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Speaker: The Honourable Geoff Regan

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Friday, February 17, 2017

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

• (1005)

[*English*]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Madam Speaker, good morning and happy Friday. I would like to inform the House that Thursday, February 23, will be an allotted day.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

ROUGE NATIONAL URBAN PARK ACT

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill C-18, an act to amend the Rouge National Urban Park Act, the Parks Canada Agency Act and the Canada National Parks Act, as reported without amendment from the committee.

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

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.) moved that the bill be concurred in.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): When shall the bill be read the third time? By leave, now?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[*English*]

Hon. Catherine McKenna moved that the bill be read the third time and passed.

She said: Madam Speaker, I am proud to rise in the House today to speak to Bill C-18, and to the work that has been accomplished to bring forward the proposed amendments to this important legislation for the future of Parks Canada.

[*Translation*]

I want to personally thank my hon. colleagues and the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development for their careful analysis of the proposed legislation. I encourage all members to join me today in supporting Bill C-18 at third reading so that it can make its way to the Senate.

[*English*]

The timing of the proposed legislation is significant as we celebrate the 150th anniversary of Confederation and the centennial of national historic sites.

Canada's national parks and national historic sites enable Canadians to experience our rich history and heritage. The legislation before us would give Parks Canada the authorities it needs to build on its role as a world leader in conservation and its growing list of accomplishments.

Bill C-18 proposes to amend three statutes: the Rouge National Urban Park Act, the Canada National Parks Act, and the Parks Canada Agency Act. Each set of amendments targets specific goals. Together these will benefit Canadians in several important ways.

Since 2011, when the initiative to create Rouge National Urban Park was first announced, we forged partnerships with community organizations and indigenous peoples. Parks Canada has completed dozens of projects to improve and protect ecosystems and farmlands in the Rouge.

[*Translation*]

Today, with Bill C-18, we will make ecological integrity the management priority for the Rouge National Urban Park. Adding ecological integrity to the Rouge National Urban Park Act would help us realize the full potential of Canada's first national urban park.

Discussions around Bill C-18 have focused on the concept of ecological integrity. I believe that focus was justified considering the importance of the Rouge to greater Toronto area residents and all Canadians.

Government Orders

•(1010)

[*English*]

Ecological integrity is about maintaining the native components of a place, including plants, wildlife, waterways, and ecological processes. The Canada National Parks Act defines the term clearly, and it requires Parks Canada to maintain or restore ecological integrity in its management of all national parks. For Rouge National Urban Park, Bill C-18 would make this requirement explicit.

Rouge National Urban Park is unique and special for many reasons. It has remarkable diversity of flora and fauna, a rich history dating back to the first indigenous peoples, and a vibrant agricultural heritage. All of this is within one hour of seven million Canadians, and one can get there on public transit. It will be the first national park that many new Canadians get to visit. What better gift to all Canadians than free access to the Rouge and other parks across Canada to celebrate the 150th birthday of Confederation?

The combination of these factors presents both challenges and opportunities. The best way to meet these challenges and to make the most of these opportunities is to place ecological integrity at the forefront of the park's management.

[*Translation*]

The goal of this management approach is to preserve the Rouge National Urban Park's great wealth of natural, cultural, and agricultural features for future generations.

The Rouge is home to rare Carolinian forest, significant wetlands, and over 1,700 species of plants and animals. It includes some of the oldest indigenous sites in Canada, sites that date back thousands of years, and vast expanses of class 1 farmland, the rarest and most fertile land in the country. Some of that land has been farmed for centuries.

This approach puts ecological integrity first to ensure that the Rouge's cultural and agricultural heritage is protected now and for generations to come.

[*English*]

Our government is committed to the protection of our national parks, expanding the system of protected areas, and contributing to the recovery of species at risk. No organization in the world is better equipped than Parks Canada to support these goals. For more than a century, the Parks Canada Agency has acted to preserve and protect this country's natural and cultural heritage.

Parks Canada is recognized around the world as a leader in conservation, educational programming, and meaningful and high-quality visitor experiences. As other members of this House have pointed out, the agency has already made strides in these areas at Rouge National Urban Park.

It is because of Parks Canada's vast expertise in conservation that this government assigned the agency a co-lead role in fulfilling one of Canada's international commitments under the UN Convention on Biological Diversity. The convention proposes to protect the world's biodiversity by encouraging countries to protect their lands and waters. As part of its commitment under the convention, Canada

aims to protect at least 17% of our lands and fresh water, and 10% of our marine ecosystem by 2020.

Joining Parks Canada at the helm of the terrestrial component of this initiative is Alberta's Environment and Parks ministry, along with the province's climate change office. To achieve this ambitious goal will require broad collaboration and determined action to establish networks of protected areas that preserve Canada's incredible biodiversity along with a series of other equally important conservation measures.

[*Translation*]

In order to facilitate this collaboration and identify key initiatives, Canada and Alberta will create a national advisory panel. The panel will advise the governments on practical solutions for expanding the existing network of terrestrial and freshwater protected areas, particularly on how best to evaluate progress.

The panel will include members from various stakeholder groups, such as indigenous organizations and non-profit agencies, municipalities, representatives from the natural resources sector, as well as youth and community groups, in order to ensure that the panel's advice reflects a wide range of perspectives.

•(1015)

[*English*]

Our government is determined to expand this country's system of protected areas and to safeguard biodiversity not only to honour the UN Convention on Biological Diversity, but also because of its importance to each and every person on this planet.

Biodiversity is essential to our collective well-being and to Canada's ability to adapt to climate change. By protecting Canada's vast variety of species, ecosystems, and ecological processes, we also protect humankind and create a valuable legacy for future generations.

Natural spaces are a vital component of Canadian culture. They are central to our identity, to our heritage, and to our economy. More than a century ago in what is now Banff National Park, Canada became one of the first countries in the world to protect a natural space from development. Our country was also the first to establish a federal agency to administer and protect areas of natural and historical importance.

Another indication of how important natural spaces are to Canada and to Canadians is that we use legislation to designate protected areas. We understand these areas are vital to Canada's ecosystems and that they play a fundamental role in safeguarding habitat for wildlife, mitigating the impacts of climate change, and providing opportunities for tourism, recreation, and connection with nature.

[*Translation*]

In order to achieve our national biodiversity target, which is to protect at least 17% of Canada's land and fresh water, our government will work with indigenous peoples in the spirit of reconciliation and a renewed nation-to-nation relationship.

Government Orders

We will work together based on recognition of rights, respect, cooperation, and partnership. Canada values the wisdom and contributions of indigenous peoples in our collective effort to reach our biodiversity targets.

[*English*]

Parks Canada works with more than 300 indigenous peoples across Canada to protect, conserve, restore, and present Canada's natural and cultural heritage.

To strengthen the agency's working partnerships with indigenous peoples, Parks Canada introduced a reconciliation framework last year and utilizes traditional knowledge in its work.

In addition, through budget 2016, our government invested in a five-year program that will encourage indigenous storytelling and support indigenous tourism opportunities. This year Parks Canada will work with indigenous communities to develop and deliver 40 interpretive activities at national parks and historic sites across the country to enable visitors to gain new perspectives on Canada's treasured places.

[*Translation*]

In managing national parks, Parks Canada maintains or restores ecological integrity, and provides Canadians with opportunities to discover and enjoy them.

The main reason why Canadians enjoy these spaces is that they tell stories of who we are, including the history, cultures, and contributions of indigenous peoples.

Making ecological integrity a priority will help Parks Canada protect the Rouge's natural, cultural, and agricultural treasures. Situated in close proximity to 20% of Canada's population, Rouge National Urban Park offers a unique opportunity to make our national parks more accessible to Canadians, including youth and newcomers, so that they can experience the outdoors and learn about their environment.

[*English*]

By encouraging Canadians to visit national parks and providing them with the information and means to enjoy them, Parks Canada allows more Canadians to explore nature and to learn about our country's heritage.

[*Translation*]

For 2017, the Government of Canada is offering Canadians free admission to all national parks, national historic sites, and national marine conservation areas. We are thrilled with the high volume of visits to our national parks, and we look forward to welcoming visitors to Parks Canada locations to celebrate Canada 150.

[*English*]

The free 2017 parks discovery pass has been incredibly popular with more than 2.6 million individuals and businesses having ordered passes. I can say with confidence that Parks Canada has many tools at its disposal to effectively manage increased visitation.

Ecological integrity will continue to guide the management of our national parks. This includes helping visitors plan their experience in advance, encouraging shoulder season visitation, and promoting

hidden gems and less frequented parks. For example, Parks Canada places are offering even more events and activities in the fall and spring.

We are also investing in our facilities to ensure capacity can be handled. This includes significant investments in infrastructure, particularly in campgrounds, day use areas, and trails, and the addition of oTENTik accommodations across the country.

• (1020)

[*Translation*]

Through budget 2016, our government is also investing in the popular learn-to-camp program, to reach more low- and middle-income families, giving them the opportunity to experience the wonders of Canada's outdoors. Budget 2016 also enabled us make significant investments in tourism facilities and roads to help connect Canadians to nature, while stimulating the economy in communities across the country.

[*English*]

Other highlights in 2017 will include bioblitzes, in collaboration with partners, to foster greater awareness of conservation and biodiversity. Bioblitzes are great examples of citizen science. They are fun events that bring together naturalists, scientists, and members of the public to identify as many species as possible in a particular area. Canadians can contribute to real science while connecting with nature in a personally meaningful way.

As we celebrate the 150th anniversary of Confederation, my hope is that many Canadians, including youth, urban families, and newcomers, will discover Parks Canada for the first time this year at Rouge National Urban Park.

[*Translation*]

The bill before us would help the Rouge achieve its full potential. Canada's first national urban park is located in the most densely populated region in the country. The greater Toronto area, already one of the most multicultural places in the world, continues to attract more newcomers, and more so than any other region. Many of these people have little to no experience with national parks and are unfamiliar with Canada's heritage.

The Rouge National Urban Park, accessible by public transit, is the ideal stepping stone for people to familiarize themselves with Canada's incredible network of protected areas that are so dear to Canadians.

Government Orders

[English]

To help newcomers experience our country's natural and cultural heritage, Parks Canada participates in the cultural access pass program, run by the Institute for Canadian Citizenship, and will be holding citizenship ceremonies in our parks as we celebrate Canada's 150th year. The pass provides free admission to more than a thousand cultural treasures from coast to coast, including many Parks Canada places. Each newcomer receives a pass during his or her first year of Canadian citizenship. This helps to ensure that generations of newcomers to Canada have every opportunity to be inspired by the places and events that help define us.

[Translation]

I am also proud to say that as of 2018, admission to Parks Canada sites will continue to be free for all children and youth under 18, courtesy of our government.

[English]

It is important, when we are contemplating this legislation, that we look back on the work already accomplished to create Rouge National Urban Park and that we also consider the collaboration that made this progress possible. For decades, community groups and public agencies have worked to protect and celebrate the Rouge's natural, cultural, and agricultural heritage.

[Translation]

The creation of Canada's first urban national park in this environment required extensive consultation and strong partnerships. Parks Canada continues to work closely with farmers, indigenous partners, the Province of Ontario, municipalities, and other government agencies and organizations, as well as with educational institutions and environmental groups, in order to ensure the success of the Rouge.

[English]

It is a management approach that prioritizes ecological integrity and supports collaboration, because it involves a holistic, comprehensive approach. The proposed amendments to the Rouge National Urban Park would enable visitors from near and far to experience, understand, and appreciate the Rouge's unique combination of natural, cultural, and agricultural heritage. In particular, I would like to acknowledge the Government of Ontario's commitment to transfer its lands for the completion of Canada's first national urban park.

Let me turn to other proposed amendments to the Canada National Parks Act and the Parks Canada Agency Act. Bill C-18 proposes a second set of amendments that relate to the boundary of Wood Buffalo National Park, in northern Alberta. By withdrawing a portion of land from Wood Buffalo National Park, the Government of Canada would be able to honour its commitment to the Little Red River Cree Nation in supporting the establishment of the Garden River Indian Reserve. This would represent a small but vital step toward reconciliation with indigenous peoples.

The third set of amendments proposed in Bill C-18 would modernize the rules that govern the New Parks and Historic Sites Account under the Parks Canada Agency Act. Currently, funds from the account can only be used to acquire land or property to establish

a protected heritage area that has not yet reached full operational status.

● (1025)

[Translation]

The amendments proposed would give Parks Canada more flexibility so that it could act quickly to acquire land and assets in order to expand or complete existing protected heritage areas that are already in operation, for example, the Grasslands National Park or the Bruce Peninsula National Park.

The amendment would also enable Canadians to contribute to the expansion or completion of such heritage areas.

[English]

The Rouge National Urban Park Act has been the subject of considerable debate in this House. During its review of the amendments to the act, the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development called several witnesses, studied several briefs, analyzed a handful of proposed amendments, and then proposed Bill C-18 with no changes.

As we celebrate the 150th anniversary of Confederation, I urge all members of this House to endorse Bill C-18 as a way to protect our natural, cultural, and agricultural heritage for the benefit of all Canadians, now and into the future.

Mr. Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC): Madam Speaker, it was great to see the minister last night at the annual hockey game between the Liberal and Conservative parties. I think fun was had by all at the Canadian Tire Centre. It was great to see her cheering her team on.

I have a couple of questions.

With respect to farmers and the ecological integrity of the park, a number of farmers I have had the pleasure of speaking with are concerned about the use of that phrase and how it could allow long-term leases to not be in place. As we all know, farmers like to plan years ahead, and not having a long-term lease could cause a few problems with their plans, which could lead to their ultimate phasing out.

Can the minister commit that farmers will have a role inside the boundaries of that park if this legislation is passed? Second, could the minister update the House on the score in last night's hockey game?

Hon. Catherine McKenna: Madam Speaker, the hockey game was a great way to celebrate how much we have in common. We celebrated our diversity and strengths, and I do not think scores matter in this context. Rather, it is about working together. The best thing at the end was seeing how everyone celebrated. I am happy to leave the matter of the score to someone else.

Government Orders

With respect to the farming community, it is extraordinarily important that we celebrate our farmers. In fact, many Canadians have never seen how food is made. I think this is a unique opportunity to work with farmers. When I came to this file, it was challenging, because there were concerns expressed by the farmers about two things. First, what would it mean if the concept of ecological integrity was introduced, and second, what would it mean for leases? We were able to address both concerns. I had a number of meetings with the farmers. The good news is that they were able to agree that this was a good step forward, and they will now get the long-term leases in the park that they so desired.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank the minister for her speech.

Far be it from me to lecture, but in Trois-Rivières, we are fortunate enough to have a nature park nestled in the middle of an urban area. I am talking about Parc de l'île Saint-Quentin. Obviously, it is not as big as Rouge Park.

What we have noticed is that nature parks in urban areas are extremely popular and provide many benefits. However, the fact that they are used by so many people also makes it harder to protect their ecological integrity and diversity.

The Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development has already pointed out major flaws in the systems established by Parks Canada, and the park in question here is unique.

Can the minister reassure us by telling us that Parks Canada is putting specific measures in place to protect the integrity and diversity of this type of park?

• (1030)

Hon. Catherine McKenna: Madam Speaker, I thank the member for his question. I hope that the NDP will also be able to play hockey next year.

I am very pleased because Rouge Park is within one hour of seven million Canadians and accessible by public transit. I think that is very important.

Obviously, protecting the park's ecological integrity is the most important thing, and we have many measures in place to do just that. That was one of the conditions imposed by the Government of Ontario for the transfer of the land. We have many such measures in place.

[*English*]

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Madam Speaker, one of the interesting aspects of the minister's speech was when she talked about storytelling in the park. I am wondering if she could expand on that. How is it going to play out? What would be the cost of that? Does she have any idea about those things?

Hon. Catherine McKenna: Madam Speaker, I am very excited about the opportunity to tell stories about the role of indigenous peoples when it comes to the park, to tell stories about the farmers in the park, and to tell stories about our natural heritage and the species in the park. There are many opportunities. We have the resources necessary to do that. Also, we are going to be working with the indigenous communities and the farmers, who are very excited about

being able to talk about how food is made and what they do. It is a great opportunity to tell more about the amazing cultural and natural heritage of Canada.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Sven Spengemann (Mississauga—Lakeshore, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. minister for her excellent speech.

[*English*]

I appreciate the update on the excellent initiatives Parks Canada has for 2017, our 150th anniversary year.

I am wondering if the hon. minister could update the House on what she hears from the people in her riding of Ottawa Centre. We all cherish working in a city that is nestled in green space. There is a lot going on throughout the year. I am curious about what her constituents are thinking about the excellent work of Parks Canada.

Hon. Catherine McKenna: Madam Speaker, that is an excellent question.

I am always happy to talk about what the constituents of Ottawa Centre are thinking. They are very excited about 2017. The Rideau Canal is actually a national historic site. There is free access to the canal. That is very exciting.

Something that happened this past year that was of great interest to the residents of Ottawa Centre was that there were new access points to the canal. That means that more people can actually use the canal, not only when it is freezing cold but when it is nice so they can get out in their canoes and kayaks and go paddling. I had the opportunity to do that, and I am happy to take all the members paddling down the canal to Parliament.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank the minister for her speech and for this initiative, which we will definitely be supporting. I would like to ask her a specific question, which comes from the committee.

Generally speaking, in committee, there was a consensus among the witnesses. However, one of the witnesses, Alan Latourelle, was not in agreement on ecological integrity. I would like to give the minister the opportunity to respond to these concerns. This is what he said:

I would suggest that the ecological integrity standard will be impossible to achieve at the broad urban park level over the next 25 years because of the fragmented land masses...and because of development pressures outside of the park.

If Mr. Latourelle were speaking to the minister, what would her response be?

Hon. Catherine McKenna: Madam Speaker, I thank the member opposite.

I have a great deal of respect for Mr. Latourelle and I appreciate his experience at Parks Canada, but I do not agree with him. We definitely have to ensure that ecological integrity is a priority, and there are many measures in place for that. To ensure that we achieve it, we are going to work with our biologists and also with the environmental community, which is very important. I am convinced that we will be able to maintain the ecological integrity of the park.

Government Orders

• (1035)

[English]

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Madam Speaker, I like to call my riding in northern Alberta the promised land, which relates to this bill today, because there was some promised land that is now being turned over to a first nation in northern Alberta. It is 37 square kilometres, about half the size of Rouge National Park. Why did that get left out of the name of this bill?

Hon. Catherine McKenna: Madam Speaker, what is very exciting about the land that would be transferred from Wood Buffalo National Park for the creation of Garden River Indian Reserve is that this demonstrates our commitment to reconciliation. This is something that has been under way for a long time. We worked very hard with all the local indigenous communities to achieve consensus so we could move forward. This is a small step, but a very important step, toward reconciliation.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is an honour for me to rise to speak on Bill C-18, an act to amend the Rouge National Urban Park Act, the Parks Canada Agency Act and the Canada National Parks Act.

I represent the great riding of Barrie—Innisfil. The population growth of the Barrie metropolitan area is outpacing that of Canada's, at 5.4% annually, and the riding of Barrie—Innisfil grew by 7.9% between 2011 and 2016.

The riding is home to many wonderful parks and nature areas, including Kempenfelt Bay, which provides residents with walking, running, and play areas, including a great stretch of beach that at this time of year is home to many ice fishing huts and snowmobile trails.

I am pleased to speak on the third reading of C-18, an act to amend the Rouge National Urban Park Act, the Parks Canada Agency Act and the Canada National Parks Act. I will begin by saying that I will be supporting the bill.

Bill C-18 is a bill that has a history going back to 1990, when the Progressive Conservative government at the time in the province of Ontario, created an advisory committee to prepare an action plan to protect the Rouge River and its surrounding lands. In 1995, the Rouge River Park was created, and the Province of Ontario benefited with a donation of land, increasing the size of the park considerably.

With support for Canada's first national urban park, former Prime Minister Harper committed in the Speech from the Throne of 2011 to the creation of the Rouge National Urban Park. He further added an additional 21 kilometres to the park, with land from Pickering and Uxbridge. At that time, the park reached the size of 79.5 square kilometres. What was unique about the Rouge National Urban Park at the time was the diversity of the land that it encompassed, from forests to farmland.

In 2013, the federal government and the Liberal Government of Ontario entered into an agreement, transferring 47 square kilometres of land to the park. This transfer created a park that reached from the east end of the city of Toronto to Markham and Pickering. It created an urban park that was 22 times the size of New York's Central Park, and 14 times larger than Vancouver's Stanley Park.

In November 2014, the Conservative government introduced Bill C-40. It passed the bill in May 2015 to create the Rouge National Urban Park. The park is unique in Canada. Previous to Bill C-40, the lands were protected by Ontario's Greenbelt Act, which substantially lowered environmental protection standards from the federal laws that would become the new regulations for the new park under Bill C-40. With the park now under federal jurisdiction, regulations under the Parks Canada Agency Act, the federal Species at Risk Act, and the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act were all in consideration.

Located 100 kilometres from Barrie, the park is home to a unique combination of natural, cultural, and agricultural features, including 1,700 species of plants, birds, fish, mammals, insects, reptiles, and amphibians—more than 10,000 years of human history. Outcrops of rock formed in the last glacial period and found in Rouge Park are being used to study seismic activity, in particular for the risk of earthquakes. The faults that are visible indicate earthquake activity occurred between 13,000 and 80,000 years ago. Rouge National Urban Park contains the original portage route between Lake Ontario and Lake Simcoe used years before Canada's Confederation 150.

It sounds to me that by enacting Bill C-40 at the time, the federal government understood the environmental protection that this land required. Under Ontario's Greenbelt Act, the land would not have been at the level of protection that it would have been because of Bill C-40. The bill brought together the protection of nature, culture, and agriculture in a new approach. With a strong legislative framework, protection would exceed and expand on the protections that were in place at the time.

At the time of Bill C-40, the opposition felt that the term “ecological integrity” was missing from the legislation. In committee when this was discussed, Mr. Larry Noonan, from the Altona Forest Community Stewardship Committee, stated that:

Ecological integrity cannot be applied to an urban national park.

He stated further:

We cannot allow fires and flooding in the Toronto, Markham, and Pickering urban environment. The rouge national urban park...cannot have this term included, or there would have to be a list of [exemptions and] exceptions to the definition which could service to lessen its impact in the Canada National Parks Act.

• (1040)

Mr. Noonan also stated the following in committee:

Instead, Bill C-40 refers to 'the maintenance of its native wildlife and of the health of those ecosystems'. The Rouge national urban park and the management plan lay out strategies for attaining the highest possible level of health for the park's ecosystems.

When I first joined the House in October 2015, I sat until recently on the joint committee on regulations. Having sat through and researched items discussed in the regulations committee, I can honestly say that the last thing that Parks Canada needed was additional regulations to abide by. The Minister of Environment and Climate Change, the sponsor of Bill C-18, must surely know the weight of regulations that her senior staff struggle under.

In his speech for the third reading of Bill C-40, the hon. member for Thornhill and former minister of the environment, said:

Government Orders

The legislative framework for the Rouge national urban park meets the definition of a category V protected area under the stringent criteria of the International Union for Conservation of Nature. This category of protected area applies where the interaction of people and nature over time has produced an area of distinct character, with significant ecological, biological, cultural, and scenic value.

He further said:

This is exactly what Rouge national urban park represents. I will commit to the House that Parks Canada will see to it that all of this park's unique components live up to the highest international conservation standards and receive the strongest ever legal protections in the history of the Rouge.

Bill C-18 is nothing more than the Liberals playing political games at the provincial and federal levels.

In Queen's Park in Toronto, the Progressive Conservative MPP for Wellington—Halton Hills, Mr. Ted Arnott, has stood on several occasions, asking the Kathleen Wynne Liberals to abide by the 2013 agreement for the transfer of lands to the Rouge National Urban Park. His statement in the provincial house clearly shows that the Ontario Liberals were playing politics.

Taking a few sentences from his statement in April 2015, he said:

It has now been over two years since the Liberal government agreed to transfer land to the federal government to create the Rouge National Urban Park, which would be the largest urban park in North America. The creation of the Rouge National Urban Park would provide strong protection measures for the land between Lake Ontario and the Oak Ridges moraine, and as we know Parks Canada maintains high standards.

We also know that the Rouge National Urban Park would be protected by dedicated year-round park wardens. These wardens would ensure the ecological, environmental, and cultural integrity of the park by enforcing rules against illegal dumping, poaching, polluting, hunting, vandalism, and the theft of cultural artifacts—all issues that have plagued the park for many years.

By putting politics ahead of good policy, the minister is putting at risk almost \$144 million that was committed by the federal government for this initiative. This is money that would be used to protect the environmental integrity of this land and ensure that the Rouge National Urban Park is enjoyed by the people of this province for decades to come.

Today, we call upon the minister to stop playing games, stop delaying, and instead take the step forward and work together to create the greatest urban park in North America. As Mr. Arnott put it, these are Liberal games and they are the only reason that the land has not been transferred as was agreed to in 2013.

Bill C-40 is nothing more than making the Liberals in Ontario get what they want, and what they wanted, “ecological integrity”, as stated by Mr. Noonan, is not responsible for the Rouge National Urban Park.

Another voice who has supported Bill C-40 as it was without the “ecological integrity” was the Hon. Pauline Browes, a former federal minister of the state for environment. Ms. Browes stated at committee, paraphrasing: Parks Canada is a “heralded organization of experience” with very competent individuals, and “has been assigned the responsibility of the permanent protection and preservation of the natural, cultural, and agricultural aspects of the Rouge national urban park”. The act allows the minister “to make the decisions based on the identified purposes for which the park is being created and the factors which must be taken into consideration”. Pitting the elements, the urban, rural and park lands, against

each other by putting “one as a priority...would really create conflict”.

• (1045)

Parks Canada has also disagreed with ecological integrity as a primary guiding principle for the park. It is important to look at just what ecological integrity means. The true environmentalist definition of ecological integrity would imply letting forest fires burn, floods run their course, and wildlife survive without human intervention. The Rouge sits alongside residential neighbourhoods, schools, and playgrounds. It also has highways, hydroelectric power lines, and a pipeline across various parts of the park. There is farmland, a former landfill site, and an old auto wrecker's yard within its boundaries. Will the environmentalists allow fires to burn down homes, floods to do personal property damage, let highway and transportation infrastructure fall apart, and allow animals to threaten the lives of perhaps women, children, men, and their household pets, and cause hardships to the livelihood of farmers in the name of ecological integrity?

As I mentioned earlier, the current protections provided to the Rouge National Urban Park are far and beyond whatever the Liberal government could provide. In fact, I would think that Kathleen Wynne would have welcomed the federal government taking the financial responsibilities of the parkland off its books. This is much more than two words, “ecological integrity”. This is about money for the Ontario Liberal Party. This is about ego. The Ontario minister of economic development, Brad Duguid, admitted that they had no intention of working with the Conservative government with an election approaching. He confirmed this, with statements in the house in Toronto on November 26, 2015. He said:

The government you spoke about, the Harper government, didn't take that responsibility seriously. Thank goodness that the new Prime Minister and new government do, and we are looking forward to working with them to put in place a real national park for the Rouge that is going to ensure it has the protections we have in place today....

Minister Duguid also said:

This is about working together with the federal government to get this done right. We finally have in place a minister of the environment federally and a government that cares about the environment, that is determined to save this planet, determined to ensure that we preserve these ecological gems like the Rouge Valley.

Let me say that the Harper government got it right with the Rouge National Urban Park. Witnesses in committee confirmed that the enhanced protection of Parks Canada in federal regulations would far outweigh whatever protection the Wynne government provided. Loopholes in Ontario's Greenbelt Act and the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Act grandfather environmentally destructive clauses and provide for bad permits to be issued. The exemptions would do massive damage to terrain and allow endangered species to die.

Again, witnesses, such as former CEO of Parks Canada, Alan Latourelle, said:

Any individual or organization that directly or indirectly implies that the federal legislation for Rouge National Urban Park does not meet the standard of the current provincial legislation for Rouge lands is misleading the public.

As members have heard, Parks Canada disagreed with the need for ecological integrity.

Government Orders

The Friends of Rouge National Urban Park is a small group organized to encourage the Ontario government to commit to its legal obligation to transfer its 25 square kilometres of land to the federal government. It should be noted that at the time, November 2015, this group included former federal cabinet ministers, current MPs, and councillors. All involved with this group supported the original Bill C-40, with no ecological integrity as part of the land transfer agreement. Contrary to the Ontario government, *The Globe and Mail*, on March 20, 2015, said that the federal government position was a reasonable compromise as it provides for the “flora and fauna and any endangered species”, and “prohibits hunting, dumping, mining, logging, and other unparklike activities”. Just as important, *The Globe and Mail* noted that the Rouge was an urban park and that natural ecosystems do not work in an urban setting.

This bill is also about money. The Ontario government is drowning in red ink. The deficit and debt grow. The provincial debt is at \$316 billion. The individual debt of Ontarians is valued at almost \$23,000. Therefore, it does not surprise me when I find out that the Ontario infrastructure minister, Bob Chiarelli, requested, make that demanded, a change to the land transfer agreement. A demand was made for a \$100 million payment for the transfer of the Rouge National Urban Park to Parks Canada and the federal government.

● (1050)

If members remember the opening of my statement, I mentioned that the park grew with donations of land to the Ontario government from municipalities to grow the Rouge. The key here is “donation”.

The province was asking for money from some lands that were given to the province years earlier. Only after the demand for payment was given did the Ontario government decide to stop any transfer of the park lands in the name of ecological integrity. This goes against the June 22, 2016, announcement by Minister Duguid at the “Paddle the Rouge” where he stated that he would recommend the provincial land be transferred to the federal government. I wonder who forced the minister to reverse his decision?

Demands for money were replaced with demands for ecological integrity. The demands were made without Ontario Parks being able to evaluate and respond to the Parks Canada's plan for the new park.

Led by the provincial infrastructure minister and the economic development minister, the Ontario Liberal government broke a legally binding land transfer agreement with the federal government that covered 47 square kilometres. The Wynne Liberals acted in a partisan manner with a federal election approaching and, once again, used their inability or desire to work with another governing political party to get their way, when so many experts had gone on record in disagreement with the demand of that Liberal government.

In the 2015 election, Prime Minister Harper committed to expanding the park even though the Ontario Liberals had broken a legal agreement. New trails, streams, forests, creeks, and meadows would add to the Rouge National Urban Park. The then third place Liberals campaigned at the same time that the Ontario government would be provided with the “comfort” they needed to have them contribute their land. No commitment was made to expand and add to the park as it was.

Will the Liberal government go against the 2013 legal agreement for the land transfer? Will Premier Wynne get her \$100 Million for “comfort”?

I want to end by saying that the previous federal government took bold steps to add more than 220,000 square kilometres to Canadian federal parks and marine protected areas, an increase of more than 58%. The former Conservative government's national conservation plan expanded national park lands by tens of thousands of square kilometres and secured ecologically-sensitive private lands.

Canada's national parks provide outstanding examples of our country's natural landscapes, generate significant economic activity by attracting visitors from Canada and abroad, and provide Canadians with access to our natural heritage. The environment is arguably the most common of threads that binds every citizen of this planet together, and I believe in conservation. I also believe conservation is in concert with many Conservative values.

I look forward to supporting Bill C-18, but I just wish the Liberal government and its provincial Liberal cousins would stop playing politics that causes introduction of legislation that increases regulations and pits sectors of our economy against each other.

● (1055)

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Scarborough—Rouge Park, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I know the member is very familiar with the area, having worked just north of it as a firefighter for a very long period.

I want to get a sense from him as to how he and his family have enjoyed the park over the years, and the kinds of plans and activities he would envision for his family as the park takes shape over the next few years.

Mr. John Brassard: Madam Speaker, probably the only activity I have had in that park is putting out grass fires.

I live in an area in central Ontario that is rich with natural heritage. It is on the shores of Kempenfelt Bay in Lake Simcoe, which has many parklands in it. However, speaking from a family standpoint, there is no question that national parks are a big part of our Canadian fabric. They give a lot of families the opportunity to enjoy.

Statements by Members

However, the real challenge with the bill before us is the ecological integrity aspect of it. Even for those experts who have invested so heavily into this park to ensure it becomes a gem of the greater Toronto area for all Ontarians and Canadians to enjoy, there is a real challenge with this issue of ecological integrity. No one is questioning the fact that this will be an important part of the greater Toronto area, and it already is, the ecological integrity is the real challenge.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is disturbing to see that this park is still not completed and that there have been so many partisan games. I am not surprised to find out that the Wynne Liberals broke their promise on the land transfer. I am also not surprised to see a deal going on between her and her buddy the Prime Minister for \$100 million.

On the subject of ecological integrity, it is important we reflect on what that really means. If we really do ecological integrity, it means that if there were a forest fire in that area, it would be allowed to burn, Toronto would burn. If there were a flood, it would be allowed to happen. It is clear to all of us that we would not allow that to happen, so we will not do ecological integrity there.

On the other hand, what about the farmers who surround the area? There is a huge number of questions about what kinds of added burden and changes to their procedures will be required if environmentalists decide to take ecological integrity to the max. I would ask my colleague to comment.

Mr. John Brassard: Madam Speaker, the hon. member has brought up the real issue, and that is the designation of ecological integrity. It means farmers could potentially end up losing their farms. There are no greater stewards of land and conservationists than Canadian farmers.

As I said in my speech, the other challenge with respect to this is what about the infrastructure that exists within it? What about the fact that, as the hon. member said, we would let fires burn and floods happen? The balance between an urban setting with houses and residents and an urban park really has to be managed in a particular way. This is not a forest or an urban area in the middle of nowhere. This park actually borders a lot of residences, and we have to be mindful of that. That is why the—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member will have six minutes of questions and comments remaining the next time the bill is before the House.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

● (1100)

[English]

PARLIAMENTARIANS HOCKEY GAME FOR CHARITY

Mr. James Maloney (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I rise today to somewhat begrudgingly congratulate my colleagues across the way for their stunning victory at the CTC last in the 19th annual parliamentarians hockey game for charity. While defeat is difficult to swallow, it was wonderful to throw partisanship aside and have another kind of battle, one where we came together in sportsmanship and positivity for a good cause.

Close to \$6,000 was raised for the Terry Fox Foundation last night. I thank the Ottawa Senators for allowing us to use its facility, and a special thanks to all the people who came to support their teams.

It is always hard for the red team to watch the blue team win, and while the fans in red were hoping for a different outcome, it cannot be 2015 every year. We look forward to next year's game.

Last night helped us identify a missing element to our strategy, practice. Clearly, our focus has been on good government, not good hockey. Although we are genuine in congratulating our opponents, they would be wise to remember the last time the Liberals were counted out.

* * *

FOREIGN INVESTMENT

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Madam Speaker, when choosing where to start projects and create jobs, investors listen for clear and consistent messages from legislators and regulators, messages saying that the country is open for business and wants new investment.

So when a prime minister, who signals policy intent with every public statement, tells one group that the oil sands have to be phased out and boasts to others about approving pipelines, investors get confused. They take their plans, their cash, and all the jobs they would have created and go to other jurisdictions, like the United States.

If the government wants jobs to stay in Canada, it has to quit scaring off investors with mixed message and new taxes. Instead, it should voice a clear and consistent message, that Canada is open for business, Canada welcomes investment in energy projects, Canada has faith in the rigour of its regulators and environmental practices, and that Canada will get its resources to market.

* * *

INSPIRATION LAKEVIEW

Mr. Sven Spengemann (Mississauga—Lakeshore, Lib.): Madam Speaker, for decades, the Mississauga—Lakeshore skyline was defined by the Four Sisters, the smokestacks of the old coal-burning Lakeview generating station. Since this plant was taken down, over 10 years ago, the community, with the tireless leadership of Mississauga Ward 1 councillor, Jim Tovey, has taken significant steps to transform the Lakeview waterfront.

Jim Tovey is a strong advocate for the environment and a social innovator. The project is known as "Inspiration Lakeview", and its master plan paints an exciting vision of the Mississauga shoreline east of Port Credit.

Statements by Members

Wildlife thrives in the dozens of hectares developed for wetlands, forest, and fish spawning beds. A research centre strengthens the urban and environmental sustainability of the Great Lakes. Local residents and businesses work together to establish an innovation hub that transforms the waterfront into a world-class beacon of sustainable development.

Inspiration Lakeview truly inspires the people of Mississauga, and I am excited to lend my support to this remarkable initiative.

* * *

WORLD DAY OF SOCIAL JUSTICE

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Madam Speaker, the World Day of Social Justice will be observed around the world on February 20 next week.

Observance of the World Day of Social Justice should support efforts of the international community in poverty eradication, the promotion of full employment and decent work, gender equity, and access to social well-being and justice for all.

Justice is ultimately that by which fairness is administered. Social justice is that by which we break down barriers so all people, linked by our common humanity, are able to fully participate in our society.

The unfortunate fact is that people continue to face barriers every day because of their gender, ethnicity, religion, disability, age, culture, or sexual orientation. We continue to live in a society that is marked by economic inequality and an increasing gap between rich and poor.

We in the NDP will continue to fight for social justice and make it our mission to build a society—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for Pierrefonds—Dollard.

* * *

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Mr. Frank Baylis (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.): Madam Speaker, over 50 years ago, a young lady, a black immigrant to Canada, was denied a job because of her race. When that happened, she went to court. Her case would take over 12 years to be settled, and when it was done, the perpetrators were fined the princely sum of \$25 dollars.

However, her case was never about money. No, it would be the first case in Canadian history that would be fought and won against workplace discrimination. After that, it would no longer be legal in Canada to deny someone a job simply because of the colour of their skin.

I am very proud to say that this lady, with an indomitable spirit, is my mother, Gloria Leon Baylis. Her story is part of my personal history. It is part of black history. It is a part of Canadian history.

* * *

• (1105)

GOVERNMENT APPOINTMENTS

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Madam Speaker, Canada's justice system faces a crisis as a result of the

failure by the Minister of Justice to fill judicial vacancies in a timely manner.

As a result of the minister's inaction, serious criminal cases have been thrown out of court due to delay, including murder cases, sexual assault cases, and serious fraud cases. More than 800 criminal cases are presently in jeopardy, while the minister sits on her hands with 60 judicial vacancies.

It is time for the minister to stop making excuses, stop dithering, and start appointing judges.

* * *

MUSLIM CANADIANS

Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the recent killing of Muslims praying in the mosque in Quebec City is no accident. This is the direct result of the dog-whistle politics, the politics of fear and division.

Things like Muslim ban in other countries should be of concern to us. Fear is a dangerous thing. Once it is sanctioned by the state, there is no telling where it might lead. It is always a short path to walk from being suspicious of our fellow citizens to taking actions to restrict their liberty.

In Canada, the elements who championed charter values, niqab ban, barbaric cultural practices tip line, all targeted at Canadian Muslims, these elements are getting active again. It is painful and fearful to watch politicians who, in their attempts to grab power, go back to practising the dangerous politics of fear and division.

* * *

DAVE AND HEATHER ABRIEL

Mrs. Bernadette Jordan (South Shore—St. Margarets, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is with a heavy heart I rise today to pay tribute to a couple in my riding of South Shore—St. Margarets. Dr. Dave and Heather Abriel were tragically killed in a car accident on February 2.

Dave and Heather were well-loved musicians and Father and Mrs. Christmas.

Dave was a giant of a man with a heart to match and will be remembered primarily for his passion as a palliative care physician. It was not unusual for Dave to go to the bedside of a patient in the middle of the night to comfort the family as a person passed. He was the quintessential caring rural physician with a wife who was always by his side. He was a champion for those patients wishing to die at home and a strong advocate for medical assistance in dying.

To their children, Kate, Dan, and Shelagh, your community grieves with you. Dave and Heather should rest easy. They have made a difference in the lives of many and our community is a better place because they were here.

* * *

REG STACKHOUSE

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Niagara Falls, CPC): Madam Speaker, today I have the opportunity to honour former parliamentarian, Reg Stackhouse, who passed away in December. I was proud to serve with Reg under Prime Minister Brian Mulroney from 1984 to 1988.

Statements by Members

Reg wore many hats in his time here on earth and made a tremendous impact in all of his roles. From working diligently with Prime Minister Mulroney to free Nelson Mandela, advocating for the removal of mandatory retirement, initiating community colleges in Ontario to a myriad of human rights issues, Reg Stackhouse left an enduring mark on the fabric of Canadian society.

Reverend, doctor, parliamentarian, human rights advocate, author, husband, and father, we all owe him a debt of gratitude. Reg will be missed greatly by all who had the privilege of knowing him.

* * *

CHATEAUGUAY

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.): Madam Speaker, my statement today is dedicated to the Municipality of Châteauguay, which has implemented two great sustainable development projects that our community can be proud of.

[*Translation*]

In December, the municipal council recognized the exceptional nature of the Île Saint-Bernard wildlife refuge and identified it as a municipal heritage asset. The City acquired it in 2011 and has since been working to preserve this communal treasure that was once the home of Marguerite d'Youville and the Grey Nuns.

Shortly before that, Châteauguay took the equally important step of protecting the Fernand-Seguin Ecological Centre forest, a 70-hectare area that extends all the way to Île Saint-Bernard, in perpetuity. Mayor Nathalie Simon and her municipal team were featured in a *Québec Science* article for this initiative.

I congratulate Châteauguay for doing such a great job of dovetailing the environment and the economy.

* * *

• (1110)

RURAL REGIONS

Mr. William Amos (Pontiac, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, the Minister of National Revenue, and the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food for meeting with the residents of Pontiac recently.

It is clear that our government is working hard to meet with Canadians and give a voice to rural people.

The measures put in place by our government are already making a real difference for Canadians across the country, and we will continue to work hard to ensure growth and strengthen the middle class every day.

We will also continue to work for reconciliation, and for creating opportunities, for Aboriginal peoples, while promoting Canada's diversity as one of our greatest strengths, protecting our environment and fighting climate change.

Thank you to my colleagues for listening to our regions.

[*English*]

MUSLIM CANADIANS

Mr. Matt Jeneroux (Edmonton Riverbend, CPC): Madam Speaker, I rise today, on a Friday, during a time when the Muslim community in Edmonton and across the country, begins its Friday prayers. I rise today to recognize the impact the Muslim community plays in our region of the country. The members of the Muslim faith, and quite frankly all Canadians, had their safe space, their place of prayer, fiercely attacked in Quebec City. When a gunman opened fire in a mosque, not only did it have a profound impact on the Quebec Muslim community, it gave possibility to what could happen across our country. Canada is a welcoming place, a place that does not and should not live in fear. Our values alone are a barrier to protecting the impossible from happening.

I do know, trust, and love many friends in my Muslim community of Edmonton. They should and need to feel safe today, on a Friday, and every day in Edmonton. I want all members of the Muslim community in Edmonton, and across the world, to know that I stand in unity with them and condemn the horrendous attacks on Quebec City.

* * *

VOLUNTEERISM

Mr. Omar Alhabra (Mississauga Centre, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize an outstanding Canadian. After the tragic Quebec mosque shooting, Mohamad Fakhri offered to cover the costs of the funerals for all six victims, and repairs to the mosque. When asked why, he said, "That's what Islam taught me and that's what Canada taught me."

Mr. Fakhri is known for his generosity. Last year, he started an initiative to hire dozens of Syrian refugees. He also supports groups like the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation, Cops for Cancer, the Mississauga Food Bank, Sheridan College, Ryerson University, and the True Patriot Love Foundation, just to name a few.

2017 is a special year for Mohamad. In 10 short years he has built one of the fastest-growing Middle Eastern food businesses around the world. Today, Paramount Fine Foods employs hundreds of Canadians and is expanding globally.

I want to congratulate Mohamad, his team at Paramount, and his family: wife Hanan; and, his children Emad, Kareem, and Adam. They represent the best of Canada.

* * *

DEMOCRATIC REFORM

Mr. David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, a lot of promises are made on the campaign trail. Some are big-ticket items, some are local concerns, some promises are made once, and some promises are made 1,813 times.

Oral Questions

Changing the electoral system was a major plank of the Liberal platform. We have had the special committee, cross-country consultations, as well as a national survey. However, instead of taking the report of the special committee seriously, the government attacked the committee, and then abandoned its promise to make 2015 the last election conducted under the unfair first past the post system. Among the Prime Minister's more outlandish excuses for breaking his promise was the fearmongering that proportional representation would risk our democracy by allowing extremist parties to take power. Really? Where was the Prime Minister's concern about extremist governments when Stephen Harper got 100% of the power with only 39.6% of the vote because of first past the post? The Liberals got even less with 39.5%.

PR means 39% of the vote only gets 39% of the seats.

* * *

[Translation]

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to draw your attention to all the work that was done by the previous Conservative government during the negotiations of the free trade agreement with Europe.

I want to acknowledge our former Prime Minister, the Right Honourable Stephen Harper, and the former Minister of International Trade, the hon. member for Abbotsford, who masterfully handled these negotiations, which were then handed over on a silver platter to the Liberal government.

We are very pleased with the outcome, despite the Minister of Foreign Affairs' crocodile tears, the ones she shed as part of a distasteful strategy she decided to pursue during a reception at the Canadian Embassy in Washington.

Now that the Minister of Foreign Affairs has lost credibility and shown herself to be shameless and manipulative, let us hope that the Liberal government will send credible people to take part in the upcoming NAFTA negotiations and defend every sector of our Canadian economy for the future and well-being of all Canadians.

* * *

•(1115)

[English]

ORDER OF CANADA

Mr. Andy Fillmore (Halifax, Lib.): Madam Speaker, this morning at Rideau Hall, the Governor General will invest a group of accomplished Canadians into the Order of Canada, one of our country's highest civilian honours, and I am so proud that one of those Canadians is from Halifax, Nova Scotia. Bruce MacKinnon is one of our country's most gifted and insightful cartoonists. From his post at *The Chronicle Herald* in Halifax, where he began in 1985, Bruce's cartoons have helped to capture moments in Canadian history over three decades. His artistic skill and sharp point of view on issues of the day have made him not only a hometown hero but on many occasions his cartoons have been shared across the country, and even around the world, such as a certain bat flip cartoon or, more poignantly, his drawing of the National War Memorial following the

death of Corporal Nathan Cirillo, when he so beautifully captured the unspeakable grief of a Canada in mourning.

I proudly invite all members of the House to join me in applauding Bruce MacKinnon, C.M., on his impressive achievement. Congratulations to Bruce.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

TAXATION

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Madam Speaker, the carbon tax cover-up is growing. Today, through access to information, we obtained a government memo that purports to contain the potential economic impact of carbon policies. All the key data, of course, is blacked out. Earlier this year, the government blacked out data on the financial burden on poor and middle-class families as a result of the federally mandated carbon taxes.

Are the Liberals covering up this information because it will show that they broke their election promise not to raise taxes on the middle class and those working to join it?

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we are fully implementing our promise to show that the environment and the economy go together. Surely the member opposite does not believe that pollution should be free and that people can dump pollution anywhere they want. That is why we are putting a price on pollution.

We are also working with the provinces and territories to invest where it counts: public transit, green infrastructure, more energy-efficient homes, and cleaner power. This will help middle-class Canadians save more money every day in their homes, in their workplaces, in their communities.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Madam Speaker, yesterday's Fraser Institute report confirmed what many taxpayers suspected all along. Of all the provinces that have carbon taxes, not a single one of them is revenue neutral. In all cases, taxpayers keep less so governments can get more. Trusting Liberals with money is like trusting a bear with honey. "Once they get it, they ain't giving it back."

Is the government covering up the calculations on its carbon tax so that the middle class and those working to join it will be kept in the dark about the new costs the government is imposing on them?

Oral Questions

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I think maybe the member forgets that climate change is real, and it is happening right now, from floods to winter storms. Prince Edward Island is shrinking at 43 centimetres per year. Canadian families are already at risk from climate change. Canadian insurance claims from severe storm damage now average \$1 billion a year, up from \$300 million at the turn of the century.

Our kids and grandkids should not have to foot the bill. That is why we are taking action now.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Madam Speaker, our kids and grandkids should not have to foot the bill, this from a party that is piling up \$100 billion in national debt. Sometimes the Liberals make it a little bit too easy.

If this were really about the environment, the minister would be able to stand up and show that the levies they are imposing on carbon are in fact offset 100% by other tax reductions elsewhere, but not only are they failing to do that, they are covering up data on the real cost for the poor and the middle class. Why?

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to remind the member opposite that our government has made a commitment to help the middle class and those working hard to join it. Also, I would like to remind the member opposite that it is this party that has actually lowered taxes for middle-income Canadians. We are also the government that has put in place the Canada child benefit program that has helped hundreds of thousands of children get out of poverty.

Our government is here to help the middle class, and that is exactly what we are going to continue to do.

• (1120)

[Translation]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Madam Speaker, we know that in a few days or weeks the government is going to table its budget. Yesterday, the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, which represents 200,000 employers, 200,000 job creators, 200,000 creators of wealth, made 10 recommendations. The most important thing it had to say to the government was that, if we want to improve productivity, we need to cut the cost of doing business in Canada. Simply put, that means that the government should not impose new taxes and new charges on our businesses.

Why does the government not do as the Chamber of Commerce says?

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I once again thank my colleague for his question.

[English]

Canada has a very competitive business environment. Compared to other areas in other OECD countries, we have a competitive corporate tax rate. Businesses that invest in Canada also benefit from a highly skilled and highly educated workforce.

We will continue to focus on ensuring that our Canadian economy is competitive, providing good jobs for middle-class Canadians and a good future for our country.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Madam Speaker, let me be clear. The best way to help those who create wealth, those who create jobs—our Canadian entrepreneurs—is by not creating new taxes and new charges. This is exactly what the government has done for the last 15 months, and this is exactly what the government will do for the next year if it does not change its mind. Why create a new Liberal carbon tax? Maybe one day the government will understand.

Why is the government so opposed to those who create wealth in Canada? Why is the government so opposed to creators of wealth? Why is the government so opposed to entrepreneurial Canadians?

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Madam Speaker, why is the party opposite so opposed to taking action to protect our environment, to grow a clean economy, to create jobs, to foster innovation, and to ensure a more sustainable future for our children?

We understand that this is a real opportunity. We are putting a price on pollution because we want less pollution and we want more innovation. This is a huge opportunity, and we are going to take advantage of it.

* * *

[Translation]

PRIVACY

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Beloeil—Chambly, NDP): Madam Speaker, the risk that Canadians will be stopped at the U.S. border and asked for their social media passwords is growing. These invasions of privacy are intimidating, and there are serious consequences for refusing to co-operate: interrogation, detention, and refusal of entry. Searching people's computers or cellphones is much more intrusive than searching their luggage.

Will the minister finally stand up to protect Canadians' rights here and at the border?

[English]

Mr. Mark Holland (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Madam Speaker, unequivocally we support Canadians' right to privacy and security, and we make sure that those rights are protected each and every day. That is why the protocol governing the use of passwords is so clear. It is publicly available, but I will read the most relevant section:

The CBSA's current policy is that such examinations should not be conducted as a matter of routine; they may only be conducted if there is a multiplicity of indicators that evidence of contraventions may be found on the digital device or media.

I am sure the member opposite would agree with me that this is a prudent policy.

* * *

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Beloeil—Chambly, NDP): Madam Speaker, I do agree, but the problem is what the U.S. wants to do and the deafening silence we heard from the Prime Minister when he met the U.S. President.

Oral Questions

While Canadians are being turned away at the border, the minister continues to downplay concerns about Bill C-23, which has far-reaching consequences and could lead to even more Canadians being treated unfairly at the border. Bill C-23 would grant worrisome powers to U.S. border agents on Canadian soil, such as permission to carry firearms and without the appropriate criminal liability framework.

I ask again. What will it take for the government to finally stand up and protect Canadians' rights both here and at the border?

Mr. Mark Holland (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have tremendous regard for the member opposite, but his question, frankly, is just inaccurate in the way it has posed the information.

The reality is that pre-clearance already happens for 12 million Canadians every year at eight locations. Everybody who crosses the border is protected by the Canadian charter and Canadian law. The result of not having pre-clearance would mean that these individuals would be on U.S. soil, where they would not have the protection of the charter and they would not have the protection of Canadian law. This is the right way to proceed.

* * *

• (1125)

[Translation]

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Ms. Karine Trudel (Jonquière, NDP): Madam Speaker, when Canada signs free trade agreements, it is supposedly in the best interests of Canadians, and not the interests of the elite who travel to private islands by helicopter.

Signing agreements that will have devastating consequences for Quebec's dairy producers is unacceptable, especially when they are made to believe that there will be compensation and the government does not keep its promises.

What kinds of surprises can Canadians expect when the free trade agreement with the U.S. is renegotiated?

[English]

Ms. Pam Goldsmith-Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Madam Speaker, CETA is the most progressive trade agreement ever negotiated by Canada or the EU. It will create jobs, bolster our prosperity, and help grow the middle class.

As the Prime Minister said in his address to the European Parliament, "This forward-looking agreement reflects a truly progressive trade agenda—one that protects the ability of societies to promote the public good."

It is one that focuses on small and medium-sized enterprises.

We have put the interests of workers and consumers at the heart of our trade negotiations. We are giving Canadian businesses unprecedented access to 500 million affluent Europeans.

[Translation]

SOFTWOOD LUMBER

Ms. Karine Trudel (Jonquière, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is the same old song and dance.

When the Prime Minister met the U.S. President this week, there were no reassurances about advancing the softwood lumber file. This climate of uncertainty is already causing softwood lumber prices to fluctuate.

Industry stakeholders are expecting a surtax and producers are limiting their exports because they are afraid that the surtax will be retroactive.

When will the government finally reassure the forestry industry by moving ahead with negotiations, and especially by announcing a plan B?

Hon. Andrew Leslie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs (Canada-U.S. Relations), Lib.): Madam Speaker, the softwood lumber agreement expired when the previous government was in power. Our government is vigorously defending the interests of the softwood lumber sector, as did the minister last week and as did the Prime Minister on Monday in Washington during his excellent visit.

We again strongly defended our softwood lumber producers. We will continue to work closely with softwood lumber workers and producers, the provinces, and the territories. We are looking for a good agreement for Canada, and not just any agreement.

* * *

[English]

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Hon. Gerry Ritz (Battlefords—Lloydminster, CPC): Madam Speaker, the Liberals claimed they had a 100-day fix 300 days ago. That did not work out.

President Trump has made his intentions clear that he will tweak NAFTA. The Americans have already insisted that supply management, dispute mechanism settlements, and even COOL are back on the table.

What will the Liberals put on the table during NAFTA negotiations? Nobody really knows. Jobs are at risk, and Canadians deserve to know. What will it be?

Hon. Andrew Leslie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs (Canada-U.S. Relations), Lib.): Madam Speaker, our government had a very productive and important meeting with the President last Monday.

Let me remind the House that the President assured Canada and the world that "We have a very outstanding trade relationship with Canada".

As for NAFTA, it is important for all of us to continue to realize that the principal actors in the U.S. cabinet have not yet been appointed. Even more important, the United States has not formally initiated a NAFTA negotiation process. If and when that happens, we will be ready.

Oral Questions

Hon. Gerry Ritz (Battlefords—Lloydminster, CPC): Madam Speaker, NAFTA will be under renegotiation. The President has made that very clear. The outcome, of course, will be unknown.

It is more imperative than ever that Canada pursue other trade opportunities, like the TPP. The Conservatives have been saying for over a year that regardless of what the U.S. does, we should continue to move forward with like-minded countries.

Will the minister commit to completing an Asia-Pacific deal before any bilateral with China begins?

Ms. Pam Goldsmith-Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Madam Speaker, with respect to our interest in exploring talks with regard to the Asia-Pacific market, it is very important that we begin cautiously. We know that this is very important to Canadians. We are very pleased so far.

* * *

SMALL BUSINESS

Hon. Diane Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk, CPC): Madam Speaker, small and medium-sized businesses are the backbone of our economy, but the Liberals want to shut them out at every turn.

Small businesses in Haldimand—Norfolk are struggling to survive under Liberal governments. With hydro prices skyrocketing out of control, small businesses are forced to pay Ontario Liberals out of one pocket while these Liberals reach into the other to grab money for the carbon tax and CPP hikes.

Why will the Liberals not get their hands out of small businesses' pockets and start showing them the respect they deserve?

• (1130)

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member got one thing right. Small businesses are the backbone of the Canadian economy. Small businesses are job creators. That is why this government is committed to working with them wholeheartedly. That is why we are making investments so that small businesses can sell their products and services to Canadians.

The middle-class tax cut actually puts more money into the pockets of consumers. We are engaging with small businesses. Those stakeholders will be well represented. We will continue to work very hard for them.

* * *

[Translation]

AIR TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Madam Speaker, for months, there has been talk of the Liberals wanting to privatize Canadian airports. They asked Credit Suisse, an investment firm, to analyze the financial implications for Ottawa, and yesterday, the president and CEO of the Caisse de dépôt et placement du Québec indicated that he would be delighted to invest in airports.

Do the Liberals really have a plan to privatize airports, or is this just another attempt to pay for their out-of-control spending and deficits?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Madam Speaker, as I have said many times, our priority is service to passengers.

That is why we are trying to reduce costs for passengers to ensure they can have more options and to reduce wait times at security and customs. We are even planning to create an air passenger rights regime.

Service to passengers will remain our priority as we explore the options.

* * *

[English]

HOUSING

Mr. Ron Liepert (Calgary Signal Hill, CPC): Madam Speaker, the Liberals' new mortgage rules have denied thousands of young Canadians the opportunity to purchase their first homes. The new rules smack of a government that thinks it knows better than the taxpayer.

This week at committee, the president of the CMHC said, "It's like you're at a party, and the party has gotten too strong, and you remove the punch bowl".

Does the finance minister agree with the president of CMHC, who compared Canada's young working class, struggling to buy a first home, to a punch bowl party that has gotten out of control?

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing and Urban Affairs), Lib.): Madam Speaker, our government believes that all Canadians deserve safe and affordable housing. That is why we have invested more than \$2.3 billion over the next three years to do just that.

We also increased the down payment requirements in December to address pockets of risk, in particular in Toronto and Vancouver.

In budget 2016, our government has also allocated \$500,000 to Statistics Canada to study the phenomena that were causing some of the housing prices to spike, and we will be looking at policies and opportunities to make sure that we sustain affordability in the private market. We will continue to keep our focus on that issue, because it matters to Canadians.

* * *

REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Matt Jeneroux (Edmonton Riverbend, CPC): Madam Speaker, last week, the latest job numbers were released, and the picture remains bleak in Alberta. Unemployment keeps rising, yet the Liberals simply do not care. Clearly, their reckless spending plan is doing nothing to support Albertans and nothing to create jobs.

How many more Albertans need to lose their jobs? How many more families need to lose their homes? How many more businesses need to close their doors before the Liberals get their heads out of the sand and present a plan that will actually create one job in Alberta?

Oral Questions

Mr. David Lametti (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Madam Speaker, nothing could be further from the truth. We are working hard to create jobs across the country, including Alberta. We have approved pipelines. We have invested \$240 million in post-secondary education, \$78 million to the University of Calgary, and \$20.7 million to the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology.

We are supporting economic development in Fort McMurray. We are doing what we need to do to help the Alberta economy move forward.

* * *

JUSTICE

Mr. David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, Bill S-201 is legislation designed to protect the rights of Canadians to the privacy of their own genetic information. Currently, Canadians who receive genetic testing on a variety of medical issues are at risk of being denied insurance coverage if they fail to turn this information over.

Could the chair or the vice-chair of the justice committee update the House on how many expert witnesses testified and how many meetings were devoted to the study of Bill S-201 before the bill was reported back to the House?

• (1135)

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Madam Speaker, as the vice-chair of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights, I would like to thank the member for Hamilton Centre for his continuous work in bringing transparency and accountability to the House.

He is correct. Bill S-201 is an important bill, intended to protect Canadians against unfair treatment by insurance companies based on their genetic information.

To answer his question, the justice committee held five meetings and heard from 28 witnesses. The overwhelming testimony was in support of the current draft of the legislation, and the committee itself reported the bill back without amendment.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Madam Speaker, after the justice committee reported Bill S-201 back to the House, the Liberal government made an astonishing move. The government is trying to gut this important bill by deleting the majority of the clauses at report stage. This would send a green light to companies to discriminate based on genetic conditions.

At the eleventh hour, the Liberals caved to pressure from the insurance industry. Why is the government more interested in protecting the profits of insurance companies than in protecting Canadians?

Mr. Marco Mendicino (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Madam Speaker, our government believes in the charter. That is why our government is committed to protecting Canadians from the possible misuse of genetic information.

The Senate public bill is a step toward helping prevent genetic discrimination and protecting the privacy of Canadians. Preventing

discrimination and other forms of misuse of genetic information is an important goal. That is why our government believes in the amendments, which we introduced earlier in the House. It is about striking the right balance between the roles that should be played by the federal government and the provincial governments.

We look forward to further debate in the House so we can achieve the goals of that bill.

* * *

GOVERNMENT APPOINTMENTS

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to ask myself a question through you. The Liberals family and friends deal event is in full swing in Ottawa. Mary Ng, another Kathleen Wynne staffer who followed Gerry and her good friend Katie to Ottawa to become the Ottawa PMO director of appointments, is now appointing herself to be the Liberal candidate to replace John McCallum.

She announced her candidacy days after John McCallum was pushed out the door to become the ambassador to China. The thing is that she would have been the one that worked on the appointment of McCallum.

Could the Prime Minister tell the House what role he played in this backroom deal?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to rise and answer that question. The member well knows that it is the prime minister who makes decisions on who to appoint as ambassadors.

As our Prime Minister said, the Hon. John McCallum has a distinguished career in public service, and as Canada's new ambassador to China, our Canada-China relationship will be well served, and Canadian interests strongly promoted.

As we work toward a strong, more stable, and long-term relationship with China, we will have more opportunities to share a culture, increase our people-to-people ties, and hold frank dialogue on issues of importance to Canadians.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is more than unsavoury that after John McCallum is bumped, the PMO's director of appointments appoints herself to replace him. It certainly smells like the fix was in.

Yesterday, the government House leader said, "I have no reason to doubt that the rules have been respected." Respecting the rules, how has that been working out for the Liberals?

Again, what promises were made by the Prime Minister to Mary Ng if she pushed John McCallum out the door?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I believe the member is mistaken. He knows very well that the Prime Minister makes decisions of who to appoint as ambassadors.

As the Prime Minister has also said, the Hon. John McCallum has a distinguished career in public service. As Canada's new ambassador to China, our Canada-China relationship will be well served, and Canadian interests strongly promoted.

There are huge opportunities for the two countries to work better together to create opportunities for Canadians, the people for whom we are here to work hard.

* * *

[Translation]

ETHICS

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, CPC): Madam Speaker, never before has a Canadian prime minister been the subject of two ethics investigations, one of which could lead to sanctions.

Either the Prime Minister does not understand that he is supposed to be above suspicion or he does not care.

Will the Prime Minister finally admit that he broke the law when he rode in his friend's private helicopter during his personal vacation?

• (1140)

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to answer the question, which we have answered several times already. The member has asked the same question several times, so she will get the same answer.

The Prime Minister said that he will answer all of the commissioner's questions.

[English]

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Madam Speaker, we have demanded answers about the Prime Minister's illegal use of private aircraft. The government House leader keeps telling us that he will answer the Ethics Commissioner's questions. Well, he did answer her preliminary questions, and she must not have liked his answers, because she escalated the matter to an unprecedented full investigation.

When will the Prime Minister admit to Canadians that his conduct was unethical and illegal? Will he do it now or does he really want to wait for the Ethics Commissioner to do it for him later?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the Prime Minister has said time and time again that he will answer any questions the commissioner has.

On this side of the House, we are taking an unprecedented level of consultations with Canadians. We are here to work to respond to their questions.

I am not surprised that the member opposite has problems when people have more questions. We are okay with it, because we are responding to the real challenges that Canadians are facing. We are here to do the good work they expect us to do, and we will continue to do that.

Oral Questions

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Ms. Georgina Jolibois (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, NDP): Madam Speaker, yesterday, along with other indigenous MPs, we sent a letter to the minister calling on her government to rename the building that houses the Prime Minister's Office. It is named after the creator of the Indian residential schools, a system that continues to negatively impact indigenous people today.

In the spirit of reconciliation, we have asked the minister to rename the building to reflect the government's commitment to indigenous people. Will the government commit today in the House to change the name?

Mr. Steven MacKinnon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Madam Speaker, there is no relationship more important to our government than the one we have with indigenous peoples.

Our government is fully committed to implementing the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action. This includes developing a reconciliation framework for Canadian heritage and commemoration. Any decision will be made in full partnership with indigenous people.

* * *

[Translation]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP): Madam Speaker, we have heard some disturbing messages from the White House this week on the Israeli-Palestinian issue. Many European nations reacted immediately, and so did the United Nations.

My question is simple: does Canada still support a two-state solution?

If so, what exactly is this government doing to convince the Israeli government to put an end to its settlement policy, which is currently jeopardizing the two-state solution?

Mr. Matt DeCoursey (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I appreciate my colleague's question.

As a determined peace builder, Canada supports efforts to advance a two-state solution and create the conditions that will help the two states resume direct negotiations in order to achieve comprehensive, just, and lasting peace. That has always been Canada's policy.

* * *

[English]

JUSTICE

Mr. Marc Serré (Nickel Belt, Lib.): Madam Speaker, our government has been very clear about our commitment to gender equality, and our Prime Minister has demonstrated a commitment at home and abroad.

[Translation]

As a member of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women, I have heard a number of witnesses talk about the role we all must play in achieving equality.

Oral Questions

Can the Parliamentary Secretary for Status of Women explain to the House why it is so important to include men and boys in the discussion on gender equality?

[English]

Mr. Terry Duguid (Parliamentary Secretary for Status of Women, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I appreciate my colleague from Nickel Belt's commitment to gender equality. It is an absolute honour to serve as the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Status of Women.

We know how important it is to engage men and boys in the advancement of gender equality to help create cultural change. Gender equality is not only a women's issue; it is a societal issue. As our Prime Minister has said, feminists come in all genders.

Again, I am honoured to have the opportunity to be part of this important work.

* * *

• (1145)

TAXATION

Mr. Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC): Madam Speaker, Canadians are not buying this Liberal deception about supporting the middle class. Thanks to the failed energy policies of the Wynne Liberals, the Millbrook arena in Cavan Monaghan was recently hit with a monthly hydro bill of over \$11,000.

The Liberals have cancelled the children's fitness tax credit and have introduced a new carbon tax, making the cost of everything, from renting ice at the arena to fuel to get children to the rink, substantially more expensive. When are the Liberals going to help families instead of burying them in taxes?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to give the colleague a lesson in history. During 10 years, the previous government announced in 2007, with great fanfare, its sectorial policy to improve the environment. The Conservatives had 10 years to put it in place. It was announced in 2007. Over 10 years, they implemented two out of the six sectors. That is their terrible record with respect to the environment. The Conservatives have nothing to tell us.

Mr. John Nater (Perth—Wellington, CPC): Madam Speaker, under our government, CO₂ emissions actually went down.

Under the failed Liberal policies of the Kathleen Wynne Liberals, life in rural Ontario is becoming more expensive. In fact, high energy costs are especially hard on seniors living on fixed incomes, on farmers, on farm families, and on small businesses. Now the federal Liberals are taking lessons from the failed playbook of the Kathleen Wynne Liberals.

Why is the Prime Minister forcing a carbon tax on rural Canadians who can least afford it?

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I might want to explain why emissions went down under the previous Conservative government. It was nothing to do with the Conservatives. It was because the Liberal government in Ontario closed coal-fired plants and also because the economy was not doing well.

We understand we need to put a price on what we do not want, which is pollution, and foster what we do want, which is clean innovation and jobs. That is why, unlike the previous government, we will be doing that. We will be reducing pollution, reducing emissions, and growing our economy.

Mr. David Yurdiga (Fort McMurray—Cold Lake, CPC): Madam Speaker, as we speak, more and more people in my riding are losing their homes because of the current Liberal economy. Now the charitable agencies providing support for these individuals and families have to cut programs as a direct result of the Prime Minister's ill-conceived carbon tax scheme.

When will the Prime Minister admit that by charging a carbon tax on charities, he is actually taxing the most vulnerable?

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would hope the member opposite would understand that polluting is not free, that we want to leave a cleaner future to our kids, that we want to grow our economy, and that we want to create good jobs, so we want to foster innovation. That is why we are working with the provinces and territories, developing a plan that will reduce emissions and will produce a more sustainable world for our kids and grandkids, because they deserve that.

Mr. Robert Kitchen (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC): Madam Speaker, southeast Saskatchewan is in the midst of a jobs crisis and thousands of my constituents are out of work. The Liberals are making things worse by forcing a carbon tax on families who are already struggling to put food on the table.

A carbon tax will increase costs for our farmers and ranchers. Middle-class Canadians will have to pay significantly more now just to keep operating. Why will the Liberals not stand up for hard-working Canadians and abandon their foolish carbon tax?

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we always stand up for hard-working Canadians. That is why we reduced taxes for middle-class Canadians and raised them on the 1%. That is why we introduced the Canada child benefit, where nine out of 10 families will get more for their children.

We will also take action on the environment because it actually makes economic sense. We are moving forward for a cleaner future for our kids. We will support the middle class. We will create good jobs, because that is what Canadians expect us to do.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

RAIL TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Madam Speaker, the Minister of Finance is fine-tuning his upcoming budget, and the Minister of Transport is endlessly studying studies, but the train may have left the station. In Trois-Rivières, like anywhere else in the Québec City-Windsor corridor, the return of passenger rail service is vital to stimulating the regional economy.

Can the minister confirm that he will finish his homework on time for budget 2017 to include the necessary funds for VIA Rail's high-frequency rail?

● (1150)

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the concept of high-frequency rail is one that we are looking into and have already invested \$3.3 million in. That speaks to how much we value this study on the Québec City-Windsor corridor. Studying the viability of such a project is complex work. We are in the process of doing so. We are doing our homework and when we are finished, we will make an announcement.

* * *

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Madam Speaker, it would be nice if the government stopped talking about sustainable development and actually did something about it. As the NDP critic for the electrification of transportation, I can say that I look forward to the next budget. I look forward to it because I was deeply disappointed to see that this Liberal government's great contribution to the electrification of transportation in the previous budget was to give Quebec a grand total of four charging stations. Wow. In the meantime, the Quebec government was contributing to installing 800 stations all around Quebec.

Can the Minister of Natural Resources tell us how many charging stations Quebec will get in the next budget? One, five, or six more?

[English]

Hon. Jim Carr (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the government was very pleased, in the budget of 2016, to announce a program of establishing electric vehicle charging stations, \$62.5 million over two years.

We are also very pleased that it was the Province of Quebec that was the most enthusiastic of all the provinces.

I know it is absolutely consistent with the government's commitment to move to a lower carbon economy while creating good, clean jobs for Canadians, and I am glad the member is on side.

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JUSTICE

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Madam Speaker, last fall, Travis Vader's conviction of two counts of second degree murder of Lyle and Marie McCann was vacated after the trial judge based his conviction on a zombie section of the Criminal Code.

Zombie laws are booby traps for the unwitting, with the potential for costs, delays, mistrials, appeals, and like what happened to the McCann family, miscarriages of justice.

The Minister of Justice can easily introduce legislation to repeal these sections. When will she?

Mr. Marco Mendicino (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to begin by reiterating that our government extends deepest sympathies to the family of the deceased.

The reference to a zombie provision, as my colleague puts it, is a stark reminder about the importance of conducting a broad, comprehensive review of the criminal justice system.

Our government is undertaking that process. We look forward to working with my hon. colleague across the way to ensure that we have a fair, relevant, and accessible criminal justice system.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Madam Speaker, the Justice Department has launched an initiative called “Transparency for the 21st Century”.

Canadians are interested to see how that goes, since there has been a total lack of transparency from the Minister of Justice.

She will not tell Canadians which mandatory minimum sentences she will get rid of. She will not tell Canadians why over half of the judicial positions she was supposed to fill are still empty, leading to murderers and sex offenders going free.

When will she tell Canadians which mandatory sentences will be eliminated and why she has not filled the judicial vacancies?

Mr. Marco Mendicino (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to begin by saying that we all acknowledge that child sexual assault crimes are wrong, and we are doing everything in our power to prevent them from occurring again.

Our government firmly believes that mandatory minimum sentences are appropriate for the most serious offences. It is also clear that the last government introduced a number of mandatory minimums that have been systematically struck down by the Supreme Court of Canada, and that is why we must take a careful look at mandatory minimums going forward.

Our government is committed to doing that so that we have an efficient, fair, accessible criminal justice system.

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FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Len Webber (Calgary Confederation, CPC): Madam Speaker, my friend, Neil Bantleman, faces 11 years behind bars in Indonesia. Indonesia's justice system has accused him of a crime that is unfounded and unwarranted. A year ago, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs claimed that he was “deeply concerned and dismayed” by the court's decision. Since then, nothing, and Neil continues to languish in prison.

Why will the minister not give Neil, his family and friends, hope, and outline what action she is taking to bring Neil home?

Oral Questions

Mr. Omar Alhabra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs (Consular Affairs), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague for his question and his ongoing work on behalf of Neil Bantleman. It is our government's priority to see Neil Bantleman back home in Canada as a free man. Our government has reiterated that concern with the Indonesian government at the highest level.

Our officials and myself have been engaged with this family. We have been working with his legal team and his family throughout this judicial review process. I want to take a moment to recognize the strength of his family and his friends, and particularly his wife Tracy, for her courage and her strength.

* * *

● (1155)

PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Ms. Pam Damoff (Oakville North—Burlington, Lib.): Madam Speaker, recently I held a round table in my riding of Oakville North—Burlington about the challenges faced by people living with disabilities.

[Translation]

I commend them for their courage and determination.

[English]

The challenges related to accessibility and inclusion in workplaces and in our community are many. We have to change our perceptions and make Canada more inclusive.

Could the Parliamentary Secretary for Sport and Persons with Disabilities tell us about our government's efforts to ensure better inclusion?

[Translation]

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon (Parliamentary Secretary for Sport and Persons with Disabilities, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague from Oakville North—Burlington for her question.

Our government is committed to ensuring better accessibility for Canadians with disabilities and better opportunities in their communities and their workplaces from coast to coast to coast. Many Canadians have already participated in one of the 19 public consultation sessions, in addition to the consultations held by their MPs. The public portion of the consultation is now complete.

I encourage all those who have not yet participated to do so online at Canada.ca/Accessible-Canada by February 28.

[English]

Better is always possible.

* * *

[Translation]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): Madam Speaker, the Liberal government remains out of touch with the realities of the forestry industry and the regions of Quebec.

It is urgent that the government negotiate a softwood lumber agreement and put an end to the uncertainty surrounding the woodland caribou. Unfortunately, the government does not have enough information to make informed decisions on this issue.

The Minister of Environment likes to claim that her decisions are based on science. Will she make sure that her department learns more about the woodland caribou so that an informed decision can be made without giving in to the blackmail of activists?

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to inform my colleague that I will be meeting with my provincial counterparts, including my Quebec counterpart, on Tuesday. We are going to talk about the woodland caribou, science, and how we can protect this species. We are also aware of the employment issue.

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[English]

CANADIAN HERITAGE

Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.): Madam Speaker, my constituents often tell me how important it is to have access to arts facilities in our communities. This allows families to take part in the arts and better understand our stories as Canadians.

Will the government please share with us how it plans on supporting these important staples of our communities?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Madam Speaker, our government firmly believes in investing in our cultural sector, as it drives innovation and growth and allows for unique Canadian stories to be shared with the world.

[Translation]

In budget 2016, we invested nearly \$170 million over two years in cultural infrastructure. That is a historic amount for arts and culture.

[English]

In fact, just this morning, we announced over \$6.5 million in funding for Arts Court and the Ottawa Art Gallery right here in Ottawa. This will help to provide a home for 26 not-for-profit organizations to allow them to continue to support our Canadian creators.

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CANADA REVENUE AGENCY

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): Madam Speaker, Canadians expect all taxpayers to pay what they owe. They do not want anyone to give them preferential treatment.

Could the Minister of National Revenue explain why, after allocating \$444 million to combat offshore tax evasion, we are told that her department is failing to collect \$50 billion each year. Wow, \$50 billion would be enough for the Liberal budget to balance itself.

[Translation]

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Madam Speaker, Canada's middle class and those working hard to join it pay their taxes and fund programs for all Canadians, but they have had enough of those taxpayers who do not pay their fair share.

We have invested \$444 million in order to prevent tax evasion and tax avoidance. We are working very hard. Before long, I will have the great pleasure to give my colleague opposite some good news.

* * *

INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Madam Speaker, when Ottawa insists on approving infrastructure projects one at a time, everything grinds to a halt and we never get a single penny.

The parliamentary budget officer has confirmed that, of the \$13.6 billion announced in the budget, only one-third has been spent. In Quebec, things are twice as bad.

Will the government keep its election promise to transfer all uncommitted funds to the gas tax fund to make sure, according to its platform, that "our communities are not shortchanged"?

• (1200)

Mr. Marc Miller (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Madam Speaker, as my colleague knows very well, we have a historic plan to invest \$180 billion in infrastructure. With regard to the reallocation of funds, these funds are allocated to specific projects. I assume that he does not want to take money away from specific projects, which are not yet paid for.

With respect to Quebec, monies are paid once projects are finished. Funds are assigned to projects and it would not be appropriate to reallocate them to the gas tax fund.

Funds that were to be redistributed were allocated to the gas tax fund.

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Madam Speaker, that is not what the Liberal Party election platform said.

Only 2% of public infrastructure is federal. The rest, the government does not have a stake in, which is why it takes so long to release the money.

By interfering in other people's business, Ottawa is holding up projects, paralyzing cities, and preventing Quebec from moving forward. Only the Canada 150 propaganda infrastructure seems to be getting money. The government knows all about propaganda.

In the next budget, will the government commit to paying a lump sum for infrastructure, money that remains frozen in Ottawa, and will it stop dilly-dallying?

Mr. Marc Miller (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Madam Speaker, my colleague will be delighted to know that we have announced 61 projects in Quebec. The total eligible cost is \$1.6 billion. These are projects that were chosen with the approval of Quebec. We are working very closely with our provincial partner and the municipalities. They are pleased with this collaboration. These are

Oral Questions

projects that take time to develop. We are going to move them forward for the good of Canadians.

* * *

NATURAL RESOURCES

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Madam Speaker, Newfoundland and Labrador has taken Hydro-Québec to court 17 times since 1976 over the Churchill Falls accord, and Newfoundland and Labrador has failed 17 times.

This vexatious behaviour, and it is vexatious behaviour, has cost Quebecers \$50 million in lawyers' fees. Now we are being asked to fork over our tax dollars for a Muskrat Falls loan guarantee.

Can the government understand Quebecers' anger? How can anyone expect them to sit back while the government uses their tax dollars to fund Newfoundland and Labrador's unfair competition against Hydro-Québec?

[English]

Hon. Jim Carr (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the government is interested in promoting electricity ties throughout the country. We realize that there will be a reduced reliance on fossil fuels in the future. We are in a transition period, and as part of that transition, we think it is very important to encourage the development of hydroelectric power, wherever it occurs in Canada. That is of fundamental value. We believe it is the best possible example of the environment and the economy working hand in hand throughout every region of Canada.

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HEALTH

Hon. Hunter Tootoo (Nunavut, Ind.): *Qujannamiik uqaqti.* Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health.

Adequate health care funding continues to be a serious issue in Nunavut. The Canada health transfer only covers 11% of Nunavut's health care costs. This is in stark contrast to the Canadian provincial average of approximately 21%. The \$35-million territorial health investment fund, which includes vital funding for medical travel, is insufficient. This disparity in health care funding between Nunavut and southern Canada is unacceptable.

Does the minister plan to address this inequity in the upcoming territorial health investment fund renewal?

Qujannamiik.

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would first like to thank the member for his hard work on behalf of his constituents.

Our government is committed to working with the Government of Nunavut to address the health care needs of its residents. As part of the health accord, Nunavut will receive \$11.2 million over 10 years in targeted federal funding to improve access to home care and mental health services. This is in addition to federal health funding provided through the Canada health transfer, which will reach \$37 million in 2016-17 and will continue to grow year after year.

Government Orders

We also support the delivery of public services in Nunavut, including health care, through the territorial formula financing, valued at close to \$1.5 billion in 2016-17.

Anthony. Yesterday Anthony said to me that he had a real project for me, that I would like it. When I took a look at it, I realized it was about a park. As important as the bill is, I was incredibly disappointed.

Let me just take a second to read the summary so there is a context for my remarks. It states:

This enactment amends the Rouge National Urban Park Act to set out priorities in respect of factors to be considered in the management of the park. Additionally, it adds land to the park. It also amends the Parks Canada Agency Act to allow the New Parks and Historic Sites Account to be used in a broader manner. Finally, it amends the Canada National Parks Act to modify the boundary of Wood Buffalo National Park of Canada.

I know how important that is as part of this, but my disappointment stems from the fact that I would not be given the opportunity to talk about how the government had let so many people down by turning its back on electoral reform. That was the kind of speech I wanted to make. I wanted to come in here and point out for Canadians that, again, the government had turned its back on them. The Liberals said over 1,800 times during the campaign that they would make electoral reform a key cornerstone of their mandate. It turned its back on that promise.

As I mentioned in my statement earlier, it is more than passing strange that the current Prime Minister is fearmongering about proportional representation by saying that going to PR could lead to extremist governments getting into power. My response would be to point out that Stephen Harper, an extremist government by many of our measurements, got in with 39.6% of the vote. With less than 40%, it got 100% of the power. How can that be seen as democratic? There is nothing democratic at all that 39% of the vote gets 100% of the power. One does not have to be a political scientist to understand that is not a democracy.

The Prime Minister himself said that 2015 would be the last election that we would have a first past the post system, until he won by that system, got himself a majority and got 100% of the power. The ironic part is that the Liberals formed a majority government and got 100% of the power with a smaller percentage of the popular vote than the Harper government had.

Under proportional representation, if we get 39% of the popular vote, we get 39% of the seats. It makes every vote count. That is the key thing.

The members can appreciate my disappointment when yesterday, as I was lining up my work for today, Anthony said that this was what he needed me to do today, to speak to the bill before us.

●(1210)

I really was hoping it would be something about electoral reform, so I could reflect the anger and the betrayal and the disappointment that exists certainly in my riding and based on the emails that I am getting seems to have spread across the country.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

●(1205)

[English]

PETITIONS

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition on behalf of nearly 1,000 Canadians, hundreds of whom are from my riding of New Westminster—Burnaby.

These citizens call upon the Government of Canada to take prompt action and conduct urgent meetings with the Port Metro Vancouver Authority to require comprehensive, independent health and environmental impact assessments before considering new coal shipping projects; to implement a credible, inclusive, broad, and open consultation process; and to ensure that British Columbians have a say and control over a matter of public health that could irreversibly affect their health and quality of life. I am speaking about the proposed Fraser Surrey Docks expansion.

The petitioners, through the electronic petition process, have asked the Government of Canada to respond.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

ROUGE NATIONAL URBAN PARK ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-18, an act to amend the Rouge National Urban Park Act, the Parks Canada Agency Act and the Canada National Parks Act, be read the third time and passed.

Mr. David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to join in this important discussion on Bill C-18. Creating parks is important.

I was kind of disappointed yesterday. We are all friends here and I am sure no one will tell a tale out of school. The most powerful person in the entire NDP sits just on the other side of the door. His name is Anthony Salloum. If anyone really wants to know where the power is, and it is bit of a secret inside story of the NDP, it is

Government Orders

Millions of people may not be hanging on this issue yet, but the numbers have grown. Quite a number of years ago our former leader Jack Layton asked me to be the NDP democratic reform critic, which I did for a period of time. Again, millions of people were not interested but the number was smaller than it is now. This shows that people understand the issue and understand why virtually every other advanced country moves to a PR system. We have a natural hesitancy to do anything too radical. Once people get past that—

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The debate is on Bill C-18, an act to amend the Rouge National Urban Park. My hon. friend is discussing something that is not relevant to this particular debate. I wonder if you could give him some guidance as to focusing on the debate itself rather than referring to something that is not part of these amendments.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The member is likely aware that there is a lot of flexibility while debating bills or motions. I am sure that the member is attempting to get his point across and he will refocus. I do want to remind the member that there is a lot of flexibility when it comes to debates in the House.

Mr. David Christopherson: Madam Speaker, I appreciate that latitude. I also appreciate that latitude can only go so far and that my remarks need to be germane to Bill C-18. I thank my friend across the way for his interjection because, at least superficially, it suggests he is listening and that is always nice. I appreciate that because it is not always easy to listen to my speeches, I grant him that. Stay tuned, and please, I urge the member to jump in again if he feels the need, if he is so moved by my remarks and by the arguments and things that I am presenting, if he is so wound up in that he has to leap to his feet and participate. I urge him to please continue to do that.

With regard to the issue that the member raises about why I am going on talking about electoral reform when we are actually here about Bill C-18, an act to amend the Rouge National Urban Park Act, the Parks Canada Agency Act and the Canada National Parks Act, this is about my feelings about Bill C-18. I am expressing for my friend that the biggest feeling is disappointment because it is not Bill C-18 that I really would like to debate. Parks are wonderful. We all love parks. I love parks, but I would rather talk about the broken promises. That is why I was saying it is germane to Bill C-18 because my emotions, how I feel about this, are directly related to the fact that it is Bill C-18 and it is not what I had hoped I would be able to debate here today.

That is not the only thing. I was further disappointed when Mr. Salloum handed me the bill and I looked at it, and I said, “It is not about door-to-door mail delivery either”, which is something else I feel passionately about and my constituents do, especially when it looks like we may be heading for another betrayal there. The government is starting to split hairs. It has studies and consultations, all the Liberals' usual delay tactics that are meant to look like anything except like a delay but that is what is going on. I worry, and I know that my colleagues worry, that the government is eventually getting to the point where it is going to do to its promise to return door-to-door mail delivery exactly what it did to its promise on electoral reform.

It matters to Bill C-18, and it is germane to this, because the debate on this park is important. There is no question that this park is

important and all parks are important. That is why I found myself so conflicted as I was coming into the House.

I have a number of significant parks in my riding. We have Gore Park right downtown, which is kind of small but it is the centre of our city. It is uniquely shaped and the history of it is quite fascinating. Then there is Gage Park, which is another major urban park in my riding that I am very proud of. I can remember as a kid going there, riding on my bike and playing hide-and-seek with my friends in Gage Park. My question would be this as I am dealing with Bill C-18 and thinking about Gage Park: How do I go about making my park a national park? That would be a great idea.

I see my friend again who is just paying such wonderful attention, and I do appreciate that so much, and he is making mannerisms. Maybe he has an answer for that, about how we can go about it. Maybe there is an application form I missed somewhere along the line that we could get to fill out if someone would like a municipal urban park to become a national park. I want to check off the box that says yes. We will take that if we can.

If it is a little too small for that designation, although it is not in my riding, we have Confederation Park, which is much larger. Then of course we have Bayfront Park, which is as one might think, near the bay, near the harbour. We have a lot of parks but none of them are national yet. Again, that is why this is important. My understanding is this is the first national urban park and that is a great thing.

I heard the minister commenting earlier. I stand to be corrected, but I believe the minister said that it is the first national park that people can get to by public transportation, and that is a positive thing. That is a good thing that should happen. Therefore, we can appreciate those mixed emotions I had when I was coming in because what was really motivating me was to talk about why the Liberals have broken their promises on Bill C-51. It is good that we are doing Bill C-18 on the park. That is a great thing, but what is of much urgency right now to people and a top-of-mind issue is what seems again to be more broken promises around Bill C-51. For all the Liberals' talk during the campaign about how important it was and how they were going to act on it because it is about the security of Canadians and their privacy and their rights, and they were going to get right on it, here we are well over time and still nothing. On Bill C-18—

• (1215)

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree: Madam Speaker, on a point of order, I appreciate my friend's needing some time to discuss the issues that are relevant to him and there are appropriate venues and timelines in this House to do that. This is a very important issue for my riding. I represent the riding of Scarborough—Rouge Park. It is a very important bill and—

• (1220)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. I ask the member to hold on for a second here. Thank you very much. I do want to remind the member to ensure that his thoughts and his speech are very related to the subject at hand. There is some latitude. However, we also have to make sure that it is relevant to the issue that is before the House. Therefore, I would ask the member for Hamilton Centre to ensure that he gets back on point.

Government Orders

Mr. David Christopherson: Madam Speaker, of course I will follow your ruling. I would say this to my friend. One thing he should be careful of is to not challenge the Speaker. When the Speaker asks him to sit down, he should sit down. He should trust me that this a good piece of advice.

I understand the concern. The hon. member said it was trivializing. I do not think that is fair at all. I could make an argument about how if this was a proportional representation House we might be able to deal with Bill C-18, and a whole lot of other things, more co-operatively, and move them through more quickly. That would be the opposite of trivializing. It would make it a greater priority, and allow it to get through even more quickly. Therefore, there are linkages to all of these things.

I can understand that maybe the member has nothing better to do than to make sure that nobody steps one millimetre outside the boundaries of debate, and that is fine, if that is what the member wants to do with his time. However, I would rather focus on the issues of the day, and the matter in front of us is Bill C-18.

One of the interesting things about Bill C-18 is that there seems to be some debate and concern with respect to the idea of ecological integrity. I am not an expert, but there are those who are suggesting that is a problem. However, when I listened to the experts, who know this issue, they said that this is key.

I want to read a quote from Jim Robb, the General Manager of the Friends of the Rouge Watershed, who stated on December 8, 2016:

Ecological integrity, is it justified? Of course it is. This is one of the most biodiverse areas in all of Canada. Yes, there will be challenges. Yes, this is an aspirational goal, but we can do it...The diversity is so great here and the potential is so high that we should choose no other goal than what has been put forward before you.

During the questions and answers, if there is a focus on that, I would be especially interested to hear from those who have a concern about it. Again, I am not an expert, but from a layperson's point of view it looks like this is a good thing, and one we should be most pleased about.

As I wind up my remarks, it is also worth mentioning that the previous government tried to play a bit of a shell game by announcing it was going to create this park but then did not provide the protections that were necessary, not even to the point where the provincial government would be willing to turn over its lands to the federal government and put it under the umbrella of the national parks system. Therefore, the primary thing this bill does is to bring into force a number of those protections and supports for the park that would then meet the minimum standard of the provincial government in Queen's Park, so that it would feel comfortable knowing that the standards it had in place would at least be met or exceeded. To that degree, we do acknowledge that this is a good bill. We supported it at second reading and took it to committee. We did not get everything we wanted. However, on balance, we are prepared to support this bill. We think it is a good thing.

It is good to point out that the last government played a bit of a shell game. We saw a lot of that, where it would announce things, but if we had a look underneath the shell, there was no pea there, and if we looked under all three shells, there was still no pea there. The former government tried to make it look like it was a tree hugger,

when in reality all it was doing was building a cardboard cut-out of a park, like on a Hollywood movie set, rather than implementing the full-blown measures that needed to be taken, which we find in Bill C-18. That is why I am willing to support it.

I certainly hope that no one thinks that this has been trivialized. I still would have liked an opportunity to talk about some of the other issues, but I will look for those opportunities when they are in order so that I am consistent with the rules.

However, at the end of the day, let me say that this bill is completing a job that the previous government started, and we are pleased to be here to support it, and see the proper thing done with this park and with this bill.

• (1225)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, this is a good-news bill for those who want to be engaged in Canada's national parks. Millions of Canadians will be able to benefit. I want to applaud all those involved in this.

There is a great sense of Canadian pride in our national parks and historic sites. I think of Birds Hill Provincial Park, national parks in the province of Manitoba, and even The Forks, in downtown Winnipeg.

Millions of Canadians participate in our parks and historic sites every year. This bill will provide so much for future generations and people today in Toronto and the surrounding area. They will have access to a wonderful, beautiful national park.

To that end, would my colleague across the way not agree that Canadians as a whole benefit when we have legislation of this nature, which reinforces the importance of our national parks and historic sites?

Mr. David Christopherson: Madam Speaker, we have to mark this moment down, because I am going to agree with the hon. member. I think this is a good day, a good bill, and an important issue. We are pleased to support it.

Again, we would hope that this is only the beginning, that it is not meant to be just a storefront issue, and that there will be a lot more attention in this area. We have high hopes. To answer the member's question, yes, we should all be proud of the fact that we have this new designation.

Let me just say, notwithstanding the shots I took at the previous government, that virtually every party that has been in power has contributed somewhat to the national park system. I know that there are Conservative leaders who have made their mark in this area. The Liberals have done it in the past and are doing it again today.

To the hon. member, yes, the government is doing a good thing with this bill. It makes Canada a better place, and we in the third party are pleased to support it.

Government Orders

Mr. Kerry Diotte (Edmonton Griesbach, CPC): Madam Speaker, I could not let that shot go without giving a return shot to the member for Hamilton Centre. He talked about our previous government winning a majority with 39% and that somehow that was not fair. I wonder whether he thinks it is fair that the very regressive tax-and-spend NDP government in Alberta has 54 or 55 of 87 seats with about 41% of the vote.

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree: Madam Speaker, on a point of order, just to repeat what I said earlier, relevance is very important in this debate. This debate is about Rouge National Park and the amendments to the National Parks Act. It is about Bill C-18, not other issues that are not relevant to this discussion.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I appreciate the point of order on relevancy. The question had nothing to do with the bill itself. Therefore, I will go to a different question and comment.

The hon. member for Scarborough—Rouge Park.

• (1230)

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Scarborough—Rouge Park, Lib.): Madam Speaker, this is a very important bill for my community, the people of Scarborough—Rouge Park, the people of Scarborough, and the people of Canada as well. I want my friends opposite to take this discussion seriously and focus on the debate. There are a number of amendments to other legislation as well, which is also important to different communities and to Canadians as a whole. If there is other discussion, I am sure it can be taken up in some other forum at some other time.

My question is about ecological integrity. How important is it for new parks that come in under the National Parks Act to adhere to ecological integrity, which will ensure that future generations will be able to enjoy and benefit from the immense parks we have in Canada, and not just the traditional ones but the new and emerging parks, like urban parks?

Mr. David Christopherson: Madam Speaker, I can understand why the hon. member is proud. He should be proud. It is quite an achievement for him that he is able to deliver this.

He asked about ecological integrity. I have to get out of the habit of giving the Liberals credit, but I do give the provincial government kudos too for refusing to water down the importance of ecological integrity in terms of the protections that would be brought to this new national park. As I understand it, the previous federal government did not bring forward the kinds of protections that would meet or exceed those in place under the provincial government. The provincial government was not about to let go of its area of responsibility until it knew that it was going to go somewhere where it would be protected.

The province played its role, and the House is now playing its role in bringing this about. I congratulate the hon. member on getting this up so early in its government mandate. There is a lot of householder material here for bringing and bragging.

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Madam Speaker, once again, I am going to speak a little about my own riding. As I have been saying recently, I like to call my riding the promised land. This bill is very fitting in that it covers a piece of promised land up in northern Alberta in Wood Buffalo National

Park. I wonder if my colleague has some comments about that aspect of the bill.

I heard a lot about the Rouge park, ecological integrity, and things like that, but I wonder if he has any words for the chief of the Little Red River Cree Nation, Gus Loonskin, and the future as we see it from here.

Mr. David Christopherson: Madam Speaker, I confess, I am not 100% sure what the question is. I think he was asking about how much support and enthusiasm we might give to parks in the member's area, or ecological issues—

Mr. Arnold Viersen: It is part of the bill.

Mr. David Christopherson: It is part of the bill. I know. What I am saying is that I think that is an important part of it too.

It is a motherhood bill. Did you want to fight about it? We can have a fight, but I do not know what we would fight about. We all—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order, please. I would remind the member for Hamilton Centre that he is to address the questions to the Chair and not to individual members.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques.

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Hamilton Centre for a very relevant intervention. When we debated the bill in the last Parliament, when it was Bill C-40, we actually opposed the bill. I am not sure, but I think the Liberals might have opposed it as well. It was because there were insufficient protections, such as the ecological integrity aspect, in the bill.

The member actually made relevant comments in terms of the composition of the House. We know that we are under first past the post. The Conservatives did not need to come to the NDP or to the Liberals to actually have it passed. It passed, even though all the other parties were opposed to it.

Now we have a bill, which I believe is a demonstration that consensus can actually take place in the House among the various parties on a specific issue. The bill was drafted in a way that we could support it, but with a proportional system, it would be more mandatory to actually get that type of consensus for a bill to pass. I want to give the member a chance to make that correlation between the voting system we are under and the type of legislation, such as this, that can get a large consensus in the House.

• (1235)

Mr. David Christopherson: Madam Speaker, that is an excellent point, because it suggests that in the last Parliament, had the previous government wanted to get its bill through, it would have likely had to get support from one of the other parties, and the condition for that support might have been the ecological integrity issue, which is germane and the central focal point of Bill C-18.

Government Orders

Therefore, it is an important issue to keep in mind, especially when we know from polling that Canadians really want us to try to work together as much as we can. However, this system does not lend itself to that. If we had proportional representation, it would actually force us to find ways to work together, as they do in most of the other modern democracies around the world. Most of them have gone to PR. If we look at New Zealand, there is a reason it went there. They reviewed it after a few elections and stayed with it.

It really is that fundamental issue, as my friend has mentioned, of having to put a little bit of water in one's wine to get support from others. At the end of the day, it could have given us this park under one bill and saved us a whole lot of time and been far more efficient, and the people in the Toronto area could have enjoyed this park much sooner.

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Scarborough—Rouge Park, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am very proud to stand here today, once again, in support of Bill C-18, an act to amend the Rouge National Urban Park Act, the Parks Canada Agency Act and the Canada National Parks Act.

I want to thank my colleagues for their interventions this afternoon, and certainly on previous occasions in the House, and the committee for its hard work, which has brought the bill forward to us in such a short period of time.

I will focus my discussion today primarily on the Rouge National Urban Park, as it is very relevant to the riding I represent, the riding of Scarborough—Rouge Park.

Parks Canada has decades of experience in applying ecological integrity in a variety of protected areas, each with its own unique needs and circumstances. In considering the addition of ecological integrity to the Rouge National Urban Park, I am confident that Parks Canada can and will bring that experience to bear in the Rouge while respecting the park's urban setting and its reason for establishment.

Allow me to begin by quoting the amendment proposed for section 2 of the Rouge National Urban Park Act:

ecological integrity means, with respect to the Park, a condition that is determined to be characteristic of its natural region and likely to persist, including abiotic components and the composition and abundance of native species in biological communities, rates of change and supporting processes.

As this definition makes clear, ecological integrity involves a holistic and comprehensive view. By viewing ecological integrity as a continuum and adopting an approach similar to that taken by partners in the greater Toronto area, Parks Canada will be able to apply ecological integrity across the park's diverse landscapes to achieve the best ecological outcome possible while ensuring an integrated approach to the conservation of nature, culture, and agriculture.

Essentially, Bill C-18 would require Parks Canada to manage Rouge National Urban Park in a way that appropriately considers living things, meaning the urban park's flora and fauna, along with inanimate things, like land and water. In addition, its management would also have to consider the dynamics of ecosystems, how they change, and what drives their evolution.

Placing the first priority on ecological integrity in this way is not new, of course. Parks Canada is already required by law to place the first priority on ecological integrity in the management of traditional national parks. However, Rouge National Urban Park represents an entirely new concept for Canada: creating, protecting, and presenting natural, cultural, and agricultural heritage in a park that lies next to Canada's largest city and metropolitan area.

Incidentally, the park is accessible to seven million people within a one-hour drive, and as indicated by our minister, it is also accessible by public transport.

Rouge National Urban Park represents a bold step forward for Canada. To get a better sense of this, one need only look back to the history of protected areas in this country.

In 1885, the Government of Canada demonstrated great vision by creating and protecting our country's first national park, today known as Banff National Park. The decision to create one of the world's first national parks was a bold and progressive move by a young country. The idea that elements of our natural and cultural heritage are inherently valuable and worthy of protection for future generations remains just as powerful today, especially as we celebrate our 150th birthday.

Just as significant, however, was Canada's decision to make national parks accessible to all Canadians, and not just a privileged few. This policy remains relevant today, albeit challenging, because of the inherent challenge in preserving elements of a dynamic ecosystem and making those elements accessible to visitors.

In 1911, Canada created an organization originally known as the Dominion Parks Branch, now the Parks Canada Agency, to handle this work and to develop the expertise needed to do it well.

● (1240)

Over the years, Canada created more national parks and developed world-leading expertise in how to plan, manage, and program them. Today, Parks Canada actually protects wildlife in places that attract hundreds of thousands of visitors each year. This work requires innovation, scientific research, and a great deal of field work. It also requires making tough decisions. Managing the relationships between species and deciding when to intervene and when not to intervene is a balancing act.

Another important milestone that informed the creation and management of Rouge National Urban Park was the establishment of the national historic sites program more than a century ago. With this program, Canada began to protect and present elements of our history. At the time, it was also seen as a bold step forward.

Today, Parks Canada manages 171 national historic sites, such as former forts, towns, and fur trading posts. By preserving and presenting elements of our history, Parks Canada helps Canadians and visitors to this country appreciate our rich and unique heritage. Canada's decision to establish a national marine conservation area in 1987 further enabled the protection and promotion of Canada's natural and cultural heritage, and was another bold decision that demonstrated international conservation, vision, and leadership.

Government Orders

Over time, ecological values have increasingly merged with heritage values. This is particularly true with Rouge National Urban Park, a place that includes some of the oldest indigenous sites in Canada along with first-class agricultural land that has been farmed continuously for centuries. It is also home to rare Carolinian forest, wetlands and meadows that provide habitat to over 1,700 species of plants and animals, some of them at risk of extinction.

With each new milestone, Parks Canada has taken on greater responsibility and acquired new levels of expertise and experience. It has forged valuable partnerships with external organizations, including indigenous partners, community groups, volunteers, and local residents.

One of the strongest examples of successful partnership is Gwaii Haanas National Park Reserve and Haida Heritage Site, located on the edge of the Pacific continental shelf on Canada's west coast. The lands and waters of Gwaii Haanas have long been celebrated for their stunning beauty and remarkable biodiversity. From its temperate rainforest to the surrounding marine waters, the archipelago is a place of great cultural and ecological significance, and a sacred place where the land, sea, and people have always been inseparable. In 2010, the Gwaii Haanas became the first site in the world to be protected from mountain summit to deep ocean floor. The Archipelago Management Board, with representatives of the Council of the Haida Nation and the Government of Canada, manages the site co-operatively.

When Gwaii Haanas was established, Guujaaw, president of the Haida Nation, described it this way: "This is a changing of the tides, as we come to appreciate the fragile and precious nature of our marine areas, we will begin to give the necessary attention to look after and restore our oceans."

The historical context I have described is crucial in making a reasoned decision about Bill C-18. The management of national parks, national historic sites, and national marine conservation areas continues to evolve, and yet a management approach based on ecological integrity continues to be in the best interests of Canadians and our collective heritage. Parks Canada is a world leader in applying this approach.

A few years ago, the World Wildlife Fund International awarded Parks Canada the Gift to the Earth Award, the organization's top accolade for conservation work of outstanding global merit. The award recognizes the inspiring leadership and conservation achievement that contributes to protecting the living planet.

Bill C-18 would give Parks Canada the authority to follow the same management approach that it uses in traditional national parks in Rouge National Urban Park, to make them accessible and memorable for visitors while protecting their integrity. Management decision-making will take ecological integrity as the first priority while also considering the reason for the park's establishment. The authority is granted under the act in support of the park's objectives. To describe it another way, ecological integrity is the goal of Parks Canada; managing visitor experience, educational programming, and ecosystems is the process used to get there.

● (1245)

Canada remains at the forefront of efforts to conserve elements of its heritage, flora, fauna, and landscapes, placing the first priority on ecological integrity in the management of the Rouge National Urban Park to ensure that this country furthers its international leadership in conservation. Working in collaboration with environment groups, farmers, indigenous peoples, and other stakeholders, I am confident that Parks Canada will work to achieve ecological gains and conserve cultural and agricultural resources throughout the park.

I want to take a few minutes to thank and acknowledge a number of different individuals and organizations that have helped us get to this point today. I want to start with the many levels and leaders from different governments for their great work, including the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, as well as the provincial ministers who have been involved in this, including the Hon. Brad Duguid.

I want to also acknowledge Lois James, long considered to be the mother of the Rouge, and who, for over 50 years, has advocated for this vision. In 2003, she was acknowledged with the Order of Canada for her great service to this country.

The Rouge remains the life work of many different individuals, and I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge the work of the Friends of the Rouge, which was mentioned earlier by my colleagues, including Jim Robb, Kevin O'Connor, and Gloria Reszler, for their continued advocacy, including as late as half an hour ago. I appreciate their interventions and continuous work on this.

Certainly CPAWS and Janet Sumner have taken great leadership in bringing this together, along with her other environmental colleagues. It is important for them to get together and be part of coming up with the amendment, as well as farmers. The area has been farmed for over 200 years. A number of family farms have existed in the area for over two centuries and have played a very important role at the table in coming to a consensus on Bill C-18.

Many local organizations have a stake in this, including the West Rouge Community Organization, the Centennial Community & Recreation Association, and the Highland Creek Community Association, which are all part of my riding and have been impacted by the Rouge Park. There were a number of other organizations that preceded me, including the save the Rouge coalition. It was set up 30 years ago and started its great work in achieving this dream.

The previous member spoke about how he could make a little park in Hamilton a national park with a tick mark. Unfortunately, it is not that simple. It is because all of these people have worked so hard, under tremendous odds, to get to this point. To put it in perspective, the provincial land alone that we are talking about is about 25 square kilometres. Once completed, the entire park will be about 79 square kilometres. The cost of a bungalow in parts of this riding is in excess of \$1 million. The enormous push-back from developers and other interested parties in stopping this over the last three decades was immense, and these people withstood it. I am humbled by the great work they have done over this time.

Government Orders

I wish to acknowledge my good friend and colleague, the member for Scarborough—Guildwood, who used to represent part of the park and has been a great advocate of this, as well as the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and her team, who worked so hard in such a short period of time to make sure that this becomes a Canada 150 gift for the people of Scarborough, Toronto, and Canada. I want to thank her and her team for their enormous work. Finally, I want to thank all of my colleagues here who have spoken and continue to express concerns and support for this.

● (1250)

This should be an issue that is across party lines. We are solidifying a vision of the community that has come together for the last 30 or 40 years in the way that we are preserving for future generations. We will look back on it in a number of years with great pride to see what a great Canada 150 gift we have given to our country.

With that, I want to acknowledge that we are on the traditional lands of the Algonquin people. I appreciate the efforts of all my colleagues this afternoon.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Madam Speaker, it must be great for the member opposite to have such a wonderful park in his riding.

I want to clarify this for the member for Hamilton Centre. It is my understanding that the park is already open, so we are not talking about a delay in the project. We are talking about the final transfer of a parcel of land from the Wynne Liberals for the low, low price of \$100 million.

However, on the subject of ecological integrity, I want the government to be on record on two points that I am concerned about. “Ecological integrity” sounds like a planet-friend term, but my understanding is that if fire or flood would break out in the park, the government would intervene, which is not what is typically understood in ecological integrity. I also understand that farmers will continue to be able to farm as they are farming now, which is also not guaranteed by that term. I would like to have the government put that on record.

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree: Madam Speaker, with respect to the issue of ecological integrity, it is front and centre, and I re-emphasized that in my speech. With regard to all national parks in Canada, Parks Canada has a mandate to ensure ecological integrity as front and centre of their management plans. There is no difference here. The only difference is that we are talking about an area that is somewhat developed around it. I live very close to the park, and there is a hospital, a highway going through it, railway lines, and there are a number of different communities that surround it. It is very similar to Banff National Park; there is an element of development there.

What is important is that when we look at the future, ecological integrity is front and centre. That means that if there is a fire, we will have to send a fire department to put out the fire, as our colleague from Barrie—Innisfil said earlier. Those are things that are part of the reality of the area we are talking about. We are talking about an area that, from a real-estate dollar perspective, is one of the highest areas in the country. It will definitely do those things, but at the same time have ecological integrity front and centre.

● (1255)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Karine Trudel (Jonquière, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

In my riding, Jonquière, we are privileged to have the Saguenay Fjord provincial park. We can travel for miles on the Saguenay River. On land, we can take part in all kinds of summer and winter sports. That means a lot to me.

We applied for UNESCO designation for the park. If it is designated, that will be a boon to tourism in the Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean region. I am hoping for good news about this designation.

I have a question for my colleague that is very important to me: will they keep their promise?

We are talking about the Rouge national park right now, but this is just as important for forested environments as aquatic ones. We need strict and meaningful guidelines.

[*English*]

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree: Madam Speaker, I congratulate my friend on hopefully achieving the UNESCO designation as a world heritage site.

With respect to the Rouge, it is pretty clear that ecological integrity is essential. That is what this bill envisions. This is a commitment that we made, and it is a commitment that we are delivering on.

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Madam Speaker, I appreciate this bill because it gives me another opportunity to speak about my riding, as I like to call it, in the promised land.

Seeing as the hon. member seems to have had quite a hand in drafting this bill, I am wondering about the process that people went through in order to develop taking a little piece out of the national park in northern Alberta and handing it over to the local first nation. I wonder if the member could outline a bit of the process that went into that.

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree: Madam Speaker, certainly, promised land goes way beyond just northern Alberta. I think it goes from coast to coast to coast in the country that we live in. Certainly we have more promised lands in our ridings, perhaps, than others.

My advocacy has been limited to the Rouge Park, admittedly, because of the area I represent and my particular interest in showing that this becomes a Canada 150 outcome for us.

With respect to the amendments that would affect my friend's riding of Peace River—Westlock, it really is an issue of reconciliation. It is to ensure that we transfer over lands that will enhance the first nations community in his riding and certainly to support the overall process of doing justice by our indigenous peoples.

Government Orders

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, if I may I would like to commend the member for Scarborough—Rouge Park for the fantastic work that he has done, in terms of that advocacy. I could not help but notice, whether it was in second reading, committee stage, or third reading, the member's engagement on this particular piece of legislation. The member is very passionate about not only the bill but, more specifically, the park itself. I want to congratulate him on doing such a fantastic job in being a strong advocate.

When I think of our national parks, and I made reference to this earlier, there is a great sense of pride in our national parks and historical sites. Maybe I could just ask the member if he could provide some thoughts in terms of how it is that our parks and historical sites are part of our heritage. We should go out and promote and encourage the public to get engaged in our parks. Whether it is an urban park or a rural park, all parks are good parks.

• (1300)

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree: Madam Speaker, I thank my friend for his kind words and comments.

Rouge Park is very personal to the people who live around the park and to the people of Scarborough. Many of us have spent great moments there. My daughters, for example, have planted trees. Last fall, during Thanksgiving, we went out for a hike. I know my friend, the member for Scarborough—Guildwood, said the same about his family during Thanksgiving. It is a very personal thing. There are not many people who can say they had a role in shaping a national park. A lot of kids who live not only in my riding but also around Scarborough can say that. It is very personal, and I think that impact may be coming out in the way we are presenting the need for this legislation. It does really animate a great deal of pride in us all, not just as representatives of Scarborough Rouge Park, but as colleagues here who are looking at Canada's 150 and saying, "What a gift to Canada we can give on its 150th birthday."

Mr. Arnold Viersen: Madam Speaker, once again, I would like to thank my colleague from Scarborough—Rouge Park. He and I have met on several occasions. We sit on committee together, we seem to run into each other at events, and we seem to have a lot of similar interests around the world. It is interesting that parts of our ridings end up on a similar bill, even though there is a vast 3,000 kilometres between our ridings.

My question for my hon. colleague is, why did this little piece of the bill never end up in the name of the bill?

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree: Madam Speaker, yes, we do end up spending a lot of time together on our committee work.

What is important is the content of the bill. The content of Bill C-18 covers a range of issues, including what is relevant in my riding, which is ensuring ecological integrity and amendments to the Rouge National Park Act, as well as important initiatives that will ensure that we are moving toward a path of reconciliation in my friend's riding of Peace River—Westlock. I think that is what is important. I do not think titles are essential. I think what is important is the outcome, and I think we have the desired outcome we want. As Canadians and as parliamentarians, sitting on this 150th birthday year, this is a great way to celebrate our progress.

Mr. Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC): Madam Speaker, I rise today to speak to Bill C-18, an act to amend the Rouge National Urban Park Act, the Parks Canada Agency Act and the Canada National Parks Act.

I would like to begin by thanking the member for Thornhill for his work on this very important file.

I represent a riding that is rich in its people and nature. While I may not have any federal parks in my area, Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock is full of smaller provincial parks, as well as many municipal parks, and various rest stops, places like Algonquin Park, the Haliburton Forest and Wild Life Reserve, Emily and Balsam Lake provincial parks, just to name a few.

We are also home to the Trent-Severn Waterway, a Parks Canada-managed series of historic locks and canals that run 386 kilometres from Lake Huron on Port Severn to Lake Ontario in Trenton. To this day, the Trent-Severn Waterway continues to create unique experiences. It drives year-round tourism to my riding. Villages such as Bobcaygeon and Fenelon Falls thrive because of it. Many in this place who are from Ontario may have heard of Bigley Shoes and Clothing in Bobcaygeon. It is where many credit cards get fired up because they have some pretty unique stuff, and people travel from all over just to visit that place. It is pretty amazing. If they have not, I encourage everyone in this place, and in Canada, to come to my riding and see the beauty that is there.

We also have people from the greater Toronto area and beyond flocking to the Haliburton highlands in Kawartha Lakes to enjoy the beautiful lakes and rivers, not just in the summer when the weather is gorgeous and people are able to get on their boat or just float in their canoe but also for snowmobiling and many other outdoor activities in the winter. We have a bit of everything. I know my friend from Peace River—Westlock has said that his is paradise. I disagree with my friend.

Mr. Arnold Viersen: The promised land.

Mr. Jamie Schmale: The promised land. I am sorry. I would say that Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock is where it is going to be, and I am sure my—

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Winnipeg North.

Mr. Jamie Schmale: And Winnipeg North. Yes, Winnipeg North, I am sure, is beautiful as well.

I am sure my friend from Parry Sound—Muskoka would tend to disagree with me as well. However, I will see him this weekend at the Dorset Snowball Winter Carnival, and he and I will continue that debate for sure.

However, when the Trent-Severn Waterway's locks and canals open each spring, it links a passageway so magnificent it has been named one of the finest interconnected systems of navigation in the world, and those who visit reminisce long after leaving.

Government Orders

The previous Conservative government invested a quarter of a billion dollars for greatly needed infrastructure improvements along the Trent-Severn Waterway. That was then followed by another \$260 million from the current government to meet the demand for improvements along the system, and I thank it for continuing to recognize that need.

Therefore, when I say that I understand the importance of securing these natural treasures, I speak from experience, because my riding does have the Trent-Severn Waterway national historic site.

I am happy to see this bill come before Parliament. It will continue to build on the strong record of our previous Conservative government to ensure the protection and long-term availability of these pieces of our valuable heritage. In barely 10 years, we as a Parliament increased protected areas by almost 60%, with new national parks, new national park reserves, and marine-protected areas, including additions such as Sable Island.

We also introduced the Lake Simcoe clean-up fund, championed by the member for York—Simcoe, which has greatly benefited Brock township in my riding with improved shorelines and cleaner water.

Before we can get into the details of the discussion over this piece of legislation, let us first take a look at the park itself. The Rouge National Urban Park was created on May 15, 2015, when our previous Conservative government passed Bill C-40, an act respecting the Rouge National Urban Park. Bill C-40 built on the 2011 Speech from the Throne, when our government committed \$143.7 million over 10 years to the creation of the Rouge National Urban Park.

The Rouge Valley stretches from the shores of Lake Ontario to the Oak Ridges moraine, more than 20 kilometres to the north. Due to this geographic location, it has been the subject of a significant amount of human interaction and activity. The area is home to not only some first nations sites but also a landfill and a wrecker's yard. It is surrounded by urban development, not to mention the hydro lines, railway lines, highways, and smaller roads. As we all know in this House, urban developments like that which I have just mentioned come at a price to our natural environment. Therefore, the need for rapid action on this file is so important, which brings me to my next point, and probably the most troubling aspect of this bill.

• (1305)

Bill C-18 can be used as political cover by the federal Liberals for their provincial colleagues. The Ontario Liberal government did not transfer the provincial portion of the lands before the 2015 election.

I am no fan of the Wynne government to begin with. Across Ontario, families are having to decide whether to heat their homes or pay their rent. Communities are facing extremely high hydro prices. I mentioned today the Millbrook arena in Cavan Monaghan. It had a hydro bill in December of over \$11,000. If we compared that to a community in New York State, the bill was just over \$5,000. We all know this gets picked up by one person, and that one person is the taxpayer.

The government is continually taking money out of the pockets of taxpayers who are having to do more with less. I hear this every day from my constituents. These tax increases brought on by both the

provincial Liberal government, in Ontario and federally, are furthering the struggle of many of these families.

Unfortunately, Bill C-18 does not include the transfer of parklands that were expropriated by the federal Liberals in the early 1970s for an airport that has yet to be built. It also neglects to include the additional \$26.8 million over six years and \$3 million annually thereafter in funding that our Conservative government previously announced.

Another of the most concerning parts of the legislation is the inclusion of the term “ecological integrity”. I am not a professional environmentalist or conservationist, but if Parks Canada disagreed with the ecological integrity designation as an unrealistic approach to an urban park, I see no valid reason why it should be included in this legislation.

The environmentalist definition of ecological integrity would imply letting forest fires burn, floods to run their course, and wildlife survival without human intervention. This aspect of letting fires burn and floods run their course is an important part of environmental sustainability, and is very important for more remote and under-developed pieces of land.

This is quite the opposite of Rouge. It sits along residential neighbourhoods. It has powerlines, highways, and a pipeline across various parts of it. A working farmland, a former landfill dump site, and an old auto wrecker's yard are all within its borders. If there were a forest fire or a flood would Parks Canada be required to let that happen? We are talking about letting a forest fire burn in the GTA. I do not think we can just let a fire or flood happen in an urban area. I hope members opposite see this as an issue and try to make corrections.

As all members in this place know, it is becoming more and more difficult to find and protect fertile farmland, and in my riding, some of the most fertile land. In some areas, farmland is being used for wind turbines and solar farms, thanks to premier Kathleen Wynne. All of us in Ontario know fondly of that. Her disastrous energy policy has meant some of the highest energy prices in North America for the people in businesses in Ontario being forced to pay these rates.

In my riding, these policies have pitted neighbour against neighbour and friend against friend as wind turbines were put up in Manvers township, despite widespread disapproval from the local council and its citizens living in that area. Therefore, I find it very concerning that the government has decided on including ecological integrity, which puts these farmers at risk, even after Parks Canada recommended against it.

Ecological integrity as the primary guiding principle for the park is an unrealistic measure for an urban park that was established to introduce urban Canadians to nature, local culture, and agriculture, as a first of its kind in Canada.

Government Orders

I would like to quote my hon. colleague, the member for Thornhill, who said:

...it is both a delight and a disappointment to join this debate on Bill C-18 today. It is a delight because it offers a wonderful opportunity to celebrate again the magnificent accomplishments of Parks Canada and the agency's pioneering protection and innovative conservation of precious Canadian spaces for the past 125 years. It is a disappointment because the amending legislation before us contains a sad and unacceptable compromise of Parks Canada's conservation principles and practices, a compromise clearly intended by the Liberal government to provide federal political cover for the petty partisan obstructionism of the Ontario Liberal government in its refusal to transfer provincial lands to our Conservative government to complete the magnificent new Rouge National Urban Park.

● (1310)

My colleague's comments express my very similar views on this issue. Rouge National Urban Park is a first of its kind for Canada. It gives Canadians in Toronto in the GTA a chance to experience what we in the Kawarthas, Haliburton Highlands, and Brock township have the opportunity to experience each and every day. It is therefore crucial that we ensure legislation is properly drafted to secure this park for many generations to come.

I would also like to take a moment to thank all the employees of Parks Canada for the hard work they do each and every day, protecting our natural heritage and ensuring future generations will be able to enjoy it, just as we have.

I do have a remarkable working relationship with the Parks Canada team in my riding of Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock. We have a great team run out of the Parks Canada office, running the Trent-Severn Waterway in Peterborough. We have amazing canals and locks, as I mentioned before, but I do want to make a quick promotion of my riding because there is a pretty neat experience coming up in 2017.

To celebrate Canada's 150th anniversary, there is now free lockage along Parks Canada's historic canals. I invite everyone to go along the Trent-Severn Waterway, visit the communities there, check out the stores, the unique cafes and restaurants and all the amazing things we have. Again, lockage is free for boaters this year to celebrate Canada's 150th birthday.

I should point out the hours of operation because those are very important. It opens May 19 to June 25, Monday to Thursday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., and Friday to Saturday, Victoria Day as well, 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. It is also open June 26 to September 4, Monday to Thursday, 9 a.m. to 6 p.m., Friday to Sunday, and Canada Day, the August civil holiday and Labour Day, 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. It is open until Thanksgiving. I encourage everyone to drop by my riding, because it is a place that will create memories for years to come.

Because I am sure many people are very interested, I will give a bit of the history of the Trent-Severn Waterway as we are talking about Parks Canada, national parks, and the national historic site.

The canal was originally surveyed as a military route, but the first lock was actually built in 1833 as a commercial venture. This connected a number of lakes and rivers near the centre of the waterway, opening a large area to navigation by steamship. Construction of three additional locks by the government was under way when the Upper Canada Rebellion of 1837 broke out. This led the government to re-examine the project, including that the route

would have too many locks to allow rapid movement for military purposes. The government decided that the locks under construction would be completed, but the rest could be turned into timber slides.

This left the completed inland section with no outlet, which business interests addressed by connecting the route with a number of new toll roads, plank roads and later, railways.

Sir John A. Macdonald's government restarted construction in the 1880s, adding a number of new locks and pushing the route westward before construction once again halted. For many years after this, the canal was used as a political tool to garner votes from seats along that route. With little actual construction being carried out, it was not until just before the turn of the century that a number of political changes built up incredible pressure on Wilfrid Laurier's Liberals, and serious work started once again.

The canal reached both Peterborough and Lake Simcoe in 1904. The final sections were greatly delayed, though, by World War I, with a link to Trenton opening in 1918, followed by the link to Georgian Bay in early 1920. The first complete transit of the waterway was made in July of that year.

By the time the route was completed, its use as a commercial waterway was over, ships plying the Great Lakes had grown much larger than the canal could handle and the railways that original connected the canal now took most of that freight.

● (1315)

The introduction of motorboats led to the Trent-Severn's emergence as a pleasure boating route, and today, as I mentioned, it is one of Ontario's major tourist attractions. Its passage through cottage country, both in Muskoka in the west and the Kawarthas in the east, makes it perfectly positioned as a cruising route. It draws thousands of visitors each year. It also forms a major portion of the Great Loop. Today it is officially recognized, as I mentioned, as a national historic site of Canada. Its park is operated by Parks Canada, and it is open for navigation from May until October, while its shore, lands, and bridges are open all year round.

Government Orders

I should mention that along that Trent-Severn Waterway, there are a number of campsites, RV dealers, and privately and publicly run campsites. We all know that small businesses are the backbone of the Canadian economy. They provide jobs and opportunities from coast to coast to coast. What members may not know is that family campground owners have been receiving collection notices from the Canada Revenue Agency stating that they are no longer considered small businesses and now owe the federal government more tax. We all know that this tax hike puts the entire industry at risk. These campgrounds cannot afford more taxes and will be forced to lay off staff or even close.

Madam Speaker, it is for this reason, if it is okay with you, I would like to mention that I am sponsoring petition e-770, which asks the Minister of Finance to ensure that family run campgrounds are granted active business status, similar to other tourism operations, such as hotels, motels, and marinas, so that campground operators are able to claim the small business tax deduction. As we all know, in Ontario, when we look at the new tax rules, some are paying 50% or more in tax. We all know, with the Trent-Severn Waterway being a major tourist destination, that if these campgrounds close, not only will a large number of people be unemployed but there will also be spinoff effects for supermarkets and small stores. The local economy in my area relies heavily on these.

I should point out that these family-run campgrounds are not frequented by multi-millionaires. These are working people, working hard and looking to get away and put their feet up for maybe a week or two on their holidays and on the weekend. If the campground owners are to keep going, they will have to raise that money somehow, so they are going to have to pass on the fees. The other tax increases I mentioned before are more and more out of these people's pockets. How are these middle-class people supposed to continue to pay these fees if they are continually having less and less in their pockets?

This all comes around. This is what we have been talking about. There is more and more tax, and less and less to get by. We all know it is not the government that suffers. It is the people. We need to ensure that more money is in the—

● (1320)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I want to remind the member to bring it back to the discussion of the day, which is the Rouge park.

Mr. Jamie Schmale: Madam Speaker, I was comparing the Trent-Severn Waterway to this park. I think it is beneficial to all that we have a strong park system, that we have green spaces for people to enjoy, especially in urban settings, and that we are able to enjoy nature and all of its benefits.

Those in urban settings, like the greater Toronto area, have access to this national park in the Scarborough area. We look forward to working with the government on some possible improvements and look forward to working with the hon. member for Scarborough—Rouge Park on this.

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Scarborough—Rouge Park, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I was able to get to my friend's riding several weeks ago. We were not quite in a park setting. We visited a correctional

institution in his riding, and I want to thank my friend for his hospitality and his friendship.

He has such a beautiful riding, beautiful landscape, beautiful parts of Kawartha Lakes. I have spent many summers there. I want to get a sense of how that impacts the local community, how having such green space and such open areas affects his community and the quality of life and what the people of the GTA can expect by having the Rouge National Urban Park within one hour for seven million Canadians.

Mr. Jamie Schmale: Madam Speaker, yes, the member for Scarborough—Rouge Park was able to come to my riding a few weeks ago. We had great co-operation on a file we can make some movement on and help some people in my area and his area. I look forward to working with him on that file. I do appreciate his friendship on that. The benefits that I am sure the member will see in his area and beyond his borders, and that we see here, are a great economic driver.

Parks Canada operates the Trent-Severn Waterway, as I mentioned, and in my area agriculture, first, and tourism, second, are what drive the economy. Tourism and its spinoff jobs are able to provide employment for people, not only through the summer but also through the winter because of what the Trent-Severn Waterway provides in parks and trails and that sort of thing. We all know that in rural areas that are somewhat remote it could mean that the winters are long in some places. That is why we need to expand our boundaries and include winter activities to ensure that the economic activity continues and jobs are created and sustained. I am sure the member will see not only jobs within the park, but also the surrounding jobs as a big benefit to his area and the other ridings around the GTA.

● (1325)

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to draw together two points from my colleague's speech. One, of course, is that the Liberals have been lobbying this initiative in terms of the Rouge National Urban Park. I agree it will be a great urban addition.

The Liberals are talking about the importance of parks, but at the same time they have made some movements in terms of our campgrounds. Not only are they small businesses as opposed to national parks funded by the government, but they are small businesses that give opportunities for everyday Canadians to enjoy park-like settings. Therefore, I would perhaps like the member to contrast and comment on the fact that what is happening to our campgrounds is going to perhaps create fewer campgrounds, drive small-business owners out of business, and that ultimately there will be less opportunity for Canadians in terms of enjoying the beautiful nature that we have to offer.

Mr. Jamie Schmale: Madam Speaker, I appreciate my friend mentioning the issue that is going on with Canada's campgrounds. We all know that the Canada Revenue Agency has decided that it would like to change the way campgrounds are taxed based on the number of full-time employees they have. It is causing a number of campground operators to consider whether they can continue or, if they make the decision to continue, how they get the revenue to pay the government more tax. There are some cases documented that the CRA has decided to go back a few years and collect back taxes on something campground operators had no idea was coming, and it is their fault.

The spinoff jobs, like the restaurants, the stores, and the shops, are integral to areas like mine and that of my friend from British Columbia. Therefore it is imperative that we all take issue with this and have the CRA look at that decision it has made and see how it is probably not in the right direction.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Madam Speaker, two things became clear to me as my colleague was speaking. The first one is that Parks Canada has ecological integrity standards in all its other parks and so that should be entrenched in its procedures. With that said, it makes me wonder why we are spending days talking about the Rouge park when there are hundreds of thousands of people out of work, we are trying to react to a Trump presidency, and we have significant immigration issues. It just speaks to the weak legislative agenda of the current Liberal government. I wonder if my colleague would agree.

Mr. Jamie Schmale: Madam Speaker, I appreciate all the work my friend from Sarnia—Lambton does on her file. She is a great leader within caucus and our team.

She is exactly right. A number of businesses around my area are wondering what the future brings. We are looking at possibly a very mixed business atmosphere, especially if the Trump administration holds true with its decision to lower the corporate tax rates to 15%, which matches ours but the difference is where the state or provincial tax rates are substantially skewed. That would cause severe distortion, as well as the fact that we will now have a national carbon tax where the United States does not and CPP tax, where it creates a very un-level playing field. If businesses are looking to set up in Ontario, they are also facing some of the highest energy prices in North America.

Therefore, it is a severe disadvantage when we are talking about luring businesses and well-paying jobs to this area if we are not actually continuing to put ourselves on a level playing field in allowing businesses to start up and thrive.

Having the benefit of the Trent-Severn Waterway and Parks Canada does help my area with tourism.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The member will have three and a half minutes remaining for questions and comments when the bill is next before the House.

It being 1:30 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's Order Paper.

Private Members' Business

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

● (1330)

[English]

CANADIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION PRIVATIZATION ACT

Mr. Brad Trost (Saskatoon—University, CPC) moved that Bill C-308, An Act to provide for the incorporation of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation and to make consequential amendments to other Acts, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Madam Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise in the House today to introduce my bill, the concept of which has been talked about for a long time by various members, predominantly on this side of the House. I want to make special note of the late former finance minister, Jim Flaherty, who I approached on this subject a few times in the past. He spoke to me about how it was one of his wishes to privatize the CBC. Jim and I discussed it.

Prime Minister Harper had certain feelings on this, even though he never acted on it. Many Conservatives have talked about this for a long time and it is one of my motivations for getting the debate going on this. This is a large institution in our country's history, an expensive institution, so it is important we discuss this and begin to decide what the future holds. That is the background.

I rise to speak in favour of Bill C-308, an act to privatize the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. Perhaps the best place to start my remarks today is to emphasize what this legislation does not propose. This bill does not propose to do away with the CBC. It does not propose to dismantle it, reform it, replace it, or tinker with it in other ways.

What the bill actually proposes to do is very simple. It proposes to privatize the CBC, thereby relieving taxpayers of the burden of subsidizing it, freeing it from the amateur influence of meddling politicians and government bureaucrats, and giving average Canadians the opportunity to freely choose whether to participate in its ownership by purchasing shares and exercising the rights and privileges that come with ownership. However, the bill does more than that. It lays out a responsible plan, a road map, so to speak, on how this can be done.

The CBC was first established in the early 1930s, by a Conservative government under R.B. Bennett, as a way of bringing Canadians together when broadcasting was still in its infancy. At the time, the sheer size of Canada, the relative sparseness of its population, and the remoteness of many of its communities made direct participation of the government in the project a necessity. Those days have long since passed.

Private Members' Business

For decades, privately owned and operated radio and television broadcasters have been providing precisely the same services that the CBC was created to provide. Today there are three networks, with very professional broadcast news services, plus a host of excellent regional English and French news operations. On top of the news provided by each of these networks, there are three full-time cable news channels. These entities have demonstrated that state ownership and taxpayer support of a national broadcaster is largely unnecessary. With the emergence and growing availability of the Internet and satellite communications, that need has been reduced to absolutely zero.

Let me be clear. The bill is not a reflection of the quality of the CBC's products. Everyone in the House will have an opinion about that. Some will be very supportive, while others very critical. None of this matters, though, because the focus of Bill C-308 is neither the character of the CBC nor the quality of its products and services. The focus of the bill is the CBC's status as a state-owned entity and its consequent cost to taxpayers. Let us take a few minutes to discuss those costs.

Each year, taxpayers provide the CBC with more than \$1 billion in subsidies. That is in addition to the approximately \$600 million a year in revenue it receives from subscribers through cable companies and advertisers, including, among other advertisers, the Government of Canada and other governments.

Last November, the CBC delivered a position paper to the government, proposing that its television operations become ad free and that \$500 million be added to its current annual appropriation to make up for the anticipated shortfall in revenue. That would make the CBC's annual cost to taxpayers more than \$1.5 billion. Imagine what \$1.5 billion dollars a year could do. Instead, we are using that money to ensure that the CBC continues to provide allegedly vital services to Canadians.

• (1335)

However, here is my challenge to those who make that claim. Name one service, vital or otherwise, that the CBC provides that is not provided by other broadcasters or through other media, such as the internet or satellite. The answer is, none.

Even the Minister of Canadian Heritage's own briefing book admits that the CBC/Radio-Canada's indigenous language broadcasts, which are in eight aboriginal languages, would be better produced and managed by first nation peoples themselves. Page 133 of the minister's brief book admits that the Truth and Reconciliation Commission prefers that aboriginal language initiatives, that is, the production and broadcast of radio content in indigenous languages, "are best managed by Aboriginal people and communities".

Some people may say, but what about developing Canadian talent? The truth is that contrary to popular belief, the CBC does very little, virtually nothing, to develop Canadian talent. Consider, for example, the popular series *Murdoch Mysteries*. It is wonderful entertainment, I am told, though to be truthful, and perhaps I should apologize for this, I have never seen the program.

The CBC has made a great deal in the past of how it made this the highest-rated Canadian-produced show in the country. This may be, but conveniently forgotten in that narrative is that *Murdoch*

Mysteries was developed and produced by Shaftesbury films, a private production house. It was not picked up by the CBC until 2013, its sixth season. The show was aired on City TV during its first five full seasons. Prior to it becoming a television series, *Murdoch Mysteries* was a made-for-TV movie under the name *Murder C19*, broadcast by the American television network Bravo.

This is worth repeating, not because it is the exception, but rather because it is becoming quite typical of Canadian production these days. *Murdoch Mysteries* was originally developed by a private Canadian production company for an American television network, and when it became a television series, it was broadcast by a private Canadian network for five seasons before the CBC became involved.

The success of this and so many other Canadian productions is due to the quality of the product, the talent of the Canadian producers and actors, not to unique support of the CBC. Yes, many of these productions have received help through special tax credits and artistic grants, but none of that assistance is tied to the CBC. Privatizing the CBC, or even eliminating it, would in no way impact the availability of that assistance.

So, why privatize the CBC? Why not dismantle it altogether, as some of my colleagues on this side of the House have suggested? I do not think that is a fair solution. Whatever one thinks of the character or quality of the services that the CBC provides, the fact is that it does provide those services to a real audience. Simply shutting down the corporation would deprive many Canadians of a product they have come to know and, in some cases, love. I see no reason to do this. Moreover, the CBC employs, directly and indirectly, thousands of workers. I do not believe that these workers should be arbitrarily kicked to the curb.

Privatization will preserve most, if not all, of these jobs, and ensure that the products and services that the CBC currently provides remain available to consumers who want them, so long as those products and services can be delivered in a cost-effective manner consistent with free market principles. Who will determine the cost effectiveness? Who will be the final arbitrators? They will not be faceless bureaucrats, but average consumers.

I have often heard complaints raised in this House, and elsewhere, about the high cost to taxpayers and the manifest unfairness of corporate welfare schemes. A case in point this recent week was an announcement by the government that it plans on providing Bombardier with a cash infusion loan of a little over \$370 million. This news provoked a great deal of criticism among hon. members, particularly on this side of the House.

• (1340)

It seems to me that the case of the CBC is the most blatant example of corporate welfare the government engages in. How can members oppose a one-time subsidy of \$370 million, which I am not defending, yet turn a blind eye to an ongoing corporate subsidy of more than \$1 billion annually? This makes little sense to me.

Private Members' Business

It also makes little sense to taxpayers who support the idea of privatizing the CBC. Their support is strong and non-partisan. A January 2014 poll by Abacus Data found that 45% of those surveyed supported or strongly supported selling the CBC, compared to 34% who were opposed to the move, while 21% were undecided. The same poll found that 45% of self-identified Liberals supported privatization versus 39% who were opposed. Self-identified New Democrats were split, with 44% supporting privatization and 45% opposed. For Conservative supporters, it is worth noting that 63% of self-identified Conservatives in the same poll supported privatizing the CBC.

This sentiment was hardly unique. A poll conducted at the time of the last budget revealed that most Canadians, by a wide margin, either outright opposed restoring funding cuts the previous government had made to the CBC or at best were ambivalent. That poll said that only 27% of respondents supported increasing funding.

Another reason privatization makes such good sense is that it would give taxpayers the opportunity to derive some financial benefit. Taxpayers would gain at least a modest return through the sale of assets, and those who chose to would be able to invest in the corporation, either directly or perhaps indirectly through mutual funds, as would other institutional investors, such as pension funds, the largest of which, ironically, belongs to public servants.

This would not be the first time Canadians moved large corporations out of the hands of government and into the private sector. During the 1980s, the government privatized both Petro-Canada and Air Canada. At the time, opponents of these privatizations said there would be great calamities. None of these dire predictions came to pass. Today these companies employ thousands of Canadians while delivering vital products and services, all while making money for millions of average Canadians. Indeed, it is no exaggeration to say that many elderly Canadians today who vehemently protested the decision at the time are now benefiting from the benefits of privatization in the 1980s through their pensions.

Mr. Speaker, the CBC is not a national institution, as it is so often described, but a television and radio broadcast company, no more and no less. At one time, it provided Canadians with a new and vital service that might not have been available without the direct assistance of the government. Those days are long since gone. The CBC is like adult children who live in the basement of their parents' home, trying to discover themselves at their parents' expense. Mom and Dad love them, but that does not change the fact that it is time for them to move out and make their own way in the world.

I have pointed out many reasons why I support this bill I have presented. I would ask all members of this House to give it thorough and thoughtful commentary and support it. It is time for a change. It is time we had a CBC that was private and in the hands of Canadians, not in the hands of the government.

• (1345)

Mr. Sean Casey (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I represent Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island. *Compass*, the local CBC news show, is on at six o'clock every evening, and 80% of the televisions that are turned on in Prince Edward Island at six o'clock are tuned in to that

program. The CBC is extremely important to places like Charlottetown. The CBC is extremely important to communities that are in a minority situation with respect to official languages. The CBC is extremely important to northern, remote, and indigenous communities. Why does it have to be all about the dollar and not the character of our country?

Mr. Brad Trost: Madam Speaker, I absolutely agree it is about the character of the country, but the question is who actually should provide the voice, the people of Canada or the Government of Canada? Remember, any local news station that gets an 80% market share is not going to vanish, it is going to continue to grow. As I noted in my speech, aboriginal and northern Canadians, even by the government's own briefing books, would be better served by a different system than we have now.

This is about the character. The dollars and cents belong to Canadians. They need the right to decide what to do, but CBC is not a voice for all Canadians. It is a voice for some Canadians and therefore, all Canadians should not pay for it. Other Canadians choose other means and other methods to speak to the country. We do not need the CBC to do it.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP): Madam Speaker, I listened with great interest to my colleague's speech, especially the part about the fact that *Murdoch Mysteries* would still exist even without the CBC, which is reassuring.

CBC/Radio-Canada plays a unique and specific role in the areas of education, information, and the promotion of Canadian culture. This crown corporation has been underfunded for years, especially compared to how the Germans and British fund their independent public broadcasters, for example. Indeed, contrary to what my colleague is saying, it is not the government or bureaucrats who decide what happens at CBC/Radio-Canada. It is a model for others to follow.

However, the Conservatives slashed its budget, and now they are complaining that it has become too commercial, so we might as well fully commercialize it.

Is my colleague aware of the special role that CBC/Radio-Canada plays for francophones across the country?

[*English*]

Mr. Brad Trost: Madam Speaker, I respect my colleague and I understand her perspective. I listen to these things and I begin to wonder if people have not realized that the world has changed. People no longer put up the rabbit ears on the TV and get two stations, they get thousands. They get stations from Europe, there is programming all over the world. There are community radio stations, community broadcasts that are easy to produce. People produce them in their basements. We get unique and different voices.

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Technology has changed how the world is. Whatever arguments are being made for CBC applied better in the thirties, forties, and fifties. They do not apply in the million-channel universe where we can get programming from everywhere and where individuals are empowered to do their own broadcasting.

I appreciate the hon. member's comments, but this is about looking to the future. A lot of the arguments I am hearing against this are about looking to the past. Our culture is always changing. Our institutions need to change with it.

Mr. Sean Casey (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is my pleasure to speak today to Bill C-308, which provides for the privatization of CBC/Radio-Canada and the amendment of several acts. In studying the bill, it quickly becomes clear that it involves numerous risks for the Canadian broadcasting system, Canadian media corporations, and Canadians in general.

[*Translation*]

I would first like to point out that the bill seeks to privatize the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation by allowing for its public offering. However, there has been no assessment of the market value of the corporation or of any interest in the market for the share offering. There is no guarantee that selling it would even generate any profit. The corporation as we know it could become unrecognizable.

• (1350)

[*English*]

Let me remind my colleagues that the corporation was created in 1936 to counter the American influence on our radio waves. Today, its mandate is inscribed in the 1991 Broadcasting Act. This act states that CBC/Radio-Canada must offer radio and television services including a wide range of programming that informs, enlightens, and entertains; that is predominantly and distinctively Canadian; that reflects Canada as a whole and serves the needs of the regions and official language minority communities; and that it must be made available throughout the country.

In short, CBC/Radio-Canada represents Canadians and unites them. Bill C-308 would repeal the corporation's mandate as established in the act. Since no other private corporation has to meet the same objectives, the privatization of CBC/Radio-Canada would deprive Canadians of a unique service within the Canadian broadcasting system.

[*Translation*]

Furthermore, the other laws that govern the corporation, such as the Access to Information Act and the Financial Administration Act, ensure that CBC/Radio-Canada remains accountable. In addition, all of those laws also stipulate that the corporation must remain at arm's length from the government when it comes to its own day-to-day management. The legislation also guarantees its journalistic, creative, and programming independence.

The bill would repeal and modify all of those provisions, to the effect that, as a private corporation, CBC/Radio-Canada would be accountable only to its shareholders. Canadians would no longer be able to get information about its operations or take part in any meaningful way.

[*English*]

The possible economic impacts of privatizing CBC/Radio-Canada are also cause for concern. The corporation currently offers numerous radio and television services in English and French, including national networks and local stations, which includes our vital CBC bureau in Charlottetown.

[*Translation*]

CBC/Radio-Canada also offers many digital services and is considered a pillar of Canadian content broadcasting in the digital environment. In order to offer those services, the corporation uses a hybrid funding model that combines public funds and self-generated revenues, including advertising revenue.

We do not know how much revenue CBC/Radio-Canada would bring in if it were privatized and was no longer accountable to Parliament. However, we do know that cultural industries are currently transitioning to the digital environment. Some platforms, including traditional television, must overcome major obstacles such as a decrease in advertising revenue.

[*English*]

A privatized CBC/Radio-Canada would generate most of its revenue from advertising. This means its total revenue could be heavily reduced. It is quite probable that it would choose to reduce its offering to ensure profitability. It is also possible that it would first choose to cut its regional services, which serve official language minority communities and indigenous communities, among others. This would be a loss not only for those communities but also for the diversity of voices in the Canadian broadcasting system. We could also see a reduction in the quality and quantity of programming offered to Canadians. For example, let us take the local news. It is of vital importance for Canadian citizens.

[*Translation*]

The current government believes in a strong Canadian broadcasting system. Its approach involves supporting creative industries, investing in CBC/Radio-Canada, and renewing ties with the corporation. The government is investing \$675 million in CBC/Radio-Canada over five years. The corporation has indicated that it will use that money to create new, more distinctly Canadian content, continue its transition to the digital environment, and increase its resources in the region in order to be more local.

This money will be used to recruit the next generation of Canadian talent. It will allow the corporation to continue to support indigenous programming and the services it offers to official language minority communities. Finally, CBC/Radio-Canada has committed to being accountable to Canadians on the use of this new funding. In my opinion, those commitments offer real benefits to Canadians. In contrast, the bill does not contain any meaningful measures as specific as those.

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• (1355)

[English]

To sum up, the government believes in the importance of our national public broadcaster, CBC/Radio-Canada, for expressing Canadian culture and providing Canadian content. The bill would eliminate everything that defines the national public broadcaster and ensures its proper functioning. Privatization would fundamentally transform CBC/Radio-Canada, without guaranteeing that the result would be beneficial for the Canadian broadcasting system, Canadian media corporations, and Canadians. For all of these reasons, the government is opposed to this bill.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Madam Speaker, the Conservatives are once again proposing an attack on CBC/Radio-Canada. Today, the member for Saskatoon—University is trying to resuscitate old, outdated debates that are as tired as they are tiresome. I cannot believe that we have to waste precious time in the House discussing how to undermine our public broadcaster for the umpteenth time when there are so many other urgent matters that require our attention, especially since we already know that the vast majority of Quebecers and Canadians support the CBC. It seems to me that this matter should have been put to rest since the last election. Those watching at home must be thinking that this nonsense was supposed to be over and done with, because they already voted to put an end to it.

There comes a time when people grow tired of hearing the Conservatives' greatest hits. However, the Conservatives insist on taking us for a stroll yet again, and it seems we are not out of the woods yet. We have before us a very detailed, technical bill put together by the Conservatives. If it were to be deemed in order and passed, it would incorporate CBC/Radio-Canada and require the government to ensure that all shares were sold like those of any other publicly traded company.

In other words, what is currently a public broadcaster, as well as an important cultural symbol for countless people and especially for French-speaking people in this country, would become a private enterprise, a private broadcaster like any other that would no longer belong to Canadians. It would cease to be a public asset. This private broadcaster would no longer have to fulfil all the obligations imposed by Canadians as owners and shareholders of the CBC. At present, all Canadians have a stake in the CBC/Radio-Canada.

Make no mistake about it, this bill would take away a basic tool for expressing our culture and setting rigorous broadcasting standards, especially with respect to the news, which impact the entire broadcasting system. A public broadcaster is a tool and its role is to better inform us, and to tell us more about who we are.

Honestly, I cannot believe that we are still talking about this. Just two years ago we had an election where the vast majority of Canadians voted to support the CBC, or at least voted for parties that defended the CBC's role and also promised to increase its funding.

When I say that we are wasting time on this fringe proposal, I mean that there is no time to waste on this type of issue.

I have often said that my two main goals in politics, and here in Ottawa, are climate urgency and defending our distinct culture. I am

my party's critic for culture. I spent 25 years in the music industry in Quebec, including at Audiogram, Sony Music, Cirque du soleil, and at various television stations. I am a member of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage, which I am honoured to co-chair, and I can attest to the fact that we have our work cut out for us. We just spent the past few months speaking with many representatives of a sector that has been completely turned upside down, a sector that is trying to figure out how to come up with new revenue streams, considering all the new platforms.

As everyone knows, our cultural industries are facing a real disaster.

We are very proud of what Quebec has built. We are proud of Bill 101, which strengthens our language rather than letting it fade away. We are very proud of what has been built here in Ottawa: the CBC, the NFB, Telefilm Canada, Canadian content rules, this entire television and cultural ecosystem, the creative works of a generation of builders who were trying to do more than just make it to the end of the week.

We are proud of this framework, this whole sophisticated infrastructure, this work, and these investments that are paying off today all around the world, whether we are talking about Denis Villeneuve, *Degrassi*, *The Weeknd*, or Robert Lepage.

Today, all of that is in jeopardy. Unbeknownst to us, the cultural and linguistic treasures that our parents and grandparents fought to defend have all but vanished.

What do our children watch? At the time, it was *Passe-Partout*, *Cornemuse*. Today, fewer and fewer programs are produced here at home with voices that will perpetuate our accents and our world view. Netflix Kids is the flavour of the day.

With this upheaval that is at our doorstep and on our screens, we are starting at square one, and we know that everything we do and decide in the coming year, in the coming months, will have to be as good as what was done by the greats, such as Pierre Juneau.

That is why I feel compelled to say that we have no time to lose. We are out of time. We have no time to waste dealing with ideologically-motivated legislation like the one that was dropped on our lap today. We have no time for it because, even though the Conservatives may not realize it, we have serious work to do to defend our culture and defend what they seem to take for granted or worse, what they seem simply to know nothing about.

However, if we must spend time on this, then let us do it. I note that the hon. member for Saskatoon—University made a preposterous statement when he introduced this bill in September. He told the House that privatizing CBC would make the corporation a true public broadcaster instead of a state broadcaster, which will allow Canadians to participate in it and be owners of it.

• (1400)

I will spare the House my comments on that.

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The bill would result in a fire sale of CBC/Radio-Canada. It would be controlled by a limited number of investors. The bill would dissolve the board of directors and remove all references to CBC/Radio-Canada in the Broadcasting Act and other acts that ensure transparency and accountability.

Today, CBC/Radio-Canada is 100% owned by Canadians. It is an independent broadcaster that operates at arm's length from the state. Most industrialized countries have similar broadcasters. It is not a state broadcaster. It is kind of absurd to suggest that privatizing our public broadcaster would make it more participatory or more democratic. On the contrary, it would become a private broadcaster like any other.

I have to say that I do not really understand why this bill was introduced now that we have left behind a decade of rule by the most right-wing government in our history. We were governed by the right-wing Conservative Party, which spent years getting all worked up about CBC/Radio-Canada and taking aim at it at every opportunity. It was actually kind of undignified.

For years, the Conservatives have been threatening CBC/Radio-Canada and making cuts to the public broadcaster. However, they still took the opportunity to shamelessly appoint to the corporation's board of directors their best friends; their best contributors; Conservative Party lawyers, accountants, and campaign managers; and former Conservative Party MPs.

We understand what is happening here. The member for Saskatoon—University is introducing this bill today because he is now a candidate in the Conservative Party leadership race, the embarrassing spectacle that we have been witnessing over the past few months. It is a race to the bottom where each candidate tries to outdo the other with increasingly right-wing proposals and they all try to stand out by making the most ludicrous suggestions.

The reality is that, despite their relentless efforts and all the breath they wasted in the leadership debates, the Conservatives would never be able to afford to privatize CBC/Radio-Canada because, in one fell swoop, they would lose one of their best sources of funding. In fact, every time they attacked CBC/Radio-Canada by cutting its budget, the next day they would bombard their supporters with outraged emails begging them for another \$5.

I have here an email dated November 23, 2016, from the leadership campaign of the member for Saskatoon—University. He signed this letter and sent it to his supporters shortly after introducing the bill that we are discussing today. It reads:

[English]

Leaders act while followers talk. That's why I introduced legislation this year to sell the CBC. Bill C-308 is more than just a tool to raise funds for my campaign — it's an actual plan.

[Translation]

He sent that letter to his political supporters. Just to be sure members understand, I repeat:

[English]

“This bill is more than just a tool to raise funds for my campaign”.

[Translation]

What gall. Some people have no shame.

What we should understand is that here, in Parliament, we have better things to do than talk about ideas that are being floated in order to finance a leadership campaign. Is that not what is happening right now? It is inexcusable to waste Parliament's time like this.

I feel like telling my colleague from Saskatoon—University that instead of going to Quebec once every four years to participate in a leadership debate, he should visit us more often to understand our culture and our cultural industries. That is what differentiates us and makes us proud. It is also what has created hundreds of thousands of jobs in our music, recording, film, and dubbing industries, not to mention in theatre and the video game industry.

My colleague should visit francophone communities across Canada and Acadian communities, which trust Radio-Canada to open a window onto the future of their community, to provide cultural ideas for new generations, and to create new enticing projects, both big and small. We could say the same about Quebec anglophones in the Eastern Townships and communities all across the country, including cities.

There was a reason why there were tens of thousands of people protesting in the streets of Montreal in November 2014 in support of CBC/Radio-Canada at the height of the Conservative cuts. We know how much people care about CBC/Radio-Canada. They are proud of it.

As we leave our safe harbour for deeper and unknown waters, I believe it is this pride and sense of belonging that will, more than ever, make CBC/Radio-Canada the flagship of Canadian culture.

• (1405)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon—Grasswood, CPC): Madam Speaker, it gives me great pleasure this afternoon in the House to speak to the private member's bill, Bill C-308.

As an almost 40-year veteran of CTV, it may seem a little peculiar, I am sure, that I would rise today to plead the merits of keeping the CBC as a crown corporation, but I am here to do it.

The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, as we know, has functioned as Canada's public broadcaster for over eight decades. Private broadcasters, and I have worked for them all my broadcasting career, need competition. CBC gives a different perspective and certainly gives private broadcasters that much needed competition. When we have competition, I believe we have innovation. I believe we have diversity. That has elevated, I feel, the quality of journalism in this country and added to our freedom of speech.

As we have heard this week in the heritage committee from the Competition Bureau, there are concerns about not enough competition in this industry. The big private telcos have dominated the private radio and television sector.

Now, being a traditionalist, I respect the fact that the CBC is the oldest existing broadcasting network in this country, with certainly a unique mandate. The mission statement of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, as set out in their annual report from the year 2007, is to present programs “designed to inform, enlighten and entertain.... that reflect Canadians and Canada's regions” in both official languages.

Independent polls conducted by Forum Research back in 2011, and again in 2013, revealed that really, the majority of Canadians, 53% in 2011 and 51% in 2013, support the public funding of CBC. Back then, only 25% believed in its privatization.

Privatization of the CBC, as we all know, could save the federal government well over \$1 billion, \$1.2 billion and more. However, let us ask this question before we talk about the money: what would we lose? We would most certainly lose local broadcast news in many remote regions of this country, plus in minority language communities. Believe me, the private industry has no appetite, zero, to serve these regions in our country. I know, because I have worked for them.

The CBC, with its distinct programming, excels in the educational component of helping Canadians learn about this country, showcasing Canadian culture, showcasing our art, our literature, our history, and probably most important, our geography.

For example, let us just take last summer. Over 11 million people, on a Saturday night, tuned in to CBC to watch the concert by the Tragically Hip. They performed with lead singer Gord Downie. The almost three-hour performance was carried live on CBC TV and CBC Radio and streamed online on its website. It was an opportunity for many to say goodbye, their final farewell to Gord Downie, who had bravely announced earlier in the year that he had terminal brain cancer. No surprise, Gord gave his first interview after the tour to CBC.

To me, this was a prime example of Canadian culture at its best. Private broadcasters had absolutely zero interest in producing this distinct Canadian historic moment. May I say this? Eleven million tuned in. That is nearly a third of the population in this country.

As technology, consumer preferences, and market conditions have changed, the CBC has had to adapt to maintain its role as a leading creator and distributor of Canadian content in this country. There is no doubt that in today's ever-evolving news market, with Canadians increasingly consuming non-traditional media and utilizing non-traditional news sources and social media sites, the appetite for both news and information in this country, believe it or not, has never been higher. Canadians want to consume a variety of sources of information.

• (1410)

The CBC has also nurtured significant talent in this country in the journalism and the entertainment industries: people like Barbara Frum, Lorne Greene, John Candy, Don Cherry, Pierre Burton, Tommy Hunter, Wayne and Shuster, and I could go on and on. Let us not forget the three women who went on to become Canada's governors general: Jeanne Sauv , Adrienne Clarkson, and Micha lle Jean are all CBC alumni. Of course, I would be remiss if I did not pay tribute to the award-winning author, journalist, producer, and

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professor, Stuart McLean, who just passed away on Wednesday. Who will ever forget his humorous stories from *Vinyl Cafe*?

It should be also noted that the CBC has been and continues to be a source for Canadian expats just to keep up to date with news from home. Back in 1978, I know that seems like a long time ago, CBC became the first broadcaster in the world to use an orbiting satellite for television service. It linked Canada from east to west and, maybe more important, to the north.

Let me quote Hubert Lacroix, president and CEO of CBC, who, in the corporate plan summary from 2016-17 to 2020-21, stated:

The evolution of our regional services also reflects the changing pattern of audience consumption, with mobile and digital services telling stories in new ways and engaging with our audiences. By leveraging web and digital platforms, and adjusting the length of TV supper-hour news shows, we were able to find resources to provide audiences with news updates at different times throughout the day, segments from local morning radio shows simultaneously broadcast on TV, and more news coverage on regional sites and social media. As important as web and digital platforms have become, TV continues to be the place where the majority of Canadians watch content, especially in the evening. In Strategy 2020, we promised that we would not leave TV and radio behind as we transform ourselves into a modern, more relevant public broadcaster.

Lacroix goes on to say CBC/Radio-Canada currently has local programming from its 21 television stations; 88 radio stations; one digital station; two main television networks, one in English, one in French; five specialty TV channels; and four Canada-wide radio networks, two in each official language.

Advertising is CBC/Radio-Canada's second largest source of revenue. In the fiscal year 2015-16, it generated over \$250 million. It was only 16% of total revenue and sources of funds. CBC is witnessing some profound shifts in the advertising market that are negatively affecting the outlook of traditional media companies like CBC/Radio-Canada. CBC, though, is not unlike the private broadcasters, which are all experiencing a downturn in advertising revenues. This is an industry-wide problem. We have heard that for the last year in our Canadian heritage committee.

TV is still the king of media. Time spent with it surpasses time spent with any other media. However, some viewers are now watching TV on the Internet, which is becoming particularly evident in the English market. Over time, the CBC expects, and I think we all do, that the Internet and online TV will continue to grow. According to Lacroix, as well as being Canada's largest cultural institution CBC/Radio-Canada is one of the most influential brands in Canada across all industries. Believe it or not, it is the highest-ranked media. Recent tracking shows 57% of Canadians consider one or more of CBC/Radio-Canada's services to be personally important to them, and 73% of Canadians strongly agree there is a clear need and a role for CBC/Radio-Canada in the future.

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The media landscape is changing and we all know that what the future holds for any public or even private broadcaster is uncertain. I will say this. We know Canada is a big country; it needs to be serviced with unique Canadian programming. Canadians have enriching stories, and they need to be told so the future generations have a better understanding of how greatly this country has evolved. All of these important points should be taken into consideration when we are looking at Bill C-308.

• (1415)

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Scarborough—Rouge Park, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am astonished at the speech by my good friend, the member for Saskatoon—Grasswood. What an amazing defence of our Canadian broadcaster. I thank him.

I want to share some observations and experiences that I have had with the CBC. I heard about the CBC before I even came to Canada. I was probably seven or eight years old. I was living in Dublin, Ireland. There were four channels there. There were two Irish channels, BBC One and BBC Two. CBC had pictures of Expo 67 and the Olympics from Montreal. On occasion, it had pictures of the north and small vignettes of Canada. That was my vision of this country when I came here as a 10-year-old. This service defined to me what Canada was, a vast, beautiful, gorgeous, diverse country, with so many different peoples, languages, and cultures. That was my initial snippet of the country.

When I came here, I think I was 11 or 12. I was an avid reader of the news, and I tuned in to *The National* virtually every day. I would fight with my mother, who would tell me it was too late and I had to go to bed, but I wanted to see *The National*, with Knowlton Nash. He would have the world's best journalists from around the world giving us the news. There was Schlesinger. Members know the names. They would give us a good sense of what the world was. I grew up on that. I remember the day when Knowlton Nash appeared on television and said that Canadian broadcasting is so important to him that he was not going to let Peter Mansbridge go. He was going to step aside so we could have another Canadian broadcaster take over as CBC national anchor. Those are the types of value that this broadcaster has given us.

I grew up watching that over the years. There were very few days in my life that I missed the newscast. Last November, I was trying to look at what was happening in the U.S. election and I was turning the channels. I went to the virtually million channels that my friend, the member for Saskatoon—University, was talking about, trying to figure out what was going on. I kept switching, and finally I came back to the CBC, which had exceptional coverage. It also had exceptional coverage on Brexit. When any major event around the world takes place, we end up going back to the CBC.

Every time that I have travelled across the world, and I travel quite a bit, there are very few days where I do not try to get an Internet version of *The National* to look at what is going on, not just in our country, but around the world. It is something that only CBC can do.

Therefore, I am quite astonished, in fact, shocked that on Canada's 150th birthday, we have a bill here that is effectively trying to destroy the very core of our Canadian identity. It is offensive. I am beyond words to describe why on earth we would have a such a

frivolous debate in this House in this year, such an important milestone year for us.

It is shameful that we are even having this debate. Nevertheless, we are having it, and I want to add my voice to those eloquent voices who have spoken in defence of this national institution. I want to take this opportunity to present to my colleagues the reasons that I am opposing Bill C-308, which would privatize the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation and amend several acts, including the Broadcasting Act.

In September, when he presented the bill, the member for Saskatoon—University described the CBC/Radio-Canada as a state broadcaster. According to him, privatizing the corporation would make it a public broadcaster that truly belonged to Canadians. We disagree. CBC/Radio-Canada is our national public broadcaster, and, as such, it already belongs to Canadians. This crown corporation was created in 1936 in response to the increasing American influence on Canadian radio. It was then and remains today essential to Canadian democracy and our cultural sovereignty.

• (1420)

As the national public broadcaster, CBC/Radio-Canada must fulfill its mandate as described in the 1991 Broadcasting Act. This duty is not to be taken lightly. The act stipulates that the corporation should provide radio and television services, incorporating a wide range of programming that informs, enlightens, and entertains Canadians.

[*Translation*]

That programming should be predominantly and distinctively Canadian, be in English and in French, and strive to be of equivalent quality. It should reflect Canada and serve the special needs of its regions. It should represent both official language communities, including official language minority communities. It should also reflect the multicultural and multiracial nature of Canada. It should do all of this in an effort to contribute to shared national identity and cultural expression.

In short, programming should be relevant to Canadians, and it should reflect who they are.

[*English*]

In addition, the legislative framework that currently governs the corporation gives it great autonomy from the government as far as its daily activities are concerned. It also guarantees that it is independent in terms of journalism, creativity, and programming. What is more, since CBC/Radio-Canada receives public funding, the legislative framework requires it to be accountable to Parliament, and consequently to all Canadians.

Bill C-308 would repeal the legislative framework that makes CBC/Radio-Canada a unique entity in the Canadian broadcasting space. As a private company, CBC/Radio-Canada would be accountable only to its shareholders. The risk is that it would become unrecognizable to us, and that we would no longer recognize ourselves in it.

To fulfill its mandate, CBC/Radio-Canada currently provides numerous services. CBC/Radio-Canada's television services include two national television networks, 27 conventional television stations, and the five specialty services: ICI RDI, CBC News Network, Documentary Channel, EXPLORA and ARTV. Meanwhile, CBC/Radio-Canada's radio services includes four national radio networks, including 50 English language radio stations via CBC Radio One and CBC Radio 2, more than 30 French language radio stations via ICI Première and ICI Musique, and a radio service in northern Canada. I would like to see the private broadcasters be able to emulate this even 10% of the way.

Moreover, CBC/Radio-Canada offers programming in eight indigenous languages through CBC North, broadcasts an advertisement-free online international radio service in five languages, and participates in the TV5MONDE international consortium.

It should also be mentioned that CBC/Radio-Canada provides numerous digital services to keep pace with the evolution of broadcasting in Canada and the content consumption habits of Canadians, and to ensure that its programming is offered everywhere in our country. In addition to ici.radio-canada.ca, cbc.ca, and icimusique.ca, CBC/Radio-Canada operates curio.ca, a site that allows teachers and students to stream Radio-Canada's and CBC's educational content.

It also produced a documentary in virtual reality to investigate the issue of missing and murdered indigenous women. In doing so, CBC/Radio-Canada plays an essential role in presenting Canadian content in the digital universe of today, and I would argue tomorrow.

This bill is very problematic. We as Canadians need to celebrate our identity. There are very few ways we do that. We are not like other countries where we wear our identity on our sleeve. We are a relatively young country at 150 that is trying to grapple with its past, and trying to explain the current realities for many Canadians. However, one of the few outlets we have to do that is the CBC.

I want to ask my colleagues to support the CBC unconditionally. It is not a perfect organization and it does need improvement. However, it is ours, and it is a true reflection of our identity, one that is still being developed, and one in which we can all take pride. For our 150th anniversary, let us reaffirm our support for the CBC and our national institutions.

●(1425)

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is my privilege to stand today to speak about the CBC.

I am not sure if members have ever left a telephone message or sent an email, immediately regretted it, and wanted to take it back. Such a thing happens to Dave in one of the Dave and Morley stories on the *Vinyl Cafe*, one of the shows that I much appreciate listening to on Sunday afternoon. He goes through a number of things to try to erase his message on his neighbour's answering machine, which involves going to a local auto wrecker, getting a very large magnet, climbing up a ladder, plugging the extension cord into this very large

Private Members' Business

electromagnet, falling down, getting hurt, the whole nine yards, and still the message is not erased. I think eventually he switches the tape and it is the wrong tape. It is a disaster. People who listen to it end up having to pull onto the side of the road if they are driving or, if they are home, lie on the floor laughing. It is hilarious. I love it.

The CBC has been a large part of my life living in northern Alberta, the radio, in particular. I do not have a television, but I listen to the radio a lot. The hockey game was on 630 CHED, so I definitely switched over for that all the time. When it came to the storytelling on CBC, for me, it was one of the great things about the radio.

The other one is a tradition. I believe it happens on Christmas Eve. It is called *The Shepherd*. It is on at 6:30 p.m. on Christmas Eve. It is a Second World War story that is on every year. The first time I heard it, I was on the way to pick up my now wife, then girlfriend, from the airport. I was late picking her up because I sat in the car to wait for the story to finish before finding her in the airport. I am sure it will be on again this year and I would recommend that everybody tune into CBC radio at 6:30 p.m. on Christmas Eve.

For those who have family gatherings, believe me, this will calm the room. People will be able to hear a pin drop as everybody holds on to their seats and, with bated breath, waits for what is going to happen. It is about a fighter pilot arriving home in England. Everyone else has gone home for Christmas dinner and he is all alone in the sky with inclement weather. People will want to hear the rest of the story.

The radio in northern and remote communities such as mine is the link to the rest of the world, there is no doubt about that. Satellite radio is now coming from around the world, which has a similar effect, no doubt, but it comes with a cost. Where I am, it is \$8 a month for satellite radio. The regular digital radio is still preferred by folks in my neck of the woods.

That said, I have some criticisms of the CBC and I think there are some reforms that could be made. I think there is a mandate to go forward as a public broadcaster, specifically in radio.

●(1430)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The member will have six and a half minutes remaining in his speech when this matter is next before the House.

[*Translation*]

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

[*English*]

It being 2:30 p.m., the House stands adjourned until Tuesday, February 21, 2017, at 11 a.m. pursuant to order made on Tuesday, February 14, 2017.

(The House adjourned at 2:30 p.m.)

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