scenario would put Canadian manufacturers at a competitive disadvantage compared to foreign manufacturers, and could have significant economic impacts for Canadian manufacturers.

In Canada, 13 factories in six provinces produce composite panels. In total, Canadian composite panel factories employ 11,500 workers, pay close to \$724 million in wages, and have about a \$3.41-billion impact on the Canadian economy. A little over 70% of Canada's production of raw panels and products made with raw panels are exported to the U.S. right now.

In my riding of Sault Ste. Marie, we are home to a successful Canadian factory that produces composite panels. ARAUCO North America manufactures a wide range of sustainable forest product solutions across this country, including Sault Ste. Marie. It produces the most comprehensive selection of composite panels, premium plywood, millwork, lumber and FSC-certified wood pulp.

● (1800)

Overall, ARAUCO North America employs more than 13,500 at 30 international production facilities, with sales staff in more than 80 countries. Products, sold on five continents to 3,500 customers via 220 ports worldwide, include engineered panels, such as MDF made at ARAUCO Sault Ste. Marie, as well as lumber and pulp.

ARAUCO North America purchased its Sault Ste. Marie factory from Flakeboard in September 2012, as a wholly owned subsidiary. Over 20 years ago, in 1996, the first panel rolled off the world's then largest continuous MDF press at GP Flakeboard in Sault Ste. Marie. At that time, it employed 87 people. Today, ARAUCO Sault Ste. Marie employs over 120 people, and the success of this operation is due to the ownership being heavily invested in producing quality products and having a highly skilled local workforce that takes great pride in the work.

The health of Canadians and product sustainability is paramount at ARAUCO, and many other of these Canadian companies. For example, it offers environmentally preferable product choices to support its customers' sustainable building and fabricating initiatives. With over 20 years in Sault Ste. Marie, ARAUCO has become one of the most efficient and productive manufacturers in North America. ARAUCO has shown leadership in continuing to become more efficient and environmentally friendly, and doing so with an exemplary record in health and safety issues. ARAUCO employs responsible best practices in the manufacture of every product, relying on wood grown in the company's own certified, sustainably managed plantation forests, imported products, and post-industrial reclaimed fibre such as raw materials in the domestic.

All of ARAUCO's products are certified as compliant with FSC chain of custody standards, verifying that they can trace the wood fibre used in production back to responsible sources. ARAUCO North American composite panel mills are certified to the Composite Panel Association's Eco-Certified Composite (ECC) Sustainability Standard, indicating the mills implementation of a number of performance criteria, including the CPA carbon calculator tool, to assess product life cycles and carbon footprints. All ARAUCO composite panels sold in North America are manufactured in compliance with the California Air Resources Board's CARB 2 standard for formaldehyde emissions. This is just an example of how

Private Members' Business

Canadian companies are compliant now and also exceed the American standard.

Between 2005 and 2015, Health Canada measured formaldehyde in over 500 homes across Canada. Approximately 8% of homes exceeded the long-term exposure limit, indicating a risk of adverse effects. In 2001, under the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999, CEPA, formaldehyde was concluded to be toxic to human health and the environment. Formaldehyde emissions from vehicle engines have been regulated under CEPA since 2003. As of now, no action has been taken to date under CEPA to address exposure to formaldehyde through indoor air.

Taking action on Motion No. 102 would help to protect the health of Canadians from the effect of formaldehyde in indoor air, and support regulatory alignment with the United States.

I would like to reiterate my unwavering support for Motion No. 102, as it first and foremost protects the health of Canadians. I encourage the majority of Canadian composite panel manufacturers to continue to invest in their operations to meet high environmental standards, like those in the U.S. We cannot allow foreign composite panel manufacturers, which have not made the necessary investments in their operations to meet the new American environmental standard, the ability to liquidate their products in Canada. In other words, dump their product here. It would create a health risk to Canadians, as noted in the *60 Minutes* special that aired not long ago.

I think of another story of when I was in New Orleans, driving through the aftermath of *Katrina*, while my wife was at a conference. I remember seeing the government trailers that had the formaldehyde in them. It was such a terrible thing. These poor people were left homeless, were put into these government trailers, and many of these trailers had the formaldehyde in them. It was not until 2012 when they resolved that. We do not want any of that in Canada.

Furthermore, the motion would help protect Canadian jobs, because the dumped product will cost Canadian jobs. Therefore, I ask members to please support the motion. I applaud my colleague.

● (1805)

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House this evening to speak to Motion No. 102, which was moved by my colleague from Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia. I want to vigorously express my strong support and enthusiasm for this motion.

I believe it is important to remind everyone of the purpose of the motion, since my speech will be abundantly shared on social media to make sure that my constituents can see it, because this is a very important file. The motion reads as follows:

Private Members' Business

That, in the opinion of the House, the government should: (a) adopt regulations on formaldehyde emissions for composite wood products intended for indoor use that are sold, provided, or supplied for sale in Canada; and (b) ensure that these regulations are similar to US Environmental Protection Agency regulations enforcing the formaldehyde emissions standards in the US Toxic Substances Control Act Title VI in order to protect the health of Canadians who use these products.

The motion seems worthwhile as it now stands. However, I think we need to go a little further. We have an interesting situation here in the House because it seems that everyone will support the motion. Why is it important to adopt this motion? It is good for the country's economy. It is important that the motion be adopted by the House and that the federal government then take real action to implement it. The federal government must support this motion. We must ensure that the excellent recommendations that I just read are quickly adopted by the federal government, specifically before December 2017.

I would like to provide a little bit of background on the motion, even though this is a fairly recent issue. On December 12, 2016, the United States Environmental Protection Agency released a new regulation to reduce exposure to formaldehyde emissions from wood-based products made in or imported into the United States. The EPA adopted the regulation of the California Air Resources Board on composite wood products in order to harmonize the American regulatory framework.

What people want to know is, what is the formaldehyde this motion talks about? Formaldehyde is an odourless gas used primarily as an adhesive in a wide range of wood-based products, such as furniture, flooring, cabinets, bookcases, and building materials, such as plywood and wood panels. Exposure to formaldehyde emissions can cause adverse health effects, such as eye, nose, and throat irritation, respiratory symptoms, and even cancer.

Formaldehyde in Canada is classified as a toxic substance under the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, and it is regulated.

This motion would create new regulations as requested by the industry, regulations that are absolutely necessary for our economy. If the Government of Canada decides to adopt the EPA regulations, the use of formaldehyde in finished wood-based products, such as plywood, cabinets, and countertops, would be subject to stricter standards and regulations.

It is important to note that Canadian exporters of composite wood products already adhere to the American and Californian standards voluntarily, through the CSA Group, to export to the American market.

Everyone in the House, even my colleagues here, is surely asking themselves the same question. They can hardly wait to hear what I am going to say next. Everyone wants to know why the member for Mégantic—L'Érable cares about today's motion. The answer is simple. I am proud to say that the largest plant in North America that manufactures particle panels is not in the United States, Montreal, Toronto, or in the riding of my colleague who tabled the motion. No, it is in Lac-Mégantic, in the riding of Mégantic—L'Érable, and I am very proud of that.

My colleagues are also proud of that. Having great businesses in our ridings is a real source of pride. It is nice to be able to share that

with our colleagues. There is a small town of nearly 6,000 residents that is home to a plant called Tafisa Canada. The plant provides employment for 350 families in Lac-Mégantic and generates substantial economic spinoffs linked to all the suppliers and shippers, not to mention the tax benefits for the municipality. When a plant of that size is located in a small community, it helps keep the town alive and well.

• (1810)

This morning, I had the pleasure of discussing Motion No. 102 with Tafisa Canada's president, Louis Brassard. I am going to brag again: it is a Portuguese investment by Sonae Industria. The Lac-Mégantic plant is the largest Portuguese investment outside of Portugal. Also, the entire management team and all the jobs are Canadian.

That is why in Lac-Mégantic, we are proud of Tafisa Canada, which has invested more than \$400 million in our town since 1992. Tafisa Canada manufactures 900,000 cubic metres of particle board annually, or 45,000 panels a day, shipped by 300 trucks and 50 rail cars a week, and provides 25 student jobs per summer.

The number 25 is very important, because if we want to keep people in the regions, then we have to provide jobs to our students. The summer is an extraordinary opportunity for Tafisa Canada to tell young people that there is employment back home and that if they stay, they will see what a bright future they could have in a small region. Tafisa Canada does \$300 million in sales. That is huge for a small municipality like Lac-Mégantic.

I had a good discussion with the company's president about the consequences of Canada not harmonizing its regulations with those of the United States. First, there would be the risk of dumping. Plants that do not meet the new standards in December 2017 might decide to dump their non-compliant goods in Canada because they will no longer be able to sell them in the United States.

This would pose a threat to Canadians' health and the economic health of our regions and factories, which is absolutely unacceptable. Our factories follow the rules and we cannot accept that people who do not are allowed to take such action.

Here in Quebec and Canada, a factory with fewer controls than the major manufacturers could decide to make lower quality panels. I have not yet talked about plants in other countries, such as China, that have little regard for North American rules because they can dump their goods on our markets.

The Quebec minister of forests, wildlife and parks has just written to the Minister of Natural Resources to ask that the same rules be enforced. This support was just given by the Government of Quebec. I will read two paragraphs of this letter, which was sent February 8.

In recent years, Quebec and Canadian plants have made significant investments in order to comply with the norms and standards on formaldehyde emissions, particularly the CARB standard.

Products from Asia that do not meet the same quality, safety, and certification standards will no longer be allowed on the American market. Those products could then be diverted to the Canadian market because Canada has more flexible and less restrictive regulations than the United States.

That is our concern and that is what could happen if the government does not follow up on this motion. In closing his letter to the Minister of Natural Resources, the Quebec minister of forests, wildlife and parks stated the following:

I support the association's initiative to adopt Canadian regulations on formaldehyde emissions similar to those in place in the United States. I urge you to also support this initiative with the federal health minister...who would have jurisdiction over such a regulation.

This motion, therefore, has not only the unanimous support of the House, but also strong support from the Government of Quebec, which understands the importance of adopting such regulations.

In conclusion, I want to say that we are going to support this motion. It is good for Canadians' health, Canada's economy, and the citizens of Lac-Mégantic.

• (1815)

[English]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): 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.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[Translation]

RAIL TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise in the House this evening to speak to another issue in Lac-Mégantic that is near and dear to my heart. This time I am going to demonstrate another kind of enthusiasm, because I am confident that the federal government is going to confirm any day now that Lac-Mégantic will be getting a rail bypass.

In my speech earlier I had the opportunity to talk about a company called Tafisa. It uses the rail line in Lac-Mégantic to ship about 50 rail cars full of composite wood products every week, products destined for markets around the world.

Unfortunately, we have a problem in Lac-Mégantic. The problem is that the rail line continues to go through the heart of downtown Lac-Mégantic, even after the tragedy. This means that the people of Lac-Mégantic, who are trying to heal after the events of July 2013, feel as though they are reliving the tragedy every time they hear the train.

We are in a tough situation, because we cannot expect the train to stop running. It is crucial to Lac-Mégantic's survival. These days, however, the train is also Lac-Mégantic problem. We have been asking the Minister of Transport questions regularly here in the House.

Adjournment Proceedings

In January, the Prime Minister was in Sherbrooke and had this to say to the people of Lac-Mégantic: "Together with the Minister [of Transport], I am committed to expediting the process to the extent possible in order to help you."

Yesterday, one month later, the Minister of Transport said, in response to a question, "...it is important to expedite the process, and we are working as a team to figure out how to do that."

One month later, they have not yet figured out how to do that despite all the resources currently at Transport Canada's disposal.

How is it that a prime minister tells the people of Lac-Mégantic that they will do everything they can to help them, he tells his transport minister to expedite things and, one month later, the minister tells us that they are working as a team to determine how they can speed things up?

Once again today, the Minister of Transport answered a question I asked him with lines we have heard a lot:

...this work is done together with the Province of Quebec; AECOM, the company that conducted the study; and also with the town of Lac-Mégantic and Mayor Cloutier. We have begun this work. We want to do it in a responsible manner. We understand the situation in Lac-Mégantic. I visited the town three times. We want to expedite the process and we are doing everything we can to do so.

I would like to see those words translated into action. We have had a month to work on this. I would like those words to turn into an announcement for the people of Lac-Mégantic, an announcement stating that the government will keep working to expedite the study and confirming that there will be a Lac-Mégantic bypass.

I do not just want details about how they plan to proceed. Yes, the Prime Minister and the Minister of Transport and everyone in Parliament said it is important to proceed. Can we get an answer about whether there will be a Lac-Mégantic bypass? We want that answer to be yes.

• (1820)

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to begin by thanking the hon. member for Mégantic—L'Érable for raising this important question. It is important for the people of Lac-Mégantic and we understand the situation.

The safety and security of Canada's transportation system remains an indisputable priority to our government and rail safety is the top priority for the Minister of Transport. We are investing \$143 million in budget 2016 in order to improve rail safety and the transportation of dangerous goods. This investment helps Transport Canada continue to monitor all federal railways to ensure enhanced compliance and their capacity to enforce safety rules.

The accelerated removal of DOT-111 tank cars for transporting crude oil is a crucial step toward strengthening our rail system by making sure that crude oil no longer travels in the least crash-resistant tank cars. Transport Canada will ensure that the expedited deadline set by the minister is met and will not hesitate to act swiftly in the event that old tank cars transporting crude oil are uncovered.

Adjournment Proceedings

What is more, the Minister of Transport remains committed to reducing the number of accidents and incidents on the Canadian rail network and at federally regulated crossings. There are new technologies that have proven to be effective, and we are making over \$55 million in investments across the country through the new rail safety improvement program.

The member for Mégantic—L'Érable again mentioned the Lac-Mégantic tragedy. The minister has visited Lac-Mégantic three times and has spoken directly with residents who shared their concerns about rail safety in their community. We understand their concerns. The Lac-Mégantic disaster in 2013 was one of the most tragic moments in Canada's transportation history.

I can assure the House that Transport Canada continues to monitor rail safety in the region and will not hesitate to act if necessary. What is more, during a visit to Sherbrooke, the Prime Minister met with the mayor of Lac-Mégantic and promised to do everything in his power to expedite the feasibility study. Since that time, the Minister of Transport has contacted the Government of Quebec to organize a meeting with the province and the Town of Lac-Mégantic in order to discuss the rail bypass and the possibility of expediting the feasibility study.

● (1825)

Mr. Luc Berthold: Madam Speaker, if I may, I would like to commend my colleague on the quality of her French. I congratulate her. It is not always easy to speak in French, but I think she did a great job. I also want to congratulate her on her appointment to the position of Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport. We will have the opportunity to speak regularly about Lac-Mégantic.

I heard the parliamentary secretary express her support. I thank her, as well as the minister, the Prime Minister, and all members of the House. The NDP asked a question yesterday about Lac-Mégantic.

Now that we all agree that we need to take action and expedite the process, I would like the parliamentary secretary to commit to passing the message on to the Minister of Transport.

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Mégantic—L'Érable.

As mandated by the Prime Minister, our government is committed to improving rail safety. That is the top priority for the Minister of Transport. Our thoughts are with the families of the victims of the July 2013 disaster.

Our government is committed to finding ways to expedite the study and to continue the dialogue with the people of Lac-Mégantic and with other stakeholders in order to help get the community back on its feet and to find a solution.

[English]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon—Grasswood, CPC): Madam Speaker, let me pick up where I left off last year, November 2, when I asked the member for Regina—Wascana why he continues to support the carbon tax scheme, which will cost my province of Saskatchewan substantially in jobs and in money.

We know the Liberals are on this borrowing binge of billions of dollars. They are well over their projected \$10-billion deficit they promised during the general election. They are at least double, maybe even triple over that. We will find out soon. However, we also know that borrowed money has to be paid back sometime. Will it be my children or my grandchildren who are going to have to pay this debt back?

The Liberals, we have now found out, are raising taxes on the middle class that they talk so joyfully about every day in this House.

The Prime Minister promised a new era of co-operative federalism. Instead, he is using a sledgehammer to force provinces like mine, that have not signed on to this carbon tax, and the territories to impose a massive tax grab.

Let us go to the recent *Toronto Sun* headline that stated, “Trudeau carbon tax takes from the poor, gives to the rich”.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I just want to remind the member that he is not to refer to either the Prime Minister or any other member by their name in the House.

Mr. Kevin Waugh: Madam Speaker, as my colleague, the member for Carleton, has pointed out repeatedly, we know the effect of carbon taxes are felt most by those who have the least. We know the government is censoring a Finance Canada memo showing the impact of this carbon tax on the gap between the rich and the poor.

If the carbon tax is really revenue neutral, as the Liberals say it is, then why are they not releasing the data? They know the numbers. Why are they continuing, every day in this House, to hide that number from us? Because we know that poor households spend a larger share of their income on gas, groceries, and heat. They will suffer the most from this new federally mandated carbon tax.

Our largest trading partner is the United States. It has repeatedly said it will lower business taxes and will not have a carbon tax.

Our province of Saskatchewan is very worried. Do members know why? It is not a level playing field, as our companies will have increased costs of doing business because of this unfair carbon tax. Last year alone, in my province of Saskatchewan, we lost 7,900 full-time jobs in the last 12 months in one of the great provinces of this country.

I ask, why does the government pursue this tax grab on those who can least afford it by imposing a plan that will cost Saskatchewan its competitiveness and employment opportunities?

● (1830)

Mr. Andy Fillmore (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it does in fact bring me joy to rise in the House today to talk about our government's plan to put a tax or price on carbon pollution and to speak about how it will help Canada's middle class.

Adjournment Proceedings

It is not conjecture, but rather we know that pricing carbon pollution is the most effective way to reduce emissions and to create a clean-growth economy. For this reason, it is a key part of our government's pan-Canadian framework on clean growth and climate change.

Carbon pricing will provide certainty and predictability for Canadian businesses. It will encourage businesses and Canadians alike to reduce emissions and help Canada transition to a low-carbon economy. Because it is predictable and gradual, carbon pricing will drive innovation and attract investment capital to Canada to create the middle-class jobs of tomorrow and beyond.

Again, this is not conjecture. British Columbia's introduction of a carbon price demonstrates this well. Studies show that carbon pricing reduced greenhouse gas emissions in the province while its economy, including a thriving clean-tech sector, grew faster than that of the rest of Canada. Not only that, but as a result of the B.C. revenue-neutral price on carbon, middle-class families got a tax cut of 5% for the two bottom tax brackets. Today, B.C. has the lowest overall personal taxes in the country, thanks to its carbon tax.

In Alberta, the carbon price will provide financial support for those who need it most, covering 60% of households. These rebates, which will start in July, will put up to \$520 in the pockets of middle-class families, and that is cash, not conjecture.

This is why our plan gives all provinces and territories the flexibility to decide how they implement a price on carbon pollution. They can use the revenue as they see fit, including supporting middle-class families in ways similar to the B.C. and Alberta examples that I just gave.

The member for Regina—Wascana has represented his constituents in this House for over 24 years, with considerable success and aplomb, I might add. He knows well the benefits Saskatchewan can see from introducing a carbon price. For example, with a carbon price of \$20 per tonne, Saskatchewan could reduce personal income taxes by over one-third, and cut its provincial sales tax by two-thirds. At \$30 per tonne, Saskatchewan could completely eliminate sales tax. How about that for protecting the environment and growing the economy?

By putting a price on the things that we do not want, like pollution, provinces can do things that middle-class Canadians want and need, like reducing taxes and creating good, middle-class jobs.

Mr. Kevin Waugh: Mr. Speaker, my colleagues across the floor are fond of telling us that their carbon tax scheme is revenue-neutral, yet they continue to refuse to disclose the cost. Every day in the House we ask that question. What is the cost?

Saskatchewan businesses, as early as last year, came to the House. They are not looking for hand-outs. We are not a province with hand-outs. We work. The businesses in our province of Saskatchewan are proud of what they have accomplished over the last number of years. However, when they came here, they pleaded with the current government to absolutely stop its job-killing tax schemes. Some 7,900 jobs were lost last year in our province.

Saskatchewan wants to be competitive. We love competition, but that does not include a carbon tax. We are still one of the only provinces, if not the only province, holding out.

We on this side of the House are also fighting for the working-class Canadians. Why do the Liberals insist, then, on inflicting—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Democratic Institutions.

Mr. Andy Fillmore: Madam Speaker, after a decade of inaction and years of lost opportunities, we are finally taking the steps required to protect our planet for our children and grandchildren.

Under our plan, each province has the flexibility to decide how to implement the price on carbon, based on their regional context and how they use those revenues. I have outlined just a few steps that Saskatchewan could take, including completely eliminating the sales tax in Saskatchewan. That would certainly be a job creator.

Carbon pricing is just one element of the pan-Canadian framework on clean growth and climate change. Our focus will remain on taking real, concrete, and lasting action to reduce our emissions, grow our economy, and create good, middle-class jobs across Canada and certainly in Saskatchewan.

● (1835)

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to rise today to talk about marine debris, in light of an incident on November 3, when a South Korean cargo ship lost 35 shipping containers at the entrance of the Strait of Juan de Fuca. These shipping containers were insulated with styrofoam. The debris ended up washing up along the west coast of Vancouver Island, on the coast of Pacific Rim National Park Reserve, in the District of Tofino, and on Vargas Island.

As soon as I heard about the issue, I contacted the acting superintendent of Pacific Rim National Park Reserve. I talked to local government officials and first nations. We called on Ottawa for funding support, because there was no mechanism to clean up the debris on the west coast. After a week, there was no response from Ottawa, and the local communities were left to clean up what turned out to be fridges on their beaches and styrofoam that was getting into the ecosystem, into fish and shellfish, and really contaminating the local ecosystem. This could have been prevented.

Adjournment Proceedings

Marine debris is a huge problem where I live, and it is only getting worse as we see increased traffic on the west coast with the increased trade with the Pacific Rim and Asia. There is 6% growth in our trade with Asia. The government is working toward increasing that trade, yet we see no mechanism to deal with the environmental fallout of marine debris. There is actually no money going to clean up debris right now targeted specifically to marine debris.

The people on the west coast would like to see a mechanism tied to economic growth and a real commitment from the Government of Canada and corporate interests that they are going to invest in protecting the coastline.

Right now we are relying on local organizations and true community champions like Surfrider and the local indigenous-led Guardians to do that kind of work, and we are giving them no funding. In fact, when this incident took place, they were given no money to help with fuel or to even buy coffee and cookies for their many volunteers. Nothing came from Ottawa. This is a terrible situation. At the time, we did not even know what was in those containers.

The cleanup of the high-profile beaches is mostly complete through the combined resources of these community volunteers, such as Surfrider, and the great work of the Pacific Rim National Park staff. However, now they are focusing on remote areas outside the Pacific Rim National Park Reserve. The surveillance of the remote areas is complete. We know where pretty much everything is and where to concentrate the cleanup efforts, but some of the debris is buried deep in the beach, under logs and sand, and requires large equipment to remove it.

Parks Canada received \$72,000 from the South Korean cargo ship for the cleanup effort. What we need now is a mechanism to transfer the money from Parks Canada to the community volunteers, organizations like Surfrider and the indigenous Guardians program, so they can get reimbursed for their cleanup efforts and finish the job. The only reason this debris has been removed from the shoreline so far is because of these community volunteers.

I am calling on the government to not only release this funding immediately and get it to the local community organizations but to establish a plan. We really need a plan. We need a national and international plan. Right now, the ocean protection plan, as has been discussed, is not talking about marine debris.

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for Courtenay—Alberni for his concern and advocacy for the sensitive ecosystems that are so important to all of us.

We have been clear that the safety and protection of the public and the environment are one of our government's primary concerns. He is right. There is a significant volume of Canada's commodities and processed goods that are exported by marine transportation. It employs about 250,000 Canadians and injects more than \$25 billion into Canada's economy.

With this in mind, the Prime Minister announced an unprecedented \$1.5-billion oceans protection plan on November 7, 2016, the details of which I will get into momentarily. We realize that a

consultative process would be required to address these diverse coasts and that would be important. The oceans protection plan was developed through collaborative work done by indigenous and coastal communities and various government programs.

This unparalleled plan, which we will begin implementing this year, includes tabling new legislation which would address abandoned, derelict, and wrecked vessels. It would also require shipowners to mark and remove any hazardous wreck that results from an accident, including any objects from a ship that have washed ashore. This will provide an added means of protection for local communities and taxpayers once the new statute comes into force.

Our government knows that Canadians rely on our coasts and waterways for economic reasons as well as for cultural and recreational purposes. The safety and protection of our waters and of the people travelling on them are of great importance to this government.

The hon. member's question asks specifically about the fragments of empty containers lost overboard from the MV *Hanjin Seattle*, some of which are washing ashore along Vancouver Island. These container fragments are not posing an immediate environmental or navigation hazard, for which Transport Canada would immediately move into action, but they are unsightly on our beaches and shores. As such, the lead agency for the cleanup, Parks Canada, has advised us that it will be moving quickly to remove this debris.

I want to assure the member that the incident that involved the *Nathan E. Stewart* on B.C.'s north coast, which also would have been a concern, showed us all that we needed to improve the existing maritime safety system in order to prevent, prepare for, and respond to maritime pollution from vessels.

For that specific incident, we acknowledge the assistance of all responders and partners, the Canadian Coast Guard, the Province of British Columbia, the community of Bella Bella, the Western Canada Marine Response Corporation, and the Heiltsuk Nation, in the management of this incident, much of which was carried out in challenging weather and environmental conditions. Collaborating with the Heiltsuk Nation in particular has allowed responders to benefit from the nation's traditional knowledge and extensive experience with weather, tides, and navigation in this area. Working together is the key.

● (1840)

Mr. Gord Johns: Madam Speaker, our coastline is becoming a junkyard. There is an increase in ocean plastics as a result of trade, and the number of cargo ships that are going through the Strait of Juan de Fuca are actually immediately contaminating our ecosystems. This is something that is urgent to the people in the communities where I live. It has contaminated our shellfish, our food security, and what we count on most, a clean ocean.

Adjournment Proceedings

We want to be guaranteed that the marine debris cleanup will be part of the ocean protection plan. Specifically in terms of this case of the shipments that fell off the South Korean ship at the mouth of the Strait of Juan de Fuca, we want to know that the \$72,000 was given to Pacific Rim National Park and that the bureaucrats will do everything they can under the direction of the government to release that money to community organizations like Surfrider and Tribal Parks Guardians, because they have used community funds by raising money from local businesses and local people to contribute to the cleanup.

It should be the big corporate interests that benefit and profit from shipping cargo to Asia that should be contributing. There should be a mechanism, whether it be incorporated into each TCU, each piece of cargo, that is directly related to contributing to cleaning up debris. This is having a huge impact on our communities. The amount of ocean plastics that we are seeing, the density of ocean plastics in the water is through the roof—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport.

●(1845)

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: Madam Speaker, Canadians rely on the coasts and waterways for their living, their culture, and their recreation, and it is absolutely imperative that we protect them for generations to come. That is why we announced a \$1.5-billion investment to make Canada a world leader in marine safety and take a powerful step toward co-management of our coasts with indigenous and coastal communities. This oceans protection plan will ensure our waters and coasts remain safe and clean for generations to come. I want to assure the hon. member that Canada is putting the needed safeguards in place to make certain that we are better informed, better prepared, and better equipped to protect our precious coastlines and waterways.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6:46 p.m.)

Bitter Harvest	
Mr. Wrzesnewskyj	9040
Conservative and Liberal Hockey Teams	
Mr. Peterson	9040
Defibrillators	
Mr. Reid	9041
Winnipeg Winter Festival	
Mr. Vandal	9041
Sheila Geraghty	
Mrs. Romanado	9041
Stuart McLean	
Mr. Warkentin	9041
Violence Against Women and Children	
Mr. McLeod (Northwest Territories)	9041
Stuart McLean	
Mr. Mulcair	9042
National Agricultural Day	
Mr. Anderson	9042
Stuart McLean	
Mr. Vaughan	9042

ORAL QUESTIONS

International Trade	
Ms. Ambrose	9042
Mr. Morneau	9042
Taxation	
Ms. Ambrose	9043
Mr. Morneau	9043
Ms. Ambrose	9043
Ms. McKenna	9043
Dairy Industry	
Mr. Lebel	9043
Mr. MacAulay	9043
Mr. Lebel	9043
Mr. MacAulay	9043
Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship	
Mr. Mulcair	9043
Mr. Hussen	9043
Mr. Mulcair	9043
Mr. Garneau	9044
Ethics	
Mr. Mulcair	9044
Ms. Gould	9044
Mr. Mulcair	9044
Ms. Chagger	9044
Taxation	
Mr. Poilievre	9044
Ms. McKenna	9044
Mr. Poilievre	9044
Ms. McKenna	9045

Small Business	
Mr. Clement	9045
Mr. Morneau	9045
Taxation	
Mr. Van Kesteren	9045
Ms. McKenna	9045
Infrastructure	
Ms. Watts	9045
Mr. Sohi	9045
Mr. Rayes	9045
Mr. Sohi	9045
International Trade	
Ms. Ramsey	9046
Ms. Goldsmith-Jones	9046
Dairy Industry	
Ms. Brosseau	9046
M. MacAulay	9046
Ethics	
Mr. Calkins	9046
Ms. Chagger	9046
Mr. Calkins	9046
Ms. Chagger	9046
Government Appointments	
Ms. Gladu	9046
Ms. Chagger	9047
Ms. Gladu	9047
Ms. Chagger	9047
Public Safety	
Mr. Dubé	9047
Mr. Holland	9047
Human Rights	
Mr. Garrison	9047
Ms. Wilson-Raybould	9047
Religious Freedom	
Mr. Bratina	9047
Ms. Joly	9048
National Defence	
Mr. Bezan	9048
Mr. Rioux	9048
Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship	
Ms. Rempel	9048
Mr. Hussen	9048
Justice	
Mr. Nicholson	9048
Ms. Wilson-Raybould	9048
Mr. Cooper	9048
Ms. Wilson-Raybould	9048
Housing	
Ms. Boutin-Sweet	9049
Mr. Vaughan	9049
Indigenous Affairs	
Mr. Saganash	9049

Ms. Foote.....	9049
Agriculture and Agri-Food	
Mr. Gourde.....	9049
Mr. MacAulay.....	9049
Mr. Anderson.....	9049
Mr. MacAulay.....	9049
Taxation	
Mrs. Block.....	9049
Ms. McKenna.....	9050
Agriculture and Agri-Food	
Mr. Eyolfson.....	9050
Mr. MacAulay.....	9050
Transportation	
Mr. Berthold.....	9050
Mr. Garneau.....	9050
International Development	
Mr. Aubin.....	9050
Ms. Bibeau.....	9050
Rail Transportation	
Mr. Gerretsen.....	9050
Mr. Garneau.....	9051
International Development	
Mr. Kmiec.....	9051
Ms. Bibeau.....	9051
Religious Freedom	
Mr. Beaulieu.....	9051
Ms. Joly.....	9051
Mrs. Gill.....	9051
Ms. Joly.....	9051
British Home Children	
Mr. Thériault.....	9051
Motion.....	9051
(Motion agreed to.).....	9052
Points of Order	
Oral Questions	
Mr. Doherty.....	9052
Mr. Vaughan.....	9052
Mr. Mendicino.....	9052
Business of the House	
Mr. Brown.....	9052
Mr. Lamoureux.....	9052

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

Business of Supply	
Opposition Motion—Systemic racism and religious discrimination	
Motion.....	9052
Ms. Khalid.....	9052

Mr. O'Toole.....	9053
Mr. Dusseault.....	9053
Mr. Genuis.....	9054
Mr. Lightbound.....	9054
Mrs. Wagantall.....	9055
Ms. Malcolmson.....	9055
Mr. Virani.....	9056
Ms. Gladu.....	9056
Ms. Khera.....	9057
Mr. Dusseault.....	9058
Mr. Lamoureux.....	9058
Mr. Sweet.....	9058
Mr. Virani.....	9059
Mr. Dusseault.....	9060
Ms. Malcolmson.....	9060
Mr. Lamoureux.....	9062
Ms. May (Saanich—Gulf Islands).....	9062
Mr. Dusseault.....	9062
Mr. Genuis.....	9063
Ms. Tassi.....	9064
Mr. Berthold.....	9064
Mr. Bossio.....	9066
Mr. Deltell.....	9066
Mr. Aboultaif.....	9066
Mr. Arya.....	9067
Mr. Johns.....	9067
Mr. Bossio.....	9067
Mr. Baylis.....	9068
Division on motion deferred.....	9069

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Formaldehyde Emissions

Mr. Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia).....	9069
Motion.....	9069
Mr. Choquette.....	9071
Mr. Berthold.....	9071
Mr. Doherty.....	9071
Mr. Choquette.....	9073
Mr. Sheehan.....	9074
Mr. Berthold.....	9075

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

Rail Transportation	
Mr. Berthold.....	9077
Mrs. McCrimmon.....	9077
The Environment	
Mr. Waugh.....	9078
Mr. Fillmore.....	9078
Mr. Johns.....	9079
Mrs. McCrimmon.....	9080

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