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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Monday, March 6, 2017

—

Speaker: The Honourable Geoff Regan

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, March 6, 2017

The House met at 11 a.m.

Prayer

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

• (1105)

[*English*]

FEDERAL FRAMEWORK ON POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER ACT

The House resumed from February 9 consideration of the motion that Bill C-211, An Act respecting a federal framework on post-traumatic stress disorder, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to private member's bill, Bill C-211, an act respecting a federal framework on post-traumatic stress disorder.

[*Translation*]

Mental health is a state of well-being in which every individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community.

[*English*]

Improving the mental health of all people living in Canada is a priority for the federal government, which is one of the reasons why this government will be supporting Bill C-211 with amendments and we will work to address those at committee stage.

The Minister of Health continues to engage provincial and territorial governments to deliver on important investments in health, with mental health as a priority area of focus.

[*Translation*]

On December 19, 2016, the Government of Canada offered to give the provinces and territories approximately \$11 billion over 10 years for mental health care and home care in addition to \$544 million over five years for federal and pan-Canadian organizations to support initiatives on prescription drug and health innovation. Many provinces have decided to work with the Government of Canada by using the funds to improve mental health services for Canadians.

In addition, the Government of Canada is promoting people's mental health and well-being by supporting programs that build resilience in individuals and communities to help them overcome adversity. This involves all levels of government, national indigenous organizations, non-governmental organizations, and the private sector.

[*English*]

The Public Health Agency of Canada is the lead federal organization for mental health promotion and mental illness prevention. The agency supports federal coordination in these areas across the health portfolio and other departments to provide a coherent approach to promote, protect, and improve the mental health and well-being of all Canadians.

The health portfolio, in collaboration with other federal departments, supports policy development and community-based programming across various life stages. Key areas related to post-traumatic stress disorder, otherwise known as PTSD in Canada, include family violence prevention, suicide prevention, targeted indigenous mental health promotion initiatives, and helping victims cope after emergencies.

[*Translation*]

Being a victim of violence is a significant risk factor for developing post-traumatic stress disorder, which is more commonly known in Canada by its acronym, PTSD. Domestic violence, including intimate partner violence and child abuse, is a serious public health issue and a significant risk factor for developing PTSD. Some 32% of adult Canadians reported that they have been the victim of some form of violence before the age of 16.

[*English*]

Research shows that women who have experienced intimate partner violence have heightened rates of PTSD, injury, chronic pain, sleep disorders, substance use problems, and other mental health issues such as depression and anxiety.

Private Members' Business

Children who have been abused or exposed to abuse in the family also have a higher risk of developing mental health issues, including PTSD. Those who were maltreated as children are twice as likely to have poor mental health and are over three times more likely to report suicidal thoughts. Boys who have been victimized or raised in violent homes are at an increased risk of becoming perpetrators of violence as adults, and girls exposed to violence in the home are at an increased risk of being victimized as adults, thus continuing the cycle of violence.

[*Translation*]

Our government is supporting community projects aimed at improving the physical and mental health of individuals who have been the victims of child abuse or intimate partner violence, thereby helping them to rebuild their lives. Our government is also investing in projects to better equip health professionals to work safely and effectively with survivors of domestic violence using strategies specifically tailored to the trauma experienced by each individual.

[*English*]

The Public Health Agency of Canada coordinates the family violence initiative, which brings together 15 federal departments to prevent and address family violence from multiple perspectives. Partner departments meet regularly to share new research and findings, provide advice on design and project ideas, contribute to policy initiatives, connect to stakeholder networks, and ensure that new knowledge is applied across all sectors.

As part of this initiative, information is also shared through the Stop Family Violence web pages on behalf of all the family violence initiative partners. This is a one-stop source of information and resources for professionals and for the public.

[*Translation*]

At the heart of what we are talking about today is the fact that people who have PTSD are more likely to self-harm or commit suicide. Sadly, more than 4,000 Canadians commit suicide every year.

In accordance with An Act respecting a Federal Framework for Suicide Prevention, the Public Health Agency of Canada coordinated the development of a federal framework for suicide prevention. The main goals are to raise public awareness, reduce the stigma surrounding suicide, disseminate information about suicide and its prevention, and promote the use of research and evidence-based practices for suicide prevention.

• (1110)

[*English*]

Tools and resources are also being developed to help reduce the stigma and raise public awareness about suicide, informed by research evidence on safe messaging for Canadians. In addition, a guide of standard terminology and practices for federal departments to avoid stigmatizing and inappropriate language in communication products is under development.

An online suicide prevention resource has been launched, including information on where to get help, resources for professionals, and links to additional resources and information. Funding has also been provided to support the Canadian distress line

network to develop a 24/7 national suicide prevention service. Once fully implemented, this line will ensure that individuals in crisis, regardless of where they live in Canada, have access to free and confidential support on a 24/7 basis, in a way that works best for them, by chat, text, or phone.

[*Translation*]

The Public Health Agency of Canada co-leads the National Collaborative on Suicide Prevention together with the Canadian Association for Suicide Prevention and the Mental Health Commission of Canada. Their members include various health and community service organizations that work to promote mental health and prevent mental illness and suicide across the country, including the Assembly of First Nations and the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami organization.

Federally, the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Health Canada, and the Canadian Centre for Substance Abuse, which are federally funded, are also partners under this umbrella. The mission of this Canada-wide collective is to enhance the capacity for suicide prevention in an effective manner by connecting people, concepts, and resources across the country.

[*English*]

Indigenous populations may be at increased risk for PTSD because of historical and intergenerational trauma. First nations, Inuit, and Métis experience some of the most significant health inequities in Canada. The proportion of indigenous individuals experiencing mental illness during their lifetime is 55% versus 33% of the non-indigenous population. Evidence shows that health is adversely affected by culture loss; racism and stigmatization; loss of language and connection to the land; environmental deprivation; and feeling spiritually, emotionally, and mentally disconnected from one's identity.

[*Translation*]

The federal government also supports indigenous populations through programs that are culturally adapted to the communities they serve. For example, the aboriginal head start program offered in urban and northern communities promotes the healthy development of indigenous children from birth to age five and helps them achieve their full potential in adulthood.

[*English*]

The community action program for children and the Canada prenatal nutrition program also support the healthy development of vulnerable children aged zero to six years and their families. Special emphasis is placed on the inclusion of indigenous pregnant women, children, and families. The Nobody's Perfect parenting program is a strengths-based, educational health promotion program for parents of children aged zero to five years living in socio-economic conditions of risk. The program is offered in indigenous communities across Canada.

Private Members' Business

[Translation]

These targeted programs help Canadians develop protective factors that will help them build their mental resilience and lower the risk of PTSD, because they are based on the knowledge that a significant number of mental problems stem from childhood.

[English]

People who have been exposed to natural disasters and extreme events are at risk of developing mental illness, including PTSD. Extreme weather events as a result of climate change are expected to increase in numbers and severity. Many climate scientists agree that the Canadian wildfire activity of the past few years is well above average and is connected to the warming climate.

I see that I only have one minute. I thought I had 20 minutes, so I will conclude at this stage.

[Translation]

The federal government's efforts on PTSD so far include following through on some of these recommendations and taking advantage of existing federally run activities that target the needs of specific populations. Many of these programs and activities could also be used to support other communities in Canada.

[English]

Through these concerted efforts, and the ongoing commitment to sound, evidence-based approaches, our government continues to work to improve the lives of Canadians and those affected by PTSD.

* * *

• (1115)

OFFICIAL REPORT

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. On February 23, during question period, in response to a question from the member for Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo on the Investment Canada Act, I inadvertently stated that Cedar Tree will now be owned and operated by Canadians going forward. What I meant to say is that Retirement Concepts will continue to be managed and operated by Canadians under its new ownership.

Thank you very much for allowing me this opportunity to clarify my previous statement.

The Deputy Speaker: I am sure the House appreciates the clarification at the first available occasion.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for London—Fanshawe.

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FEDERAL FRAMEWORK ON POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-211, An Act respecting a federal framework on post-traumatic stress disorder, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour of sitting on the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs, and we are currently studying mental health and suicide prevention.

I have heard considerable evidence of the toll that PTSD takes on veterans and their families. It is clear that action is needed, and increased services are desperately needed. I am sure that the bill was created with positive intentions. However, I remain concerned that there is nothing here to actually increase services for PTSD.

With nearly one in 10 Canadians experiencing post-traumatic stress at some point in their lives, it is time for federal leadership, to ease the suffering of those struggling with PTSD. I believe it is important to hear from veterans themselves about the impact of PTSD on their lives. I want to share with the House some testimony that was heard at the veterans affairs committee, and informal discussions I have had with veterans that highlight the struggles of so many veterans.

First, Mr. John Kelley McLeod told the VAC Committee the following:

We're driven. We're fit people when we serve. There isn't anything that we wouldn't do for this nation, including giving our lives. I've often said, having suffered PTSD after serving in Somalia and Rwanda, it would have been easier for me to have lost a leg or two, or to lose two arms. People understand that.

When you come back, they do not understand when you tell them "Well, I have nightmares every day. I can't cope with day-to-day living. I don't like being in crowds." For me, being a medic in those trades, everything I did at that moment was life and death. People die on the decisions you make, and you sometimes can't do anything.

I deal with that every day, and there are things that still stay with me today that are as clear as they were 20 years ago. That will never go away for me. Then, on top of that, because I served in Somalia and Rwanda, I spent over a year on mefloquine.

I'm getting older now. PTSD should be mellowing for me. I should be getting better, but I'm not getting better. I'm getting worse. I also have a terminal illness. I don't know how much longer I have, but every day I wake up and make a decision, do I live today or do I kill myself today?

Many of the veterans I spoke to said that their PTSD was triggered by financial insecurity, pensions and benefits delayed for months by an inept and dysfunctional veterans department. This is the reality of PTSD. It is terrifying and it is disabling our veterans. I also want to share with the House the words of Mr. Kurt Grant, a veteran who has been involved in the military his entire life. He came from a military family and became an air cadet at 13. He was in uniform for 41 years and deployed eight times. Kurt told us:

According to Veterans Affairs I'm now officially 136% broken; government math. I spent 15 years fighting with my PTSD before I wrote off my car and went into treatment. It's a tough thing to look at the back end of another vehicle and not realize how the hell you got there.

Private Members' Business

The stigma surrounding PTSD is huge. As much as we want to deny it and as much as we want to sit back and say, guess what, we're going to fix this, it's not going to happen. A cultural change has to take place.

...PTSD is not something that hits you right away. It took me 15 years before I finally collapsed under it.

It is clear that we desperately need to improve services for those with PTSD, and we critically need more supports for veterans specifically. We have heard testimony in veterans affairs committee that group therapy works very well for PTSD. However, there is a catch. It does not work well for veterans when therapy is in a group with civilians. Veterans have gone through traumatic experiences that civilians will never encounter. While they both may have PTSD, their experiences are not relatable. We need to make sure that veterans are able to access therapy with other veterans who understand what they have experienced and what they have lived.

We also need special supports for those living with military sexual trauma, many of whom also live with PTSD. Group therapy is very helpful for healing, but again our veterans are best served when with their peers. They not only need support from other veterans, but also those who are dealing with military sexual trauma. They may not get the support they need by being grouped with veterans or CF members with PTSD, and may not relate as well to sexual assault survivors without a military background. We need to bring men and women with MST together for healing.

● (1120)

Ultimately, that is what this is about. This is about healing those individuals who have given everything. This is about those who have set aside their lives and gambled on the promise that government was going to be there when they needed it, that government was going to somehow make sure their service was respected and honoured, that their suffering was understood, and that support would be there until the end of their lives.

However, we have military veterans in court against this government and the previous one for failure to make sure they have financial support. We now have a government that is making deals with the provinces and health ministries across this country. The government is saying that it will give them some money, but they have to accept that there will be less. "Oh yes, we'll give you a little bit of money for mental health, but the saw-off is that there is not going to be enough money to make sure that all Canadians are cared for."

We are in this place to make sure and be absolutely confident that every Canadian who has given something important to this country has the support, services, and respect that we owe them. Our veterans are special, and we all know that. They are unique individuals. They go into the field and they are fearless, because they believe in this country. Let us not take away their hope when they return home. Let us not take away their families. Let us not take away the prospect of coming back to us with a place in our communities that is safe and secure. We have to make them safe and secure.

To conclude, I thank the member for bringing forward this private member's bill. However, again, I want this to be genuine. I am tired of the games. I am tired of playing. I am tired of having to beg for what should be there. We owe it to these folks.

Mr. David Sweet (Flamborough—Glanbrook, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to sincerely thank my colleague, the hon. member for Cariboo—Prince George, for bringing forward this bill to build a national framework on an issue that is critically important to Canadians, and in turn our national safety and national fabric. These are our first responders. They are military personnel, veterans, correctional officers, and police. These are the people who protect and defend us day in and day out and care for us in our most urgent times of need. It is our duty to care for them as they grapple with post-traumatic stress disorder.

While more is understood about PTSD, or as Veterans Affairs calls it, operational stress injuries, every day, there is much more work to be done. We owe it to our first responders to do everything in our legislative power to make this happen. That is why I am honoured to stand today in support of Bill C-211, an act respecting a federal framework on PTSD, the private member's bill brought forward by my hon. colleague.

One of the greatest privileges of being a member of Parliament is the opportunity that it affords us to interact with our veterans and military personnel. I have had the opportunity to spend time on Canadian navy vessels, HMCS *Halifax* and HMCS *Montreal*, to talk with veterans from coast to coast, and to spend time with the reservists and officers of The Royal Hamilton Light Infantry and The Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders. I am proud to be a member of the officers' mess at John Weir Foote V.C. Armouries in my hometown of Hamilton.

Unfortunately, these brave women and men who gather at these armouries know PTSD and operational stress injuries all too well. That is because, tragically and regrettably, Corporal Justin Stark, a 22-year-old reservist with The Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders of Canada, took his own life in those armouries. It was October 2010, and he had returned to Canada just 10 months earlier from a deployment in Afghanistan.

Please also allow me to mention what many hon. members will know and recall, because I would be remiss in mentioning The Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders without acknowledging a major tragedy that faced us. Corporal Nathan Cirillo, who was shot and killed in the attack on the National War Memorial in October of 2014, was also an Argyll. As we talk about the scourge of PTSD that plagues his former colleagues, we should always remember the courage and valour of all military personnel.

Private Members' Business

We were mindful of the tragic circumstances that led Corporal Justin Stark to such a dark place when we announced an operational stress injury clinic for downtown Hamilton in January 2015. I was pleased to join my colleague, the hon. member for Durham, then minister of Veterans Affairs, for that announcement. The clinic would serve the Hamilton and Niagara areas, as well as parts of southwestern Ontario. All of these areas were previously served by a clinic in Toronto, and this brought the resources, counselling, and therapy closer to home for many veterans and personnel. One has to imagine that when dealing with such complex issues as mental health, operational stress injuries, and post-traumatic stress disorder, having these resources closer to home makes a huge difference in speedy diagnosis, treatment, recovery, and care.

This is a good and practical example of the kinds of things that Bill C-211 would help to facilitate. It would help to coordinate all of these resources at the federal, provincial, and territorial levels, and clinics such as this one that were funded by the federal government and operated by the province. Bill C-211 would set in motion a long-overdue and much-needed coordinated federal-provincial strategy, so that an inventory of such resources can be taken, gaps can be identified, and people in desperate need of help can be properly served.

Unfortunately, Corporal Stark is not an isolated example. When I chaired the veterans affairs committee, we heard expert testimony on post-traumatic stress disorder in our Canadian Armed Forces. What a tragedy that these brave women and men, who enlist to defend the freedoms we cherish and value so much as Canadians, are themselves imprisoned and thereby robbed of their own freedoms on their return from duty because of the psychological terror and devastating effects of PTSD. May this sadness move us to action.

While I have focused my examples thus far on military personnel and veterans, I know of many police officers, ambulance attendants, and firefighters in my community, the greater Hamilton area, who have been equally impacted by PTSD.

• (1125)

It is well known that among paramedics, the incidence of PTSD is very high. Almost a quarter will be impacted. Think about that. Almost a quarter of paramedics grapple with PTSD. These are the same people we count on in our hour of need. It is time we gave them the same priority they give us. It is time to take action as proposed by the hon. member for Cariboo—Prince George.

The only group of first responders for whom the rate of PTSD is worse than it is for paramedics is correctional officers, who have an incidence rate of 24% to 26%. When we talk about that, it is easy to understand the pressures they are under. When I researched my own private member's bill in the last Parliament, I encountered many correctional officers, and I have heard gut-wrenching accounts. Beneath the statistics, these are real stories, real people, real families, and real cries for help.

We know that what is stipulated in Bill C-211 is just a first step. It would require the Minister of Health to convene a conference with stakeholders from all relevant federal departments, provincial and territorial representatives, the medical community, and patient groups. It is a sound and logical step. Developing a framework is a necessary and needed result. It would be a step forward in

addressing the challenges, recognizing the symptoms, and providing timely diagnosis, thereby speeding access to treatment for PTSD.

It is a complex problem. It is not going to be solved overnight. A federal framework would only go so far, but it would bring together initiatives and legislation at the provincial level in a coordinated and national strategy. Is it not time?

To me, this is a simple decision. There is only one right answer. For the sake of the mental health of people who care for and protect and defend us every single day, I urge all members of this chamber to wholeheartedly support and vote in favour of Bill C-211.

I appreciate the opportunity to speak to one of the most important bills I have had to deal with since I was elected. God bless all our first responders, and God bless Canada.

• (1130)

Ms. Pam Damoff (Oakville North—Burlington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would first like to thank the member for Cariboo—Prince George for not only introducing this bill but for his tireless advocacy on this issue: the mental health of our veterans, public safety officers, and first responders. I would also like to thank the many people both here in the gallery and in our communities who have been advocates on this important issue.

The member's bill calls for a federal framework for post-traumatic stress disorder. It calls on the Minister of Health to work with the Minister of National Defence and the Minister of Veterans Affairs, along with the provinces and territories, representatives of the medical community, and patient groups, to develop a federal framework to address the challenges of recognizing the symptoms and providing timely diagnosis and treatment for post-traumatic stress disorder, PTSD.

I am very pleased that our government will be supporting this legislation, with some minor amendments. I will speak a little later about some of the concerns I personally have with the bill.

This is an issue that has actually touched this House, as we lost one of our own members to a post-traumatic stress injury. Lieutenant Colonel Sam Sharpe was first elected to the House of Commons in 1908 and re-elected in 1911 and 1917 as the member of Parliament for Ontario North. He was a sitting MP at the start of the First World War and helped raise the 116th Battalion, Canadian Expeditionary Force and commanded the battalion during its operations on the fields of Europe. His unit was present for the assault on Vimy Ridge and fought at Avion and Passchendaele.

After suffering mental injuries on the front, what at the time was called shell shock, he was hospitalized in England and subsequently returned to Canada. Lieutenant Colonel Sharpe died by suicide on May 25, 1918. Thankfully, our armed forces have come a long way since then and now recognize that mental injuries can also occur on the battlefield.

Private Members' Business

Just a few weeks ago, I met with Syd Gravel and Brad McKay, who wrote a guide to help first responders in the creation of peer and trauma support programs, entitled *Walk the Talk—First Responder Peer Support*. The two former police officers commented about how far the conversation had come since they built their own peer support networks in secret in 1988.

There has been a lot of work done in many provinces across Canada, including in my province of Ontario. My colleague, the Minister of Labour for Ontario, led efforts last spring that made it easier for first responders in Ontario to get treatment, created an awareness campaign, and required first responders to have a prevention plan.

I believe that the federal government can help other provinces and territories learn about the various best practices that have been created. While stakeholders are applauding the fact that this conversation is taking place, they know that there is still a lot of work to be done. Mental health and healthy inclusive workplaces are two areas where I am hoping, and working hard, to make a difference as a member of Parliament.

With regard to the specifics of Bill C-211, I applaud the member's efforts and his genuine concern for the mental health of our military, veterans, public safety officers, and first responders.

I do have concerns about the limitations in this particular bill about the mental health of our first responders and public safety officers. The bill invites the Minister of National Defence and the Minister of Veterans Affairs to a conference but leaves out the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness. The Minister of Public Safety has already been working, along with the Minister of Health, on creating a national strategy on this issue. Early last year, the Minister of Public Safety and his former parliamentary secretary held a national round table on post-traumatic stress injuries, or PTSD, and the effect on public safety officers.

As a member of the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security, I am extremely proud of our work last fall when we tabled the report, "Healthy Minds, Safe Communities: Supporting our Public Safety Officers through a National Strategy for Operational Stress Injuries", recognizing the need for a national strategy on operational stress injuries, not just post-traumatic stress disorder.

Any framework we develop should include policies on prevention, screening, education, intervention, and treatment. We heard from witnesses who told us that mental health injuries suffered by first responders and public safety officers on the job were far more extensive than just PTSD and included broader operational stress injuries. We heard that though many will develop PTSD, they are far more likely to suffer from depression and substance abuse. Sadly, they are more likely die by suicide.

We heard from witnesses who told us that the research and data within the military context is 15 years ahead of what is available with respect to public safety officers and that very little is known about the incidence and prevalence of OSIs among public safety officers.

●(1135)

During our study, we heard from the Canadian Institute for Military and Veteran Health Research, which is doing tremendous work to support our military personnel and veterans facing mental health issues.

Our committee called on the government to use our report to develop a national strategy; to create a Canadian institute for public safety officer health research, an advisory council, and an expert working group to develop policies; and to share research on prevention, screening, education, intervention, and treatment nationally. The committee also urged the government to study presumptive legislation for public safety officers, as several of our provincial cousins have.

That is why our committee recommended that PTSD be considered as falling within the broader health issue of operational stress injuries, defined as "persistent psychological difficulty resulting from operational duties performed while serving" as a public safety officer, along with other mental health problems, such as depression and substance abuse.

The committee heard from public safety officers regarding the uniqueness of their work environment and the fact that they see trauma in their own communities frequently. The officers could have connections and relationships with the people they serve.

Our committee called on the government to create a Canadian institute for public safety officer health research to "enhance the mental health and wellness of our Canadian public safety officers through evidence-based research, practices, policies and programs".

I was pleased to read the Minister of Public Safety's response to our report, in which he said that the government recognized the need for many of our recommendations. I know that the Minister of Public Safety shares my concerns about the mental wellness of our public safety officers. After all, we need to take care of our public safety officers, because they take care of us. We have a responsibility to return our military personnel and public safety officers to their families as we received them, mentally well.

Caring for the health of our public safety officers, both mentally and physically, is not only important to their well-being but ensures that our communities are safe. RCMP, police, firefighters, corrections officers, paramedics, aboriginal firefighters, parole officers, and those who work alongside them told the committee that their members can suffer greatly from mental health illnesses because of their jobs.

I also have concerns about the terminology used in Bill C-211. Mental health issues faced by our veterans and public safety officers are much broader than just post-traumatic stress disorder alone.

Private Members' Business

Since the public safety committee tabled our report, I have also heard from a number of nurses who have experienced operational stress injuries. One in particular stands out. An Oakville resident who had a long career as a nurse recently shared a personal story about a house fire that occurred more than 20 years ago, where a woman and her two children perished. The nurses who worked on the case faced severe psychological trauma. To those nurses, I want to recognize their injuries in this House and admit that we know very little about the impact of their jobs on their mental health, and we must do better.

I believe that a national strategy and the sharing of best practices by the federal government could benefit many employee groups who are suffering while recognizing the distinct differences in their work.

I know that the Minister of Health is aware of the effects traumatic events can have on our nurses. Recently, she wrote a letter outlining that she understands that caregivers and emergency staff who provide treatment are often dealing with difficult situations that may affect their own mental health and that there is a need to provide mental health support to our health care providers.

Finally, I believe that any conversation about this issue needs to include those stakeholders who have faced these issues, and they should be at the table as part of the discussion.

In conclusion, I am very pleased to support this bill. Bill C-211 has already raised, and will continue to raise, awareness on an important issue. Again, I applaud the hon. member on his efforts.

● (1140)

Mr. Jim Eglinski (Yellowhead, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to rise in the House today to speak in support of Bill C-211, an act respecting a federal framework on post-traumatic stress disorder, well known as PTSD.

Last Saturday, I had the privilege to attend the annual first responders appreciation dinner in my riding. Having served as an RCMP officer, this topic is very close to my heart.

Bill C-211 seeks to establish a national framework to ensure that our first responders, whether it be military, paramedics, police personnel, firefighters, emergency dispatchers, veterans, and corrections officers, get the timely access to the resources they need to deal with PTSD.

PTSD is classified as a psychiatric stress-related disorder that develops as a result of a traumatic event. PTSD can develop following direct or indirect exposure to violence, accidents, war, death, or terror attacks. PTSD experienced by first responders and military personnel is the result of years of stressful job-related calls, witnessing distressing deaths, and repeated violence.

Episodes may cause an affected person to become angry, irritable, jumpy, agitated, depressed, or frightened. Many have used alcohol and drugs and have damaged relationships because of this.

The bill, if passed, will require the Minister of Health to convene a conference with the Minister of National Defence, the Minister of Veterans Affairs, provincial and territorial counterparts, representatives of the medical community, and patient groups for the purpose of developing a comprehensive federal framework to address the

challenges of recognizing the symptoms and providing timely diagnosis and treatment of PTSD.

Every day, thousands of men and women across Canada go to work, whether first responders, police, firefighters, or military personnel, and they willingly put their lives on the line to support and protect Canadians and their country.

Their jobs demand that they be prepared to show up to any scenario at any time, ready to face the challenges of their line of work. They treat our wounds, they protect our communities, some witness some of the worst that humanity has to offer. Then they return home to their families and try to live a normal life.

When most of us would head in the opposite direction, they are the ones who run toward danger. Their heroic efforts sometimes mean they are left to deal with the haunting images, sounds, and smells, which will stay with these men and women for life. Being a witness to human tragedy and suffering can become difficult to cope with in the days, months and years afterward.

We can look today at what is happening in B.C. Our first responders are dealing with the opioid problem and how it is affecting their jobs.

As a former RCMP officer for 35 years, I personally know what first responders go through, both emotionally and physically when they arrive at a scene.

Many years ago when I was a young air cadet, probably around the age of 12, I remember talking to a lot of different veterans on Remembrance Day, and there were a lot in those days, about their war experiences. I remember one particular gentleman from our community who drank a lot. I remember him telling me that he drank to hide the past and the horrors of war. This was probably the first time I was introduced to PTSD.

As I went through my working career as an RCMP officer, I remember in the sixties when a friend of mine came off an extended period of being undercover, where he intermixed with some pretty wild and dangerous individuals. He could not switch back to a regular life and suffered immensely, both mentally and physically. He eventually had to leave the force. This was PTSD, but we did not know what was wrong with him at the time.

● (1145)

I had a very good friend who I will call Mr. T. He was a lot like the guy on TV, but he suffered for many years with PTSD. He could not pull those hidden demons from within himself. As his commander, he came to me and talked about suicide. He received help and I worked with him closely over the next decade and even after we both left our careers in the RCMP. He could not get rid of the ugliness with which he had to deal.

Private Members' Business

As I am saying this, I thinking of Mr. T, as he is not here anymore. He committed suicide two years ago. I wish he had called me as I would have gone wherever he was to help.

I can think of a number of my colleagues with whom I worked. A number of them drank too much, but were they doing this due to PTSD? Yes, they were. However, in all honesty, we did not know what it was. We did not know what to call it years ago.

I have to thank those members who have come forward in the last number of years, whether military, RCMP, paramedics, who were proud and strong enough to make public their problems and seek help.

It is out there among our first responders. As government we must work with provincial, territorial, and municipal governments to ensure that help is there for all first responders.

Unfortunately, there is a stigma around mental health issues, including PTSD. Those who are affected hate to admitting they need need assistance is showing weakness to their peers. Instead, they keep it to themselves, hidden, silently carrying a heavy weight until they can no longer bear it.

According to statistics by TEMA, an organization that supports people with PTSD through research, education, training and peer support, 188 Canadian public safety and military personnel have died by suicide since 2014. Five first responders and four military members have died by suicide in this year alone. That is nine people in only two months.

This is absolutely heartbreaking. These brave people risk their lives to serve their communities, so where are we when they need our help? They have served us, but we have not served them. This is why we so desperately need a national framework to address this issue.

The Prime Minister has already called on his ministers to act on PTSD and make the mental health of our men and women in uniform a priority, and I thank him for that.

In the mandate letter of the Minister of Health, she is called to “make high quality mental health services more available to Canadians who need them.”

In the mandate letter of the Minister of Veterans Affairs, he is directed to “Provide greater education, counselling, and training for families who are providing care and support to veterans living with physical and/or mental health issues as a result of their service... Work with the Minister of National Defence to develop a suicide prevention strategy for Canadian Armed Forces personnel and veterans.”

In the the mandate letter of the Minister of Public Safety, he is directed to “Work with provinces and territories and the Minister of Health to develop a coordinated national action plan on post-traumatic stress disorder, which disproportionately affects public safety officers.”

If that is not a clear directive from the Prime Minister to support exactly what the bill seeks to achieve, I do not know what is.

This is not a Liberal issue. It is not a Conservative issue. It is not any single party's issue. This is something that crosses party lines and it should be supported by all sides of the House.

Bill C-211 is an opportunity for all parliamentarians to stand together and acknowledge the very real impact that PTSD has on the lives of our men and women in uniform. The federal government must show leadership on this issue. I urge everyone in the House to support the bill. If we do not, we fail these brave men and women.

Most important, I want to thank my colleague from Cariboo—Prince George for his private member's bill, Bill C-211.

Mr. Earl Dreeshen (Red Deer—Mountain View, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Cariboo—Prince George for bringing forward Bill C-211 for bringing the matter to the attention of the House. I would also like to thank my good friend, the member for Yellowhead, for the work he has done and the passion he has for our military and our first responders, and the members of the NDP and the Liberal Party who have spoken about this. It is so important.

In the closing of this debate, as we get ready to again hear from the member for Cariboo—Prince George, I want to add a few comments about some of the things we see. So many of us, as we attend our Remembrance Day ceremonies, think about the importance of those who have gone before us to help protect us. I think of my wife's cousin, Everett Moore, who came back from the Second World War. He found it impossible to survive in the normal lifetime one would have expected. The war continued for him for 50 years, until he finally died. However, he did have good care. We had opportunities to visit. However, he was unable to come back and survive with that. At that time, people called it “shell shock”.

We have had so many opportunities to speak to people who are engaged in the military, so that brings it home for me. I really do understand what they go through and how difficult it is for families when such tragedies strike home. We have seen it. I think everyone in here has examples where that has happened, whether in the military, or with first responders.

The other experience I had was with the Pine Lake tornado in early 2000. As we were in it, we realized we had to be able to assist, and I was part of that. We saw the carnage that had taken place there. It was really difficult for individuals who were not trained to manage this. However, I think back to the great work done by our first responders in central Alberta. Every year, when we have the anniversary of that terrible natural disaster, we recognize the great work they did, as well as the seriousness of the loss of life.

We all recognize this. We see disasters happen, whether they are natural disasters or those that happen around the world where our men and women in our forces have to take charge or respond to terrible evils. We see it so often. What we have heard today is a great heartfelt response and support for those men and women who put their lives on the line daily and who bring it home to their families.

It is important that we recognize more can be done and that we have to go forward.

I would like to thank the member for Cariboo—Prince George. I want to thank everyone in the House for recognizing how important this is. Hopefully, we can move forward with unanimous support of Bill C-211.

• (1150)

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for Yellowhead and the member for Flamborough—Glanbrook for their passionate speeches in support of Bill C-211, and indeed our first responders, military members, and veterans. I also want to thank my good colleague from Barrie—Innisfil, who happened to sponsor this bill, and is a tireless champion of our first responders, veterans, and military. I also want to take a moment to pay tribute to and thank our colleague from Oakville North—Burlington. I know that this is a non-partisan issue, and she has done some incredible work championing for our first responders, veterans, and military.

I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge those who are with us on the Hill today, and those who are tuning in on the live stream. It is so important that this bill pass. A lot of thanks have been coming to us for bringing forth this bill, but I think all of us owe a debt of gratitude and thanks to those who are with us on the Hill, because they are the ones who really champion and stand up for us and our families moving forward and every day.

Bill C-211 seeks to establish a cohesive and coherent national framework to ensure our military, first responders, paramedics, police, veterans, and correctional officers get timely access to the resources they need to deal with PTSD. I welcome the revisions that will strengthen the intent of this bill.

I also want to caution all of us here that we should not be doing anything to weaken the intent of the bill, or allow the current or successive governments to not live up to the responsibility that is due to our first responders, veterans, and military.

The bill sends a message to our silent sentinels that this is not a battle they have to fight by themselves. It is up to all of us federal, provincial, and territorial legislators to come up with a plan to ensure no one is left behind, and that our terminology and laws are consistent across the country from the east coast to the west coast. The reality is that experiencing human tragedy affects all of us differently. These incidents and experiences cannot be erased from our memory. Most of us can never imagine what our warriors go through on a daily basis, the sights, the sounds, the smells, and the images. It affects their lives and the lives of friends and families of those who put themselves in harm's way.

We have an opportunity to give back in a small way today by ensuring that our protectors have the opportunity to receive a basic standard of treatment to deal with their post-traumatic stress disorder.

Private Members' Business

A national framework would ensure that a national discussion is undertaken on this issue. To date, we have had a great discussion on mental health and mental health injuries, occupational stress injuries, OSIs, and PTSD that our first responders, veterans, and military face. It is on us to continue this discussion.

Every year, a conversation happens on best practices, on treatment options, and on how best we can help as a society. The intent of this bill is to ensure that there is always a line item in our federal books, because for far too long we have left our first responders, military, and veterans behind.

I am asking for the support of all members today to ensure that Bill C-211 makes it to third reading, so that no other person is told that he or she is being too sensitive, to suck it up, to get over it. Having a standard diagnosis of care for post-traumatic stress disorder would change lives. Having consistent care and terminology with respect to occupational stress injuries, PTSD, or even with respect to industry terms, a standard of care, diagnosis, treatment, and terminology would save lives.

Let us get this bill to committee where we can discuss and amend it. Let us strengthen it. Let us make it stronger for those who put their lives on the line for all of us.

In closing, as members from all sides of the House rise to cast their votes, I ask only that they remember those who put their lives on the line, often without thanks, to protect our Canadian values and our way of life, because freedom is not free. There is a cost to freedom, and that cost is a human cost. We can do better. Let us leave a legacy of doing better, and doing better for those who put their lives on the line for us every day.

• (1155)

[*Translation*]

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

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

And five or more members having risen:

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 93, the recorded division stands deferred until Wednesday, March 8, immediately before the time provided for private members' business.

*Government Orders***GOVERNMENT ORDERS**

● (1200)

[English]

PRECLEARANCE ACT, 2016

BILL C-23—TIME ALLOCATION MOTION

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I move:

That in relation to Bill C-23, An Act respecting the preclearance of persons and goods in Canada and the United States, not more than one further sitting day shall be allotted to the consideration of the second reading stage of the said bill; and

That fifteen minutes before the expiry of the time provided for Government Orders on the day allotted to the consideration of the second reading stage of the said bill, any proceedings before the House shall be interrupted, if required for the purpose of this Order, and in turn every question necessary for the disposal of the said stage of the bill shall be put forthwith and successively without further debate or amendment.

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 67.1 there will now be a 30-minute question period. It is at this time that I invite hon. members to rise in their place to give an indication of the number of members who would wish to participate in the 30-minute question period. That will allow an allocation of time and seeing the numbers in the usual form, members should allow approximately one minute for their interventions and the same in response from the government side. We will now proceed with that question period.

The hon. member for Parry Sound—Muskoka.

Hon. Tony Clement (Parry Sound—Muskoka, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to participate in this debate. I wonder whether the minister could comment on a quote from May 2, 2013 from the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness in this place, where he said:

obviously it is unfortunate when debate in the House is curtailed by the use of time allocation or closure. That impinges upon the democratic right of members of Parliament to adequately consider matters that are before the House.

I wonder whether he can explain why he has changed his mind on this matter.

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are moving into what will be the fourth day of debate at second reading on Bill C-23. Including today, there will have been over 10 hours of debate. So far, 18 members of Parliament have delivered speeches on Bill C-23 and obviously there will be more to come today. The point is that the detailed work with respect to Bill C-23 is the work that is done in committee, and members, I am sure, are anxious to get into that work so that they can consider the bill in detail. That will be followed by report stage, which will be followed by third reading. This is all part of a very deliberative process where members of Parliament will certainly have ample time to express their opinions. I note also that the hon. gentleman is generally supportive of the legislation.

The Deputy Speaker: Before we go to further questions, as a reminder to hon. members, in this 30-minute question period, the preponderance of questions are allotted to the opposition. This does

not exclude members from the government side from posing a few questions in the course of the 30 minutes, but generally, it is for opposition members.

The hon. member for Cowichan—Malahat—Langford.

● (1205)

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we are starting to lose track of the number of times the Liberals have used this measure to curtail debate. One of the most solemn things that we have as a duty in the House as members of Parliament is to bring forward our constituents' views. By cutting off this debate, the minister is not allowing us to do that. There are very real concerns about this bill. I know that members on that side of the House like to dismiss them, but it is our job to give them voice in the House.

To pre-empt the minister if he wishes to reference our vote on Bill C-37, may I remind him that we did that vote because it was to save Canadian lives, but this bill has been languishing on the docket since June of last year. I do not understand what the rush is.

Hon. Ralph Goodale: Mr. Speaker, indeed there has been ample time for public examination and consideration of this bill. The international agreement upon which it is founded was signed in the spring of 2015. It was tabled in the House of Commons at the same time. The legislation to provide legal force to the agreement was tabled in June of last year. It has all been in the public domain for all of that time. The focus generally has only occurred in the last number of weeks, but the fact of the matter is there have been months and months of public opportunity to examine this legislation.

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, even though there may be some agreement on different sides in terms of the bill itself, it still is incredibly important that members of Parliament be allowed to voice their concerns and reflect their constituents' wishes.

It is interesting that back on June 3, 2015, the parliamentary secretary to the government House leader said:

The government, by once again relying on a time allocation motion to get its agenda passed, speaks of incompetence. It speaks of a genuine lack of respect for parliamentary procedure and ultimately for Canadians.

I would say that we are seeing a real lack of competence on the government side in terms of being able to work together with all sides of the House to get its agenda passed.

What are the plans going forward? Is this what we have to look forward to in the next two and half a years, that every time MPs want to speak, they are going to be shut down by the Liberals?

Hon. Ralph Goodale: Mr. Speaker, again, I would remind the member that this subject matter has been in the public domain for detailed discussion and debate going back to the spring of 2015. The legislation has been on the Order Paper since June of last year. Already in the debate there have been four days devoted to second reading. There have been 10 hours of debate. Eighteen members of Parliament have delivered speeches, and more will do so today. This will be followed by the committee stage, report stage, and third reading stage of the bill. There is going to be a lot of opportunity for members to express their opinions.

Government Orders

I want to thank the hon. member for the support that her party has shown for this legislation.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Beloeil—Chambly, NDP): Mr. Speaker, just because a bill has been placed on the Order Paper does not mean that members have had the opportunity to debate it. Given that the government has claimed to want to elevate the role of Parliament, I find it astonishing that the Liberals are now saying that this is no big deal because the bill was introduced in June. We are debating the bill now, and the government wants to limit the time we have for that. That is very disappointing. I know that the previous government liked to use this sort of tactic, but it seems the current government does as well.

That is all the more worrisome when we consider how concerned Canadians are about this bill. It is not just Canadians who are concerned. I think that something major is happening in the world and the government is ignoring it.

[*English*]

A great example of that is the Netherlands which ended negotiations on pre-clearance in light of Trump's policies. Does the minister think that the Netherlands is out to lunch on that, or does he agree that if, as he says, the current system works so well, and we agree, why is it necessary to give so many additional powers to American agents? As people say, "If it ain't broke, don't fix it."

Hon. Ralph Goodale: Mr. Speaker, I would point out that this whole issue was given a great deal of prominence in March of last year, just about a full year ago, when the Prime Minister and the president of the United States at that time discussed it very much in detail and very positively. At that time, the proposed legislation was fully described. It was tabled in June. I find it very interesting that in that whole period of time, from the spring of 2015 to June 2016, until about two weeks ago, not a single question about this proposed legislation was asked by the official opposition or the NDP, not one question.

• (1210)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. minister for what has been put forward here as excuses, but I am not persuaded at all that this is an appropriate time for time allocation.

At the largest level of concern that I have for parliamentary democracy, it is that what became common under the Harper administration is now being used all too frequently, even if less, by the new government. I had been hoping that contained in the mandate letters to the ministers, and I remembered clearly the mandate letter to the hon. government House leader, there would be instructions to be more transparent, to allow opposition voices to be heard.

In my case, as a member of Parliament for the Green Party but without adequate seats to become a recognized party, we do not get opportunities to speak to the bill, have not spoken to it yet, and the Liberals, just like the Conservatives, pass special motions at every committee, depriving me of my ability to put forward amendments at report stage.

The combined effort of all this is that it does not feel all that different from what occurred before. I am hearing real concerns about Bill C-23 from my constituents.

Hon. Ralph Goodale: Mr. Speaker, the debate is ongoing. There are many stages yet to be undertaken. The bill will receive full and proper ventilation.

I hope many of those voices in the public will come forward to express their opinion, like, for example, the transportation entities that work along the west coast in the railway business, in the cruise ship business in and out of the port of Victoria that are very anxious to see this legislation adopted, as is the Chamber of Commerce of the City of Quebec, the airport authorities at Billy Bishop in Toronto and at Jean Lesage in Quebec City, the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, the British Columbia Chamber of Commerce, the Quebec Chamber of Commerce. I hope all of those voices will be heard in the course of this debate because they strongly support this legislation.

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a quote I would like to read back to the minister, because this was after the last election.

On November 2, 2015, the *Regina Leader Post* said that this minister said at the time, two days before he became the minister, that Conservative tactics like omnibus bills and time allocation procedures, which this government has used, made Canadians feel that "their democracy was eroding."

Will the minister then agree with himself in 2015 that he himself is now eroding Canadian democracy in 2016?

Hon. Ralph Goodale: Mr. Speaker, the debates around different pieces of legislation always involve different configurations of members of Parliament.

I think it is important to note in this case that the legislation is obviously advanced and supported by the government. It is also being supported in principle by the official opposition. That represents a very large majority of members of the House of Commons.

It is not unreasonable to allow the debate to proceed in an orderly fashion with a reasonable amount for second reading and then the detailed work at committee stage, and especially so when there is such a large percentage of members in the House who do in fact support the legislation.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have voted in favour of time allocation only once since I first became a member of the House. It was a few weeks ago because the lives of too many Canadians were at risk.

I will repeat what the minister said earlier. He said that 18 members of Parliament have delivered speeches on this bill. That is 18 of 338 members. The government is imposing a gag order on an awful lot of ridings for a bill that is far from perfect as it now stands.

I would like the minister to explain to us why it is so urgent to ram this bill through when so much work still needs to be done to get it right.

*Government Orders**[English]*

Hon. Ralph Goodale: Mr. Speaker, the point is that those steps that might be taken to perfect the bill will be steps that members deem necessary when it gets to the committee stage.

The speeches that take place at second reading are largely, according to the rules of the House of Commons, speeches that discuss the bill in principle. The core work, the heavy lifting, occurs in committee, and that is where people like those I have just mentioned, from the airport authority in Quebec City, the Chamber of Commerce in Quebec City, the Mayor of Quebec City can express their support for the legislation, as will those who are anxious to see improved services at Billy Bishop in Toronto, on the train service between Montreal and New York City, on the Rocky Mountain Railway that goes from British Columbia into the United States, the cruise ship business along the west coast, all of those enterprises stand to see major improvements under this legislation.

It is important to remember that the border between Canada and the United States handles 400,000 travellers every single day, and \$2.5 billion in trade every single day. Those are indeed important reasons to move in a measured but expeditious manner to pass this legislation.

• (1215)

[Translation]

Mr. Matthew Dubé: Mr. Speaker, I found it interesting to hear the minister say earlier that not a single question was asked. The reason for that, first of all, was that the bill was introduced just a few days before the summer recess, just before we returned to our ridings, so, of course, we did not really have an opportunity to ask any questions last spring.

When we returned in the fall, we were asking questions about Bill C-51 and we introduced a bill to repeal it. We were dealing with the consultations that the minister launched in order to take attention away from the issue. There is also Bill C-22. The government is trying to tell us that it is no big deal, and that, if we have concerns about Bill C-23, we will work on it in committee and everyone will have a chance to be heard.

I will use the example of Bill C-22. It is ironic to be talking about this on the very day that we arrived in the House to find that all of the amendments that were adopted by the committee and supported by experts have been rejected by the government.

I would therefore like the minister to explain to me why he has a problem with questions from the opposition. Why should we trust the committee process for a bill so vital to Canadians' rights and privacy? The last time, the government decided to backpedal and not listen to the witnesses or the committee members, even though we were dealing with an issue that should have been non-partisan.

[English]

Hon. Ralph Goodale: Mr. Speaker, the hon. gentleman is rather overstating his point.

The committee work on Bill C-22 was very important, and has shaped a number of revisions and changes in that legislation to narrow the scope of the exemptions and exclusions, and that will represent a very substantial improvement in the legislation.

Mr. Tom Kmiec: Mr. Speaker, I have another question then to the minister, if he could answer this one.

He just said that 18 members of the House have spoken over a four-day period on this bill. There have been many bills that have come before this House that have had many more days of debate. The minister is also assuming how members of this House will vote based on how the 18 members have spoken.

However, I base my thoughts around how a member will speak based on what they say in the House and how that will transfer to their vote. How can the minister assume how all the members on this side of the House will vote when he has not even heard from them at second reading?

Hon. Ralph Goodale: Mr. Speaker, if the hon. gentleman is hereby withdrawing the support of the official opposition for Bill C-23, that will come as news to his critic.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, with a second opportunity, which I greatly appreciate, there was another concern I had in the way the minister has set out the opportunities we have all had. I was in the 41st Parliament.

I am sure the hon. minister will agree that when an agreement such as the one with the United States on pre-clearance is tabled in this place, that does not create any opportunity for debate. It is merely tabled. If one of the larger parties chooses to make it an opposition day motion, then there is an opportunity for debate.

However, there has in fact been no opportunity for debate on this pre-clearance agreement with the U.S. administration in this place until very recently, in the 10 hours of debate which the minister references. The concern I have, and I would hope the hon. minister would share, is this was negotiated by the Harper administration with the Obama administration.

Now we have the Trump administration, and the expression of a desire to have extreme vetting of people who come into the United States by officials I cannot begin to believe will be familiar with the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

This needs more debate.

• (1220)

Hon. Ralph Goodale: Mr. Speaker, the point is that the more that we can provide for border crossing inspections to be done on the Canadian side of the border before a person crosses the border, the stronger the position of the traveller. They will have the protection of Canadian law, the protection of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the protection of the Canadian Bill of Rights, and they will have protection of the Canadian Human Rights Act.

This legislation facilitates more work to be done in the inspection of travellers in Canada before the traveller leaves. That is very much in the best interests of those travellers.

[Translation]

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this is my first term in the House, and I am disappointed at the Liberal government's repeated use of time allocation, as are the people of Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, whom I represent. I think time allocation is a tool to be used sparingly.

Government Orders

I voted in favour of it on the opioid issue because lives are at stake, but I will not vote in favour of time allocation in this case, and I do not find referral to committee all that reassuring. Having been a member of the Special Joint Committee on Physician-Assisted Dying and the Special Committee on Electoral Reform, I have little faith in the committee part of the process.

On February 19, I invited people to my riding office for coffee, and they made an effort to come out and talk to me about their concerns related to Bill C-23. Because I represent them, it is important to me that we have time to speak in the House so we can express our views and convey our constituents' concerns about Bill C-23. That speaking time in the House is critical, and sending the bill to committee is not going to make it happen.

[*English*]

Hon. Ralph Goodale: Again, Mr. Speaker, I would point out that there have been three days of debate already and a fourth one has yet to be undertaken. There will be opportunities for members of Parliament to raise their concerns and ask their questions. There is also the daily question period that is an ongoing preoccupation of the House of Commons. I am more than anxious to hear all of the questions that hon. members may wish to raise. I will try my best to provide good, solid, substantive answers so that they know exactly what the government's intention is with respect to this legislation and the details of how the legislation may affect their constituents.

It is my intention and very firm desire to be completely transparent about this subject matter, because this is good legislation, it will be of assistance to Canada and Canadians, and it will make sure that more people can travel back and forth across the border with pre-clearance in Canada under the protection of the Canadian charter.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the many fine words from my colleague with regard to the economic value of pre-clearance, which many Canadians are already very much aware of. Among the actions the minister is taking is enabling other airports the opportunity to have pre-clearance. I am wondering if he could comment about the communities that will have pre-clearance service and its benefits.

I cite as an example the Toronto international airport. From what I understand, if pre-clearance was taken away, half of the direct routes would not be possible. I wonder if the minister could comment, because it emphasizes just how important pre-clearance is.

Hon. Ralph Goodale: Mr. Speaker, the airport that services the hon. gentleman's constituency in Winnipeg has the benefit of pre-clearance, but in my home city of Regina, that benefit is not available. There are eight airports in Canada that presently have the service: Vancouver, Calgary, Edmonton, Winnipeg, Toronto Pearson, Ottawa, Montreal, and Halifax. We intend, in our agreement with the United States, to extend the service to Jean Lesage airport in Quebec City and Billy Bishop airport on Toronto Island. We also intend to extend the service to the train that runs between Montreal and New York City, as well as the Rocky Mountaineer railway that travels through southern British Columbia and into the United States.

The objective is to make this service more readily available to more Canadians. There are presently 12 million Canadians a year who benefit from pre-clearance and one of the key advantages is the

one the hon. gentleman mentioned. Once people have gone through pre-clearance and gotten on the plane, they can then land at any airport in the United States, not just those that have international customs facilities. That means that instead of servicing just 27 airports in the United States, flights out of Toronto can actually land at more than 50.

• (1225)

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are talking about time allocation. I hear the minister making some arguments in favour of time allocation in this case, arguments I do not think many members are finding convincing. Of course, many of those same arguments could have applied to other cases of time allocation that were undertaken under the previous government and that this member and others positively railed against as signalling the end of democracy.

I want to ask a very specific question of the minister. Could he articulate what the operating principle is for distinguishing between the kind of time allocation that he thinks is okay and the kind of time allocation that he thinks is not okay? It seems to me that it is a purely partisan filter, but if there is some operating principle, the House would be very interested in hearing it.

Hon. Ralph Goodale: Mr. Speaker, it is a judgment call in each case about how the debate has been proceeding, whether members have had an opportunity to present themselves and present their cases, how much additional time is necessary to allow a subject matter to be thoroughly ventilated, and what is fair and reasonable in the circumstances.

Given the number of days that have already been devoted to this item of business at second reading, with committee stage, third reading, report stage yet to come, not to mention passage through the Senate, it is a reasonable proposition to say that after one more day, the House should vote at second reading and express itself in principle on the legislation. Then, at committee, we can get into the details and go through the further and subsequent stages, all of which will ensure that members of Parliament have a good and fair opportunity to represent their constituents.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Matthew Dubé: Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that, contrary to what the minister said, second reading is much more than simply an opportunity to talk about our principles. It is an opportunity to discuss the concerns and issues raised by Canadians.

I want to come back to the question I asked in my first speech on this matter. The Liberals keep singing the praises of pre-clearance. That is fine, and we recognize the benefits associated with it. However, I have to come back to the original question we have been asking for weeks now, one that the government seems incapable of answering: if the current pre-clearance system is working so well, why do the Liberals feel the need to authorize American officers on Canadian soil to carry firearms and do strip searches without a Canadian officer present, as well as detain and interrogate Canadians and permanent residents who choose to leave the pre-clearance area, because, for example, they consider the questioning unreasonable?

Government Orders

In response to my question, I have heard only economic arguments. We recognize the economic value of this measure. We are already benefiting from this aspect.

Can the minister tell me why, if the current system is working well, he felt the need to grant those officers additional powers in order to go ahead with that agreement?

[English]

Hon. Ralph Goodale: Mr. Speaker, indeed the powers that are involved in Bill C-23 are relatively small in comparison to what exist at the present time. The changes that are contemplated here are not a huge deviation from what already exist.

In the case of firearms, I would point out that the arrangement provided in the agreement and in the legislation is completely and mutually reciprocal. In other words, firearms are permitted on the Canadian side when firearms are permitted on the American side, and vice versa. To give a practical example of that, firearms are carried by CBSA officers at some border points across the country, but they are specifically not carried when those CBSA officers are dealing with passengers inside airline terminals. That is the rule that applies to CBSA. Governed by the principle of reciprocity, that is exactly the same rule that will apply to U.S. officers operating in Canada. They will not carry firearms when they are dealing with passengers inside airline terminals. That is the principle of reciprocity, and it is perfectly mutual in all respects under this legislation.

• (1230)

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, I have a brief follow-up to my previous question. I asked the minister what is the operating principle for distinguishing between the kind of time allocation that he thinks is acceptable and the kind that he thinks is not, and effectively he said it is a subjective evaluation of reasonableness under the circumstances.

The way that this process normally works is that the House leaders discuss the time required for the debate. That evaluation of reasonableness is subjective; it is dependent on the circumstances and the issues. However, that happens through a conversation among the parties. It is not just one party, the government alone deciding what it thinks is reasonable, probably much of the time being what is in its interest.

I want to ask the minister if it is about this genuine evaluation of what makes sense under the circumstances, why not work collaboratively with the other House leaders rather than imposing this? Does this not seem a lot like what they railed against, which was the government making determinations on its own about how much time should be allowed for debate?

Hon. Ralph Goodale: Mr. Speaker, those discussions about the management of time in the House are discussions that are typically undertaken by the House leaders for the respective political parties. They have a meeting at least once a week where they consider the legislative program going forward over the next couple of weeks, and try, in a reasonable fashion, to share time appropriately and make sure that business can proceed in an orderly fashion, that decisions are allowed to be taken, and votes are held and so forth. It is up to the House leaders to manage that time and to make the best use of the time in the Canadian public interest.

Reasonability is something that different House leaders might view differently, depending on their perspective and where they sit in the House. However, in all my time here, which goes right back to 1974, I have never seen a more reasonable House leader than the one who currently sits and represents the Government of Canada in this Parliament.

[Translation]

The Deputy Speaker: This concludes the 30-minute question period.

It is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith the question on the motion now before the House.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Deputy Speaker: In my opinion, the yeas have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Deputy Speaker: Call in the members.

• (1310)

[English]

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

(Division No. 203)

YEAS

Members

Aldag	Alghabra
Amos	Anandasangaree
Arseneault	Arya
Ayoub	Badawey
Bagnell	Bains
Baylis	Beech
Bennett	Bibeau
Bittle	Blair
Boissonnault	Bossio
Bratina	Breton
Brison	Caesar-Chavannes
Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)	Casey (Charlottetown)
Chagger	Chen
Cuzner	Dabrusin
Damoff	DeCoursey
Dhaliwal	Dhillon
Di Iorio	Dubourg
Duclos	Duguid
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Dzerowicz
Easter	Ehsassi
El-Khoury	Ellis
Erskine-Smith	Eyking
Eyolfson	Fergus
Fillmore	Finnigan
Fonseca	Fragiskatos
Fraser (West Nova)	Fraser (Central Nova)
Freeland	Garneau

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Gould
Grewal
Hardie
Holland
Hussen
Iacono
Jones
Jowhari
Khalid
Lamoureux
Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)
Lebouthillier
Leslie
Lightbound
Long
Ludwig
Maloney
May (Cambridge)
McDonald
McKay
MacKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
Mendès
Mihychuk
Soeurs)
Monsef
Morrissey
Nassif
O'Connell
Oliver
Ouелlette
Peterson
Philpott
Poissant
Ratansi
Rodriguez
Rota
Ruimy
Sahota
Sajjan
Sangha
Scarpaleggia
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Hajdu
Hehr
Housefather
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Joly
Jordan
Kang
Lametti
Lapointe
LeBlanc
Lemieux
Levitt
Lockhart
Longfield
MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)
McCrimmon
McGuinty
McKenna
McLeod (Northwest Territories)
Mendicino
Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-
Morneau
Murray
Nault
Oliphant
O'Regan
Peschisolido
Petitpas Taylor
Picard
Qualtrough
Rioux
Romanado
Rudd
Rusnak
Saini
Samson
Sarai
Schieffe
Shanahan
Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)
Sikand
Sohi
Tabbara
Tassi
Vandal
Vaughan
Whalen
Wilson-Raybould
Young

Kitchen
Kwan
Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Lebel
Lobb
MacGregor
Maguire
Masse (Windsor West)
May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
McColeman
Motz
Nantel
Nicholson
Plamondon
Rankin
Reid
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Sansoucy
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Lake
Laverdière
Liepert
Lukiwski
MacKenzie
Marcil
Mathysen
McCauley (Edmonton West)
McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)
Mulcair
Nater
O'Toole
Quach
Rayes
Rempel
Ritz
Saroya
Shields
Stanton
Stubbs
Thériault
Van Kesteren
Vecchio
Wagantall
Warkentin
Waugh
Weir
Yurdiaga

PAIRED

Members

Moore

Sgro — 2

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

[*Translation*]

I wish to inform the House that because of the proceedings on the time allocation motion, government orders will be extended by 30 minutes.

● (1315)

[*English*]

SECOND READING

The House resumed from February 24 consideration of the motion that Bill C-23, An Act respecting the preclearance of persons and goods in Canada and the United States, be read the second time and referred to a committee, and of the amendment.

The Deputy Speaker: When the House last took up debate on the question, the hon. member for Yellowhead had three minutes left in the time for his remarks after which there will be five minutes for questions and comments.

The hon. member for Yellowhead.

Mr. Jim Eglinski (Yellowhead, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise again to speak to Bill C-23, an act respecting the pre-clearance of persons and goods in Canada and the United States.

Back in 2011, former prime minister Stephen Harper and former president Barack Obama announced the “Beyond the Border: A Shared Vision for Perimeter Security and Economic Competitiveness”. This declaration—

Mr. David Sweet: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. My hon. colleague is just three seats away from me and it is absolutely impossible for me to hear him with all the din over here. I would ask members to respect their colleague and to please quiet down and come to order.

NAYS

Members

Abouttaif
Albrecht
Anderson
Ashton
Barlow
Berthold
Blaney (North Island—Powell River)
Boulerice
Brassard
Brown
Carrie
Christopherson
Cooper
Diotte
Donnelly
Dubé
Dusseault
Eglinski
Finley
Généreux
Gladu
Gourde
Harder
Jeneroux
Kelly

Albas
Allison
Arnold
Aubin
Bergen
Blaikie
Block
Boutin-Sweet
Brosseau
Calkins
Choquette
Clement
Deltell
Doherty
Dreeshen
Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)
Duvall
Falk
Fortin
Genuis
Godin
Hardcastle
Hoback
Johns
Kent

Government Orders

The Deputy Speaker: I thank the hon. member for Flamborough—Glanbrook for his intervention. It seems to have had the desired effect. We will continue with debate on Bill C-23.

The hon. member for Yellowhead.

Mr. Jim Eglinski: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague next door.

That declaration had deepened co-operation at the border between Canada and the United States and it would give us an opportunity to exchange best practices. We have successfully launched the automated biometric-based system to counter identity fraud, and we signed a historic agreement on land, rail, and air transport.

We have NEXUS, which is a very simple process to speed the movement of people across the borders from Canada to the United States, and vice versa. I am a proud NEXUS card carrier. I think close to 1.5 million people in Canada have NEXUS cards. It streamlines movement not only in Canada but going to the United States and back.

However, last year I went on a holiday to Mexico and I had to go through customs in the United States. There was a long line of people. My wife pointed out to me that there was a NEXUS line. No one was there, and we had our NEXUS cards. She went through just as slick as could be. I had problems because I put the wrong information in. The lights shone and everything stopped. By the time I answered the questions to verify who I was, corrected the mistakes I had made, and got through, it took about 45 minutes to an hour. My wife looked at me, and she was very mad. I was not sure why. I looked over at the other line that we did not go through, which had been really long, and those people were already gone. I was the last person to go through security.

I bring that up because it was mentioned in the House by some of our opposition members to my left, not across, that their people were having problems, and that the extra authority being given to the border guards under this great Bill C-23 was posing problems. Most of those problems come from either mistakes being made by individuals who are going through, or by their body motions, or the suspicions they might be giving the security guards. It is very important that if our security guards, whether Canadians working on the U.S. side or Americans working on the Canadian side, have reason to believe a person or persons are involved in suspicious activity that they should be able to detain and question them to see what is going on. They cannot hold them, but they can turn them over to Canadian officials, because they are doing those security checks on Canadian land and are subject to Canadian laws.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I recognize this is good news legislation in the sense that millions of Canadians benefit every year from pre-clearance. I appreciate the story the member across the way put on the record. At the end of the day, Canadians, and Canada as a whole, benefit from pre-clearance. It is important to recognize the economic value of this, whether with respect to our tourism industry or even our products. The potential going forward into the future is really encouraging.

The legislation deals with pre-clearance, meaning individuals and merchandise can be pre-cleared before arriving in the U.S. This allows them to fly to many other jurisdictions in the U.S. which they otherwise would not have been able to if that pre-clearance did not

exist. Does the member see this as a very strong thing on which we should continue to move forward?

• (1320)

Mr. Jim Eglinski: Mr. Speaker, the member is absolutely correct. It will speed things up. This is not anything new to Canada. I mentioned in my speech last week about CANPASS, which is the pre-clearance for small private aircraft flying to and from Canada. People give their information an hour before they cross into the U.S. border and because that information is already there, border officials know who is arriving, where they are coming from, and where they are going. Within a few minutes of arriving, they have gone through the customs check. In the past, it often took well over an hour. This will speed up trade and commerce between Canada and the United States, and that is a good thing.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have heard some concerns about the bill with respect to the protections that might exist, and about the way in which screening happens in the United States. However, it is important to underline that we are supporting the bill because the screening that takes place will be on Canadian soil and is subject to Canadian laws and human rights protections. Also, it provides people with better opportunities to leave that situation if they do not like what is going on, opportunities that would not exist if they were being screened on the other side of the border. Therefore, the bill not only facilitates commerce and travel, but also provides for effective protection of human rights.

I wonder if the member could comment on the advantages that come with this legislation, and how it continues the good work that began under former prime minister Stephen Harper.

Mr. Jim Eglinski: Mr. Speaker, the member is correct. U.S. border guards working on Canadian soil to pre-screen Canadians going across into the United States have to do it according to the laws of Canada. Holding people back for a bit of extra questioning is done in accordance with Canadian law. That is good. No one will be able to abuse the system.

There are rumours out there that they will have the power to detain and hold Canadians. That is not correct. If there is some suspicion that may lead that way, they have to call Canadian authorities who will then follow the process.

However, it will be good to expedite travel between Canada and the United States, and for trade.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I do not think anyone objects to the notion of pre-clearance. It currently is working fine. The concern is around the additional powers for U.S. officials to, for instance, hold people who have decided they no longer want to cross into the United States. They can hold them for further questioning and continue to keep them within the jurisdiction of that pre-clearance U.S. space.

Could the member explain why we need to give more pre-clearance powers to U.S. officials than those they have now?

Government Orders

Mr. Jim Eglinski: Mr. Speaker, for persons acting suspiciously, whether at a border crossing or at a road check on the side of a highway where people are pulled over for impaired driving, those who drive up, turn around, and take off, police officers should be suspicious enough to follow them. Those people could be guilty of either impaired driving or another crime, maybe trafficking drugs.

Due diligence and following through is good police work. If people are acting in a very suspicious nature, or are very nervous, or are turning around and leaving, customs officers doing due diligence to protect the rights of Canadians should stop those people to see why they do not want to go through a border check.

• (1325)

Ms. Pam Damoff (Oakville North—Burlington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise to discuss Bill C-23, which would allow for the expansion of pre-clearance operations. This is the system that, for over 60 years, has allowed travellers in Canadian airports, currently Vancouver, Calgary, Edmonton, Winnipeg, Toronto Pearson, Ottawa, Montreal, and Halifax, to go through American customs and immigration procedures in Canada. It saves travellers having to wait in long customs lineups once they arrive in the U.S., enables direct flights to U.S. airports that otherwise only accept domestic travel, and allows Canadians to undergo American border procedures while under the protective umbrella of Canadian law and the Canadian Constitution. This arrangement, which is currently in place in eight of our airports, has been an overwhelming success for ordinary Canadians as well as for Canadian business.

Recently, the Minister of Public Safety told the House:

Four hundred thousand people move back and forth across the Canada-U.S. border every single day and \$2.4 billion in trade moves back and forth across that border every day. We have to make that border secure and we have to make it efficient for the movement of people and goods.

In listening to the debate on this bill, it seems that there is widespread agreement among hon. members that pre-clearance is a good thing, and I am glad to hear that. However, I have also heard members of the NDP and the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands say that while they are in favour of pre-clearance, they want it to continue under the current legislative framework, and they do not understand why new legislation is necessary. I have also heard from constituents who have expressed concerns about the bill because of misinformation, so I appreciate this opportunity to explain it.

The short answer is this. If we stick with the current legislative framework, we remain stuck with the current pre-clearance locations, with no opportunity to expand to other locations, such as the Billy Bishop airport in Toronto, the Jean Lesage airport in Quebec City, Montreal Central Station, and the Rocky Mountaineer in Vancouver. If, on the other hand, we want more Canadians in more parts of the country to reap the considerable full benefits of pre-clearance, including more convenient travel to and trade with the United States, the way to do that is to pass this bill.

In my opinion, the most important thing to bear in mind is this: Canadians will continue to travel to the U.S., whether or not we have pre-clearance. However, with this pre-clearance legislation in place, U.S. officers must exercise their duties in accordance with Canadian law, including the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the Canadian Bill of Rights, and the Canadian Human Rights Act. Ports of entry within the United States have none of these safeguards.

Without pre-clearance service at Toronto's Pearson International Airport, it could not offer direct flights to almost half its destinations in the United States, because those airports do not have customs and immigration facilities. With pre-clearance, it has direct flights to 50 U.S. airports, as opposed to only 27 if pre-clearance did not exist.

Pre-clearance operations necessarily involve two countries, in this case Canada and the United States. Therefore, any expansion requires both countries to agree. This agreement has been reached. It is called the Land, Rail, Marine and Air Transport Preclearance Agreement, and implementing legislation must be passed in both countries for it to take effect.

The United States adopted its required legislation last December, with unanimous support in both Houses of Congress. The Canadian legislation needed to implement the agreement and expand pre-clearance is the bill before us now.

Here is the choice we face. Pass Bill C-23 and open the door to pre-clearance in new Canadian locations and on new modes of transport, pre-clearance of cargo, and Canadian pre-clearance in the United States, or do not pass Bill C-23 and achieve none of that. Given the tremendous upside of expanded pre-clearance, there would have to be something really terrible about this bill to justify denying Canadians the economic and travel benefits it would bring.

Certainly, the reaction from the NDP and the Green Party to the provisions laying out the authorities granted to U.S. pre-clearance officers gives the impression that Bill C-23 is the worst bill we have seen. However, when we read those parts of the legislation, they are, frankly, moderate and reasonable and quite similar to the legislative framework already in place.

For example, under existing law, U.S. pre-clearance officers can conduct frisk searches. Likewise, under Bill C-23, U.S. pre-clearance officers can conduct frisk searches.

• (1330)

Under existing law and under Bill C-23, a U.S. pre-clearance officer may detain a traveller if there are reasonable grounds to believe that he or she has committed an offence, and the traveller must be transferred as soon as possible to Canadian custody. Under existing law, a pre-clearance officer may detain a traveller for the purpose of a strip search and must request a Canadian officer to conduct the search. Likewise, under Bill C-23, a U.S. pre-clearance officer may detain a traveller for the purpose of a strip search and must request a Canadian officer to conduct the search. The only difference here is that U.S. officers can conduct a search themselves in the very unlikely event that a Canadian officer is unavailable.

Government Orders

In the existing law and in Bill C-23, the provisions governing use of force by American officers are virtually identical. The provisions laying out the penalties for lying to or obstructing pre-clearance officers are exactly identical. Neither the existing law nor Bill C-23 confers any powers of arrest whatsoever on U.S. officers in Canada. Moreover, under both existing law and under Bill C-23, travellers are free to withdraw from the pre-clearance area. The only change is that withdrawing travellers would be required to say who they are and why they are leaving. The intent here is simply to address the problem of travellers entering pre-clearance areas to probe for weaknesses in border security before withdrawing undetected.

With regard to arming, U.S. pre-clearance officers would be permitted to carry only the same weapons as Canadian border service officers in the same environment. In other words, since Canadian border service officers do not carry firearms in airport terminals in Canada, neither would their American counterparts. By the way, this provision, like the entire pre-clearance agreement with the United States, is reciprocal. That means that if Canadian pre-clearance officers eventually begin conducting operations in the United States, they will similarly be allowed to carry the same weapons as American officers in the same circumstances.

Therefore, this is not, as some have styled it, a ceding of sovereignty. Rather, it is a mutually beneficial agreement that would confer the same authorities and obligations on both parties.

Above all, as I mentioned earlier, U.S. pre-clearance officers operating on Canadian soil would have to conduct themselves in accordance with Canadian law and the Canadian Constitution, including the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. To put that in practical terms, a traveller flying today from, for example, Billy Bishop airport to Newark, has to submit to U.S. border procedures after landing in the U.S., with no Canadian legal protections. With Bill C-23 in place, that traveller could be processed by U.S. officials while still in Canada. If people are concerned about how they might be treated by American border officers, would they not rather undergo questioning and searches under the umbrella of Canadian charter protections, rather than fending for themselves in the terminal at Newark?

I appreciate that it is the role of the opposition to put legislation through the wringer, and I certainly do not begrudge the opposition members their right to raise concerns and vote against the bill if they so choose. However, we are talking about a measure that would bring tremendous benefits to Canadian travellers and businesses. The worst criticism the New Democrats can muster is that a person who wants to leave a pre-clearance area may have to say why. To me that seems an odd hill to die on. For my part, I will be supporting this legislation and looking forward to the advantages of expanded pre-clearance. I encourage all hon. members to do the same.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, frankly, I think my hon. colleague is falling into the same trap of misrepresenting our position. No one within the NDP has said that we are against pre-clearance. I have used pre-clearance. It has certainly helped me get through the Vancouver airport to United States destinations. We know it works. It works well as it currently is.

I have yet to hear a convincing argument from that side of the House in favour of provisions in Bill C-23 that would give U.S. customs and border officials the right to carry firearms. With respect to the concept of sovereignty, it is a precious thing, and when they start setting precedents and slowly giving it away, it makes it easier in the future to institute new forms.

Why do U.S. agents on Canadian soil need to carry firearms? Why can we not rely on our own police forces, who have sworn an oath of allegiance to the crown, to do that very same work? I have yet to hear a convincing argument for that.

• (1335)

Ms. Pam Damoff: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that the hon. member's party is in favour of pre-clearance.

The most important thing to consider is that at no time would U.S. border officers be carrying arms unless we, as Canadians, determined that Canadian border officers needed to carry arms. If we as Canadians made that determination, that would be the only time U.S. border services officers would be able to carry arms. We would not allow them to do anything that we had not already decided, as Canadians, we expected in our airports.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we agree on the substance of this legislation, but I want to take this opportunity to ask the member about the use of time allocation. Members of the government lit their hair on fire every time this was used previously, and now we see the increasing use of time allocation by the government. I know that the member was not a member in any previous Parliament, but does she not see some irony in the repeated use of time allocation by the same people who used to decry it as sort of marking the end of democracy as we know it?

Ms. Pam Damoff: Mr. Speaker, I find it interesting that a member of the Conservative Party is asking about time allocation.

This is important legislation. It is important to Canadians. It is important to Canadian travellers and Canadian businesses, and we feel that this legislation needs to move through the House in a timely manner. It is important that we use our time in the House to discuss the bill. I am happy to answer further questions on the bill itself.

Mrs. Celina Caesar-Chavannes (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague for her speech and her explanation of this much-needed bill, one that, as she said, would help Canadian travellers as well as businesses.

I wonder if she could elaborate further on the provisions in the bill that would ensure that when Canadians travel, they will be protected by Canadian law, and in particular, our human rights law, with the pre-clearance regime.

Government Orders

Ms. Pam Damoff: Mr. Speaker, what is important about this bill is that any Canadian traveller going to the United States with pre-clearance would be protected by our Canadian laws, our Constitution, and our human rights laws. If we do not have pre-clearance, those same travellers will go to the United States and have none of the protections they have in Canada. I would much rather be doing it on Canadian soil, protected by Canadian laws and our Constitution, than be going to the United States and not having those same protections.

Mr. Anthony Housefather (Mount Royal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, how many members have come home from a long business trip, arrived at the airport, and seen a tremendous lineup at customs? In my old job, I did this all the time. I used to work for a multinational. I would be travelling home from Europe or the United States, arrive at Trudeau airport, exhausted after being away for days and just wanting to get home to my family, and be faced with a lineup that went on from here to the end of the room. There would be hours of waiting at the airport. Of course, this was in my pre-NEXUS days. Now, with NEXUS, I can walk through the kiosk and get of the airport in no time. However, without NEXUS, in the old days that was problematic. It was hard. There was a long wait. There is nothing that makes me happier than avoiding that very long wait when I enter the United States.

There are over 12 million people who travel back and forth between the United States and Canada every year. More than 500,000 Canadians spend more than one month in Florida. In fact, from my riding, the Côte Saint-Luc Men's Club actually shifts a number of its activities to Deerfield Beach, in Florida, during the entire winter season. I can go to Florida on a constant basis and get local programming from our senior men's club if I want. That shows how many Canadians of all ages are affected by pre-clearance.

Pre-clearance is a wonderful thing. I am happy that an agreement was reached with the United States in March 2015 to provide for better pre-clearance for travellers and goods. Our government has worked hard to expand pre-clearance to now include the Billy Bishop airport in Toronto and the Jean Lesage airport in Quebec City, and, importantly, the VIA Rail terminal in Montreal, if I ever choose to take the train to New York City. Of course, it is slower today to take the train than it was when my grandfather was doing it in the 1930s and 1940s, but still the idea is there.

I am happy that pre-clearance is being expanded. We are now able to have Canadians and Americans who are in Canada, or foreigners in Canada, pre-cleared. They can fly to all of the different U.S. destinations that we can fly to today in Canada, from Pearson or from Trudeau or from Vancouver, or from other pre-clearance-approved airports that do not have facilities in the United States for customs. That means that we can go to many smaller destinations, over 50, from Pearson airport, instead of 27. This is a very big thing, and very important.

The whole idea of opposing the bill is something that I have trouble understanding. Why is that? I can understand that there are concerns over some of the expanded powers that are given to U.S. border officers. I think they are minimal, fully understandable, and yet I can understand their concerns. However, what on earth is the alternative?

Canada and the U.S. have worked together to identify irritants on both sides to allow for better pre-clearance. In the event that we are not constantly working together and identifying U.S. concerns with respect to Canadian pre-clearance, then we are eventually going to put ourselves in a situation where it is not going to stay the same as today; it could be restricted. To me, there is absolutely no reason why we would not sit down with our U.S. partners, as I understand the previous government did, and come up with what they see or what we see as improvement enhancements in pre-clearance. That is what is happening.

I personally look at it and see very little in terms of the irritants that are being talked about. Number one, in terms of the frisk search, we already do the frisk search, and we can still do it. With respect to the strip search, they can still ask a Canadian to do it. The only difference is that if no Canadian is available in a reasonable period of time, then the American officer can do it.

How often is that ever going to happen? I believe I heard the minister say that in the more than six decades of pre-clearance, we have never had one incident where Canada and the U.S. have had an argument about pre-clearance at a Canadian airport. To me, this is a minor issue, and something that certainly can be resolved at committee, if nothing else. It does not require further debate at second reading.

The idea that we should not allow someone to be questioned if they withdraw at the border is another added feature to the bill that I have heard complaints about. There is an issue. If we are sending people to the border and they see that if they are viewed with suspicion they can just withdraw, it certainly seems to me to encourage the idea that we could have people trying to probe the border to do nefarious things. I have no issue with the idea that somebody cannot simply withdraw and walk away without being photographed and asked why they are walking away. I do not see what this terrible issue is.

● (1340)

I have heard a lot of concerns that have been conveyed because of who the President of the United States is today, and concerns related to the identity of the current president. Our history with the United States has gone on for centuries. The United States is a western democratic country, our closest ally. We cannot close our eyes to the fact that the procedures in the United States are western, democratic, and civilized. Whether one likes or does not like the incumbent in the White House should not be how we judge our trade relationship with the United States, our pre-clearance agreements, or any of our other agreements with our closest trading partner and best ally. That, to me, is surprising.

One of the things I think is worthy of note is that we export \$400 billion a year to the United States and more than \$50 billion in services. There is more than \$2.5 billion in trade that crosses the border every day.

Government Orders

●(1345)

[*Translation*]

Exports to the U.S. account for 20% of our GDP. More than 2.5 million jobs in Canada and nine million jobs in the United States are tied to trade between Canada and the United States. We have 6,100 Canadians who have tourism-related jobs, and American visitors account for two thirds of the visitors who spend the night in Canada.

[*English*]

We have to facilitate trade through agreements like CETA, through agreements like the one we are working on with Ukraine, like the expansion we just did with Israel. We have to do trade missions, and we have to do other things to allow people and goods to cross the border more easily.

Border delays are one of the biggest impediments that we have to growth. We need to encourage the enhancement of easier trade. It is frustrating to see a Canadian business say that it does not want to expand and do business in the United States because it is worried it will not be able to get its goods there easily and quickly. The same is true in reverse. We want American companies to come to Canada, to create jobs in Canada, to send their goods to Canada, so we have cheaper markets and lower prices for Canadian consumers. We do not want people to be deterred because they do not think they can get here, because it will take them four hours at the border to travel to their Canadian office, or they do not know if their goods will get here on time.

A pre-clearance arrangement like this one goes towards a larger philosophical principle that I agree with, that we need to enhance trade, enhance the ability to cross the border with our closest allies. It also goes to an idea that the faster we get people across the border, the better.

I have heard a lot about the concerns that members opposite have with pre-clearance. What is the alternative? What if we do not have pre-clearance like we have in other countries in the world outside the United States? When we go to those countries, our citizens are speaking to border officials based on the laws of that country, according to the rules of that country, and under the terms of that country. It is only with pre-clearance that Canadian law, Canadian human rights, the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the Canadian Human Rights Act, all apply to travel to the United States. Given that the alternative is worse, given that it is an excellent concept, I strongly support this law, and I urge members to get it to committee.

Mr. Jim Eglinski (Yellowhead, CPC): Mr. Speaker, during the speech by the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, he spoke about Bill C-23 eventually expanding into the movement of goods to and from the United States and Canada.

I wonder if he would explain what benefit there is of pre-clearance on our products that we ship between countries.

Mr. Anthony Housefather: Mr. Speaker, I think philosophically, and I am sure he would agree with me, the faster that we get people and goods across the border between Canada and the United States, which is our biggest trading partner, which we rely on for 2.5 million jobs, which we rely on for \$450 billion of exports per year, the

better. The more that pre-clearance can apply to different goods, as it does to people, the better.

I look forward to working with him and the minister on that.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Mr. Speaker, despite my colleague's enthusiasm for this bill, I still have a question to ask him.

I know that he is also very enthusiastic about justice issues. I feel that he did not clearly explain how the government will ensure, when there is pre-clearance in Canada, that Canadian laws will be respected, in particular the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Mr. Anthony Housefather: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague from Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot. I know that she, too, is passionate about justice issues.

It is understood that there has been a program in place in many Canadian airports for sixty years now. The minister said in his speech that Canada has never had to complain about the United States not complying with our laws. That is why I am quite certain that they will continue to respect our laws. Canada and the U.S. have an agreement calling on both countries to discuss the matter in the event of non-compliance with Canadian law.

●(1350)

[*English*]

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my friend talked about long lineups, and I guess some of our friends on the left are consistent in their support for long lineups. However, I want to ask about American institutions.

The member made the point quite well that American institutions were designed to check against the power of an authoritarian executive. What we see is a strong system of institutions, a strong judiciary, and so forth. When we talk about the relationship with the United States, I think we can have confidence regardless of the administration. We can have confidence in the strength of those institutions, and we should move forward with co-operation. Whether it is enhancing and addressing loopholes in the safe third country agreement, it is pre-clearance, whether it is trades or others, we should move forward with confidence in those institutions. I think the member made that point very well, but perhaps he would like to expand on it.

Government Orders

Mr. Anthony Housefather: Mr. Speaker, since the United States created a system of checks and balances with its Bill of Rights in the 1780s, the United States has been an example, a pillar to the world. While it has not been perfect in terms of human rights, and we can look at slavery, segregation, and many things the United States has done that today are a shame to the country, in general, its system has worked better than almost any system in the world. It is an example to nations about how there can be an executive, a legislature, and a judiciary that all have checks and balances. I agree with my hon. colleague that the United States is far more than whoever is the current occupant of the Oval Office.

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the protections in the law also protect Canadian customs officers in the United States with exact equal powers. It is balanced. Could the member comment on that?

Mr. Anthony Housefather: Mr. Speaker, one of the things that we should be offering Canadian and American citizens is the idea of Canadian pre-clearance at major U.S. centres. I certainly agree that this gives reciprocal rights to Canadian officers to do this work potentially in the United States, and I would encourage our government to move in that direction.

The Deputy Speaker: Before we resume debate with the hon. member for Lethbridge, I will let her know that I will need to interrupt her. She has 10 minutes available for her remarks, but there are only about eight minutes remaining before the top of the hour. We will interrupt at that time, and she will have the remaining time when the House next resumes debate on the question.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Lethbridge.

Ms. Rachael Harder (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak in favour of Bill C-23. This is an act respecting the pre-clearance of persons and goods in Canada and the United States. The legislation completes negotiations and cross-border collaboration started by the previous Conservative government. We are very proud of our record on the matter.

With this legislation, national security would be enhanced on both sides of the border. Passengers would enjoy greater convenience when travelling to the United States, and Canadian goods and services would have easier access to the American marketplace. This is good for Canada.

I am confident the rights of Canadians would also be protected under this legislation. In fact, I would argue that they may actually be better protected because it would allow individuals entering the United States through borders to do so with those pre-clearance mechanisms that have already been identified.

Canadian law, including the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, would continue to apply in pre-clearance areas. Therefore, United States border agents would not gain the power of arrest under this legislation. This is an important point to bear in mind. Any criminal charges that are filed for someone inside a pre-clearance area would be under the Criminal Code of Canada and would be brought by Canadian law enforcement agents. Any security procedures that cannot be conducted in the public area of the pre-clearance zone, such as strip searches, would be performed by Canadian law enforcement in accordance with Canadian law.

That said, let us explore the context of the legislation. Every day, more than \$2 billion of goods and services cross the U.S.-Canada border, and across the Canadian economy, one in five jobs is directly linked to international exports. The United States is Canada's largest export market, and Canada is the biggest purchaser of American goods. We make excellent trade partners, and it is important for us to put agreements in place that will continue to protect this. Ensuring the free flow of goods and services across this border is vital to the economic interests of both countries. With the uncertainty around American trade policy at this moment in time, and concerns about American protectionism on economic and security files, legislation like this would protect the Canadian economy and the millions of Canadian jobs that rely on trade with the United States each and every day.

Ironically, the United States Congress, a place not known for its efficiency, has already passed the enabling legislation to authorize pre-clearance facilities on their side of the border. Now they await Canada to take leadership on this issue. When the United States Congress and Senate can pass an important piece of legislation like this faster than Canada, it makes one wonder about the priority of the Liberal government and whether or not it is about promoting trade with our borders.

The use of pre-clearance is not new to Canada. Let us be very clear about that. Canada first allowed American border agents to pre-clear passengers starting with a pilot project in 1952. A formal pre-clearance arrangement for airline passengers was then signed in 1974, with further implementing legislation in the 1999 Preclearance Act. Since that time, pilot projects were pre-clearing ferry passengers and cruise ship passengers. Also, truck cargo has been implemented at high-volume border crossings. If anyone has flown to the United States from airports like Edmonton, Calgary, Halifax, Montreal, Ottawa, Pearson airport, Vancouver, or Winnipeg, they already know there is this pre-clearance option available.

Twelve million passengers at these eight airports went through U.S. pre-clearance in the year 2016, so we can tell that this is of great advantage to Canadian passengers and the flow of goods and services. Without these pre-clearance operations, Canadians would not be able to take advantage of nearly half of the direct flights that presently exist between Canadian and United States destinations. Instead, they would need to fly to a major hub in the U.S., go through customs screening there, and then move onward, which of course is very cumbersome for the traveller.

I am confident when I say that most members of the House have heard concerns from their constituents with regard to this piece of legislation. Nevertheless, these concerns are rooted in an incorrect belief that American border agents would be operating under American law on Canadian soil. The concern is that Canada would be giving up its sovereignty on our very own territory. However, this is actually a false assumption and I wish to clear the record today.

Statements by Members

The legislation says, “For greater certainty Canadian law applies and may be administered and enforced in preclearance areas and preclearance perimeters.”

• (1355)

There is no surrender of sovereignty because the Criminal Code of Canada and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms are in fact the final law in these pre-clearance areas.

Furthermore, American border agents are not peace officers, which means they do not have the power to arrest those who are inside these pre-clearance zones. Again, I will quote directly from the piece of legislation I am referring to:

A preclearance officer is not permitted to exercise any powers of questioning or interrogation, examination, search, seizure, forfeiture, detention or arrest that are conferred under the laws of the United States....

A preclearance officer must exercise their powers and perform their duties and functions under this Act in accordance with Canadian law, including the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the Canadian Bill of Rights and the Canadian Human Rights Act.

The legislation could not be any more clear in this matter. American agents must act in accordance with our Canadian law.

To summarize this legislation, American agents are allowed to stop people or items from passing the pre-clearance area if they are headed to the United States. These American agents are also allowed to evaluate passengers according to Canadian laws regarding terrorism and threats to public safety.

However, if an American agent detains someone, the agent must immediately turn the individual over to Canadian police or border agents, who would then be the ones to interrogate, arrest, and then charge the individual according to Canadian law.

I am going to stop there.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Lethbridge will have three and a half minutes remaining for her remarks when the House next resumes debate on the question, and of course the usual five minutes for questions and comments.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*Translation*]

RENÉ PRÉVAL

Mr. Emmanuel Dubourg (Bourassa, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is with sadness that I learned of the death of the former president of Haiti, René Préval, who passed away on March 3.

Mr. Préval was first elected as president in 1996. He left office in 2001, becoming Haiti’s first elected president to serve a full term, before returning to the presidency for another full term in 2006.

On behalf of the Government of Canada, the Prime Minister offered his condolences to all Haitians.

On a more personal note, I had the opportunity to meet Mr. Préval on a number of occasions, particularly following the earthquake in 2010. I am privileged to rise in the House to offer my sincere condolences to his wife, his family, and all Haitians affected by this loss.

• (1400)

[*English*]

COLLEGE HOCKEY AMERICA

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, she shoots, she scores. I am so proud to recognize my niece Brittany “the Chipmunk” Howard today. This incredible U.S. college hockey player is putting St. Thomas on the map once again.

Brittany, a.k.a. Howie, is a junior redshirt with Robert Morris University in Pittsburgh. Last week she was named the College Hockey America player of the year. She led the conference with 48 points on 18 goals and 30 assists, also capturing the scoring trophy. She led the CHA in scoring in conference play, scoring seven goals while assisting on 18. This was her third full season eclipsing the 40-point mark, setting a new personal best of 48 points. “Spider Monkey”, as she is known, had four multi-goal games, including one hat trick, and also put up 15 multi-point games, which was tied for the most in the CHA.

To top that off, Robert Morris captured its first College Hockey America championship and earned a spot in the NCAA tournament by defeating Syracuse 2-0 on Saturday in the conference title game. It is the team’s first NCAA tournament berth.

On behalf of everyone in my family, and everyone in Elgin—Middlesex—London, I would like to congratulate Bulldog.

* * *

MISSISSAUGA—STREETSVILLE

Mr. Gagan Sikand (Mississauga—Streetsville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last week was an exciting week for the residents of Mississauga. We welcomed the Prime Minister to our great city to discuss the needs of Mississauga and how the federal government can continue to be a strong partner, focusing on infrastructure, Canada 150, and the middle-class families who live in ridings like mine.

Later in the week, the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development announced \$2.5 million in federal funding with \$429,000 of that going to my riding of Mississauga—Streetsville.

Our local Coldest Night of the Year walk organized by The Dam raised over \$45,000 for the homeless.

It is events like these that remind me how honoured and privileged I am to represent the people of Mississauga—Streetsville.

* * *

[*Translation*]

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau (Berthier—Maskinongé, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this Wednesday, March 8, is International Women’s Day, so I am rising in the House today to remind everyone that gender equality is a challenge we face every day.

Statements by Members

We have made a lot of progress toward achieving equity and equality, but we still have a long way to go. Even now, too many women have to fight to have their rights respected. Just think of indigenous women and the #webelieveyou campaign.

Even now, too many women have to fight for their place in male-dominated fields such as agriculture and politics.

I am taking this opportunity to encourage men and women across Canada to get involved in this cause and take action to defend our values of justice, equality, and equity.

Let us celebrate universal equality this week and every day of the year.

* * *

[English]

TOURISM

Ms. Gudie Hutchings (Long Range Mountains, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, 2016 was the best year for the Canadian tourism industry in over a decade. Nearly 20 million international tourists visited our country, including many to my riding of Long Range Mountains. That is 20 million customers for many small businesses across Canada from coast to coast to coast.

Our government knows that tourism is an economic driver, supporting over 637,000 jobs and is the number one employer of youth. Through Destination Canada, we have committed \$50 million in new, strategic targeting of international markets so we can grow our tourism numbers even more. Our Connecting America program has seen huge success with a 17% increase just this year in bringing our southern neighbours to Canada.

[Translation]

I want to remind all Canadians to get their free national parks pass to celebrate Canada's 150th anniversary and to enter the contest to win a stay in the Long Range Mountains in Gros Morne National Park.

* * *

●(1405)

[English]

ETHIOPIA

Mr. Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to the concerns that have been raised to me by my constituents regarding the political climate in Ethiopia, and which have also been raised in the U.S. by my counterpart, Congressman Chris Smith.

What is happening in Ethiopia right now needs to be addressed in the strongest possible terms. Ethiopia is potentially on the verge of civil war and/or genocide, and we are in a position to stop it, but only if we do something more than reiterate concerns or call on the Ethiopian government to make genuine improvements.

Opposition party leader Dr. Mararaa Guddinaa was jailed upon his return to Addis Ababa following a speech he gave to members of the European Parliament condemning the government for its human rights violations. A six-month state of emergency has been declared in an effort to quell dissenters. Thousands of peaceful protesters have

been killed or imprisoned. At least 88,000 people had to flee as refugees or migrants last year alone.

What is happening in Ethiopia is being called an abomination. I encourage the government to take notice and take the strongest possible stand against it.

* * *

NIMRAT GILL

Mr. Jati Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate the life of Nimrat Gill. On February 7, Nimrat passed away at the age of three from pneumonia at Abbotsford Regional Hospital. The events that led to her passing have raised serious questions and provincial authorities have launched investigations accordingly.

Those who knew Nimrat saw a child full of love and happiness. Her mother, Balraj, her father, Amarinder, and her older sister, Simrat, will always remember her as a playful child whose love for life was contagious. The heart of the child is the heart of the home. From playing Ring Around the Rosie and Daddy Finger to reciting her favourite poems, Nimrat's every word and movement was filled with love and affection for her family.

There is nothing harder than for a parent to lose their child. I offer the Gill family my deepest condolences.

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ED CARTER-EDWARDS

Mr. Vance Badawey (Niagara Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the people of Niagara have lost a hero and a legend. Mr. Ed Carter-Edwards passed away on February 22 in the town of Grimsby, Ontario.

A Second World War veteran, Ed's story reads like a movie. After enlisting with the RCAF at the age of 19, he served with 427 RCAF Squadron as a wireless operator. After being shot down in 1944 and captured by the SS, he was sent to Buchenwald concentration camp. Saved by hospital workers who risked their own lives, he was later smuggled out by German aircrews and sent to a POW camp. After the war, he returned home to Niagara to raise a family.

Despite everything he had been through, he never lost his sense of humour and was happiest when bringing joy and laughter to those around him. He saw the worst of humanity, but he never lost his belief in humankind, and that is the lesson, and the legacy, of Mr. Carter-Edwards.

Mr. Speaker, through you to his wife Lois and his family, I can only say thank you for sharing Ed with us all.

*Statements by Members***MORTGAGE BROKERS**

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Mortgage Professionals Canada is on Parliament Hill this week, joined by some of my former industry colleagues with the Alberta Mortgage Brokers Association.

I wish to point out the important role that mortgage brokers play in Canada's real estate industry. Mortgage brokers arrange one-third of all mortgages in Canada, and nearly half of those for first-time homebuyers, representing \$80 billion in annual economic activity. These professionals have a keen eye on the health of real estate markets across the country. Many mortgage brokers are concerned that the rule changes imposed by the Liberal government last October, which were imposed without industry or consumer consultation, are making it harder for young families to purchase homes. I share the concerns mortgage brokers have raised with me about reduced competition that will lead to higher costs and limited choices for consumers.

I hope many members will take the opportunity to learn about this important industry and that the government will now listen carefully to those they failed to consult prior to imposing change.

* * *

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

Mrs. Salma Zahid (Scarborough Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last Friday in my riding at the first Scarborough Centre Youth Fair, young people met potential employers and learned about the changing labour market. Youth are entering a job market more challenging than that faced by past generations. Attendees learned about new trends impacting the job market, heard directly from employers about what they are looking for, and got help from organizations providing career services to put their skills and qualifications in the best possible light.

I thank the keynote speakers, Wendy Cukier of Ryerson University, Ontario Minister of Economic Development and Growth Brad Duguid, and Michael Thompson, chair of the City of Toronto's economic development committee, and a special thanks to the dynamic young leaders of my community youth council, who organized this event by and for today's youth.

Youth unemployment is still too high and must continue to have the attention of the House.

* * *

● (1410)

*[Translation]***YOUNG LEADERS OF LONDON**

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos (London North Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today, I want to recognize London's young leaders.

As the member for London North Centre, I have the honour of talking to some of the brightest young people in Canada, for example, those who sit on my youth council. They are talented, dedicated, and engaged. I met with them this weekend, and they offer insights that I bring back and share with the House.

[English]

One young Londoner from my community who had the privilege of touring around Parliament Hill today is Corinthian Bennett. I had the opportunity to show him and his mother, Amanda, around this great place.

This bright and energetic young boy has aspirations to be prime minister one day. In fact, his ambitious life plan includes being a lawyer, civil servant, member of Parliament, a minister, and then taking on the top position in our country.

I commend Corinthian's engagement in politics. I think I speak for all of us when I say that we look forward to seeing him in this House someday.

* * *

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Conservative Party understands that parents know what is best for their children. We recognize the tragic impact of actions by past governments to remove children from the care of their parents. The devastating results of the destruction of the basic family unit by residential schools and the sixties scoop are lessons that should not be lost on any of us.

While we cannot change the past, we can decide today to not repeat the mistakes that hurt so many. Reconciliation with indigenous peoples requires us to recognize the strength that comes from the basic family unit and to build on that strength. As legislators, we must protect and cultivate the rights of parents to pass their culture and beliefs on to their children.

Each of us may have many different beliefs about everything from discipline to religion, but fundamentally, it is the role of the parents, not the state, to raise their children. When parents are supported in this role, children will flourish. This is my hope not only for indigenous parents, but for all parents across Canada.

* * *

CHILDREN'S BREAKFAST CLUB

Mr. Ali Ehsassi (Willowdale, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last week, over 150 students, teachers, and staff descended upon Ottawa to take part in the Children's Breakfast Club's annual visit to Parliament Hill to mark Black History Month.

As with last year, I had the honour of co-hosting this event with the members for Scarborough—Rouge Park and Humber River—Black Creek. We were grateful that the member for Hull—Aylmer, the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, and the Prime Minister each attended the event to individually address the students.

As the Prime Minister reminded everyone in attendance, young Canadians are not merely the leaders of tomorrow, but they are in fact the leaders of today with much to contribute. Our country and communities richly benefit from the vibrant energy, vision, and compassion of our youth.

I would like to thank not only the Children's Breakfast Club, but also VIA Rail, Historica Canada, Toronto Paramedic Services, and the Toronto Police Department for once again making last week's event a wonderful success.

* * *

[*Translation*]

PYRRHOTITE

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have lost track of how many times I have risen in the House to share the concerns of pyrrhotite victims, who are struggling to make their voices heard by one government after another in Ottawa.

This time, I am rising to recognize the work done by Myrabelle Chicoine, who is leading a group of people who could be described as being lost in the grey area following Ottawa's refusal to review the quality standard for aggregates used in concrete.

Let us be clear about this. It is impossible for these families to sell their homes without suffering major losses, and it is impossible for them to get financial aid from the government to upgrade their homes. It is high time that Ottawa funded a scientific study to establish a specific standard.

As I take this opportunity to commend Ms. Chicoine for her commitment, I am also once again calling on the government and the Prime Minister to put in place a new federal standard on the quality of aggregates used in concrete and thus help these folks who have been stuck in this grey area.

* * *

• (1415)

[*English*]

TAXATION

Mr. Phil McColeman (Brantford—Brant, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government has admitted in its own "Report on Federal Tax Expenditures" that lower-income Canadians are disproportionately harmed by consumption taxes like the Liberal carbon tax.

Documents have demonstrated that the Liberals have already done the analysis to determine how this carbon tax would hurt the budgets of Canadians, but they refuse to release that information. This includes higher prices for home heating, gas, electricity, food, and just about everything Canadians purchase.

What are the Liberals trying to hide, and what is the real cost of the Liberal carbon tax on lower-income and middle-class Canadians? The Liberals have the answers. Why are they not releasing them?

* * *

ATLANTIC CANADA INNOVATION

Mr. Andy Fillmore (Halifax, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today on Parliament Hill we are joined by representatives from four Atlantic

Oral Questions

Canada universities: the University of New Brunswick; Memorial University of Newfoundland; University of Prince Edward Island; and my own alma mater and yours, Mr. Speaker, Dalhousie University.

The representatives are in Ottawa today for a discussion with Atlantic MPs on collaboration and clean, inclusive growth in Atlantic Canada. Whether it is UPEI's School of Sustainable Design Engineering, UNB's Research Centre for Smart Grid Technologies, the Fisheries and Marine Institute at Memorial University, or the Dalhousie-led Ocean Frontier Institute, these four Atlantic universities are putting our region on the leading edge of innovation. Working together in close partnership with the federal government, these universities are transforming our shared challenges into shared opportunities.

I want to take this opportunity to welcome all members of the House to a reception after 7 p.m. tonight in the Sir John A. Macdonald Building to meet and to thank these Atlantic universities for everything they are doing to help Atlantic Canada and indeed Canada reach their highest potential.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[*Translation*]

SENIORS

Hon. Denis Lebel (Lac-Saint-Jean, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister previously said that budgets balance themselves. He said that during the election campaign before he became Prime Minister. He must admit now that budgets do not balance themselves.

We hear that the government is eliminating pension income splitting for seniors in an effort to balance its budget. I hope that the government is not attacking those who built this country.

Is it true that the government wants to get rid of income splitting?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again, the Conservatives are fearmongering to try to scare seniors. However, as Hazel McCallion said, the Conservatives do not scare seniors.

The reality is that we are lowering taxes for the middle class and increasing taxes for the wealthiest 1%. We have helped nine in 10 families with the Canada child benefit. We have increased the guaranteed income supplement by 10% for the most vulnerable seniors. That is just a small example of what we are doing to help vulnerable Canadians.

* * *

TAXATION

Hon. Denis Lebel (Lac-Saint-Jean, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has lost control of government spending. Giving money away is easy when you do not have any. Future generations, our children and grandchildren, are going to be the ones to pay for it.

Oral Questions

Where I come from, if you spend more money than you bring in, the bank comes and takes the keys to your house or your car. That is not a problem for this government, however; it just keeps adding to the debt and saying that it will take care of it years from now. However, we are going to try to make sure that the Conservatives are back in power before then.

Is the Prime Minister going to punish Canadian families by eliminating even more of the tax credits they need?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives are showing once again that they learned nothing from the last election.

We committed to invest in the future of our communities and in Canada's middle class. We have proven that we need to focus on our future. That is exactly what we are doing by investing in public transit, green infrastructure, as well as social and knowledge infrastructure. We know that investing for the future will create good jobs now as well as economic growth for the middle class and for everyone working hard to join it.

Hon. Denis Lebel (Lac-Saint-Jean, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in the last election campaign, Canadians were promised a \$10-billion deficit and a return to balance within a few years. There was talk of 2019.

An election is coming. Canadians will surely remember that promise and small-business owners will remember the promise to lower their taxes. It seems that the Prime Minister is going to break that promise as well.

Will they cut small-business taxes in order to create jobs?

• (1420)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we recognize the contribution of small businesses to job creation and economic growth in communities across Canada. For that reason we are putting more money in the pockets of the middle class so they can spend more and buy goods from our small businesses.

Families will have more money to raise their children. In fact, nine in 10 families receive more money with our new Canada child benefit. This benefit will lift 300,000 children out of poverty across the country. We know that investing in economic growth is good for our small businesses and for Canada's economy.

* * *

[English]

ETHICS

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we all know that the measure of person's character is not what he or she does when everyone is watching, but rather what he or she does when no one is looking.

We know the Prime Minister is under investigation by the Ethics Commissioner for taking a private helicopter ride. What Canadians need to know is whether the Prime Minister knew he was breaking the rules.

Was the Prime Minister ever advised by his staff or by anybody in the Privy Council Office that accepting this private helicopter ride was against the rules?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have said many times, this was a personal family vacation. I am happy to work with the Ethics Commissioner to answer any questions she may have.

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it was a personal vacation, but accepting this helicopter ride was against the rules. He has been a member of Parliament for over eight years. He should know this. Either he was ignorant of the rules, or he disregarded the rules. Both are very concerning.

Again, was the Prime Minister ever advised by his staff or by anybody in the Privy Council Office that accepting this private helicopter ride was against the rules?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again, this was a personal family vacation, and I am very happy to answer any and all questions the Ethics Commissioner has on this.

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IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the President of the United States has just signed a new executive order banning immigrants and refugees from six Muslim majority countries.

The Prime Minister has refused to denounce these racist policies. The Prime Minister has refused to suspend the safe third country agreement with the United States.

Could the Prime Minister please answer this one specific question. Does he believe the U.S. remains a safe country for refugees, yes or no?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians expect this government to do two things with respect to the United States: to work with it on protecting and promoting the economic growth that has an impact on millions of good middle-class jobs on both sides of the border; and at the same time to stand up for the values and principles of which Canadians are rightly so proud.

We are an open and welcoming country. We continue to demonstrate that we truly believe diversity is a source of strength, and that it helps cohesive and resilient communities create better opportunities for themselves and for future generations.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canadians expect a prime minister with the courage to stand up against a racist executive order.

[Translation]

Today, we learned that another Canadian born in Canada was turned away at the American border. She was detained for six hours. She was told that she needed a visa, which is not true. Why was she turned away? The answer is obvious.

Oral Questions

How can the Prime Minister abstain from taking a stand against the United States' racist policy when it is obviously affecting Canadians?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are continuing to work very hard with the American administration to ensure that Canadians, goods, and services can move across our border quickly and effectively.

We know that millions of jobs depend on this open border and that thousands of Canadians travel to the United States on a regular basis. We will always work with the American government to ensure that Canadians can continue to travel freely and openly to the United States.

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CANADA REVENUE AGENCY

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we are not talking about goods and services. We are talking about a Canadian citizen born in Canada who was illegally turned back at the U.S. border, and we want a prime minister with a backbone.

We all saw the damning CBC and *Enquête* reports on the Canada Revenue Agency and the KPMG tax evasion scheme. The Prime Minister refused to investigate the sweet deal the agency gave KPMG, which was not penalized.

If the Prime Minister ever wants to do more than just talk, will he vote for the NDP motion to end special treatment for wealthy fraudsters, yes or no?

•(1425)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on the contrary, our government is very serious about tax evasion and tax avoidance. That is why, in our last budget, we gave the Canada Revenue Agency \$444 million to take action against tax evasion and tax avoidance. Canadians expect everyone to pay their fair share, and there will be consequences for those who have not paid their taxes.

[*English*]

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): The American Congress managed to investigate KPMG but we cannot. That is pretty weak, Mr. Speaker.

The Prime Minister talks about how much he wants to go after tax fraud, but how are Canadians expected to believe him when he refuses to investigate this scandalous deal made by Revenue Canada? How are Canadians expected to believe him when it was the Liberals who blocked these KPMG documents from being revealed in the first place? How are Canadians expected to believe the Prime Minister is serious about going after tax evasion when he refuses to go after tax evaders?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this government is committed to going after tax evaders, tax evasion, and tax fraud. That is why we invested over \$440 million in budget 2016, so the Canada Revenue Agency could continue to press against any tax fraud or evaders.

We will continue to work very hard to ensure everyone pays their fair share of taxes. That is what Canadians expect. That is what we expect.

[*Translation*]

FINANCE

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we know that this government is spending recklessly, and now another organization is warning the Liberals.

The *Financial Post* is reporting today that the Bank for International Settlements has given the Canadian government a serious warning: if nothing changes, we might be heading towards a major financial crisis. It mentioned vulnerabilities and warning signs that must not be ignored.

As we have been telling the government for months now, we need to stop living beyond our means. Does the Minister of Finance finally understand that he needs to manage public funds more judiciously?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our goal is to improve the lives of the middle class and those working hard to join it.

That is why we are investing in our economy in order to increase growth and create more opportunities for Canadian employment. That is our plan. We will continue with our plan to improve the lives of Canadians across the country.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance speaks excellent French. He has certainly polished the same old answer he keeps repeating over and over again. The problem is that Canada is in a precarious financial situation. Why is the Minister of Finance not even listening to his own officials, who told him in a report, which he kept hidden for 10 weeks, that if nothing changes, we are heading for a \$1.5-trillion debt and will not balance the budget until 2055? It makes no sense, and that is why the Bank for International Settlements is calling him to order.

Who is going to make the Minister of Finance realize that enough is enough, that it is time to manage Canadian public finances properly?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our current situation continues to improve. Over the past six months, we have seen improvement in the job situation across the country. It is the best it has been since 2002. There were more jobs in the past six months than there have been since 2002. There were more jobs in the past year than in 2013, 2014, and 2015. We are continuing to invest in Canada to ensure that there are jobs for Canadians across the country.

Oral Questions

[English]

TAXATION

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on the carbon tax cover-up, a barista earning \$35,000 a year does not earn enough to get anything from the so-called middle-class tax plan, but does earn enough to pay a new Liberal carbon tax on gas, groceries, and electricity. To get some of that money back, she would need to buy a \$150,000 electric car in Ontario.

Will the government end the carbon tax cover-up and release its calculation on the cost of this new tax to the middle class and those working to join it?

Mr. Jonathan Wilkinson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government remains committed to creating a cleaner, more innovative economy, one that reduces emissions and protects our environment, while creating good middle-class jobs.

After a decade of complete inaction on the climate change file and on the innovation file from the previous government, we are focused on taking real action to address these issues. Our government has posted the results of the consultations and the work of the working group that relates to carbon pricing online. I would encourage the member to go there to review the information.

• (1430)

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, during the debate last week on my motion with respect to the carbon tax cover-up, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation said, “Revenue neutrality...is something that will be determined by each province and territory”. In plain English, that means in Ontario the Prime Minister has handed the spoils of the carbon tax to Kathleen Wynne who is spending it on rebates for millionaires who can afford \$150,000 electric cars.

The government has data on the effect of the tax and the gap between the rich and the poor. Will the Liberals end the carbon tax cover-up and release that data today?

Mr. Jonathan Wilkinson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would repeat what I said to the hon. member with respect to this question last week. The document he is actually referring to was prepared under the previous government and released in October 2015. If he wants proper and relevant information relating to carbon pricing, he should review the document that is posted on the Environment Canada website.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, whose department is responsible for the carbon tax cover-up, said that releasing the costs “could cause confusion for Canadians, industries, provinces and territories, and our partners around the world about Canada’s actual plan and the cost associated with it”. However, there is no confusion. This new tax is devastating. Small businesses like Fargo Ventures in Bonnyville have to pass on cost increases to their customers.

Will the Minister of Finance release his department’s report and end the carbon tax cover-up?

Mr. Jonathan Wilkinson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this government remains focused on and committed to creating and generating innovation and reducing our emissions concurrently. Pricing of carbon pollution will provide certainty and predictability to businesses. Pricing pollution will also drive innovation in the country.

After 10 years of a government doing nothing, this government is focused on ensuring we reduce emissions, we drive innovation, and we create good middle-class jobs.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals claim to be open, transparent, and fair, but it is clear they are deliberately covering up the harmful consequences of their carbon tax.

The Liberals should be straight with Canadians, but it is obvious why they are not. They do not want us to know they are making everything more expensive for everyone and they are hurting the most vulnerable the most. This tax will hit low-income Canadians, the working poor, and people with low incomes and on fixed incomes the worst.

How can the minister say this carbon tax cover-up is open, transparent, and fair to all Canadians?

Mr. Jonathan Wilkinson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, unlike the previous government, we are focused on supporting middle-class Canadians in every phase of their lives.

When it comes to the middle class, our government has reduced taxes for nine million Canadians. We have implemented a child benefit that benefits nine out of 10 Canadians and raises 300,000 Canadian children out of jobs. We have enhanced the student loan programming that will—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. I know members want to applaud the hon. parliamentary secretary, but they should wait until he finishes his answer.

The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change.

Mr. Jonathan Wilkinson: That will raise 300,000 Canadian children out of poverty, Mr. Speaker.

With respect to the environment, we worked actively with the provinces and territories, something the previous government did not do, to come up with a comprehensive plan—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Sherbrooke.

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[Translation]

CANADA REVENUE AGENCY

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the KPMG affair is again haunting the Minister of National Revenue as a result of the airing of the most recent episode of *Enquête*.

Oral Questions

The KPMG scheme was used in the early 2000s and no criminal charges have yet been laid against the thieves.

The minister has been on the job for 18 months and we have yet to see any action. The problem is that the minister does not walk the talk. Words are no longer enough.

Will the minister undertake to launch a full inquiry into the secret agreements signed with these white-collar criminals? In particular, will she promise today to file criminal charges against these thieves, not just against the KPMG accountants but also against the fraudsters themselves?

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it was the Canada Revenue Agency that discovered KPMG's offshore tax avoidance scheme. My colleague knows very well that this is an active file and that the CRA's work is before the courts. Discussing the matter would compromise our efforts.

Since some of my colleagues seem to have a short memory, I would like to remind them that, last March, the matter was reviewed by an independent third party, which found that the CRA's actions were consistent with its policies and procedures and based on the facts.

• (1435)

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, \$444 million has been invested, yet no charges have been laid. White-collar criminals must be shaking in their boots.

People who go to work every day pay their taxes. They do not have a choice. However, if they are late to file their tax return, the CRA cracks down on them right away and charges them interest. It is funny how the same rules do not apply to millionaires. Millionaires can hide their money in the shade of the palm trees of some tax haven, and that is fine. If they are caught, they can enter into secret agreements so that they do not have to pay any fines.

When will the Liberal government stop being so spineless? When will it stand up? When will it do away with tax loopholes? When will it renegotiate the bilateral conventions? When will it punish fraudsters?

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is firmly committed to combatting tax evasion and tax avoidance and to ensuring that our tax system is fair for all Canadians.

Over the past year, our government has recovered \$13 billion thanks to our commitment to combat tax evasion. The CRA has increased its capacity for intelligence gathering and now has access to a lot more information.

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[English]

FOREIGN INVESTMENT

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today, the innovation minister was forced to stand in this House and acknowledge that he had misled when he said that the company he is selling our B.C. retirement homes to was Canadian. He confirmed what we have been saying all along. It is going to be under Chinese ownership.

In the minister's desire to be transparent, will he confirm who owns Anbang Insurance? Is it the Chinese company he agreed to sell our facilities to or, as one of the residents in my riding says, "Who will own my home?"

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we think investment is a good thing. Global investment into Canada is good for our economy. It will create opportunities. It will create jobs.

On this specific transaction under the Investment Canada Act, we made sure that we put forward a proposal that focuses on growth and opportunities for seniors, as well.

With regard to Retirement Concepts, managed and operated by Canadians, they have now the ability to expand, which will provide better services for seniors and more job opportunities, and that is good for the economy.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have no faith in the minister at all. He said he did his due diligence, but he did not even know who owned the company that is going to be taking care of our seniors. We want to know who owns Anbang Insurance. Two weeks ago, he said it was Canadians. Who owns it? Will he put the sale on hold until he assures people throughout Canada that he has done his due diligence and this is not a hasty political sellout?

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the British Columbia government has approved operating licences for Retirement Concepts. I want to make it very clear. We are open to trade and we are open to investments, because they are good for the economy.

When it comes to seniors, we do not need any lessons from the member opposite. It is our government that increased the guaranteed income supplement for seniors. It is our government that reduced the old age security age from 67 to 65.

We will continue to help seniors and we will continue to find economic opportunities that will create growth and jobs.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the innovation minister is rushing to sell essential senior care facilities to Anbang Insurance Group without telling Canadians who is pulling the strings. The minister will not tell Canadians who owns this company because, as he admitted today, he does not even know.

Wall Street firm Morgan Stanley refused to do business with Anbang Insurance Group because it was alarmed by the murky ownership structure of this Chinese firm dominated by a who's who of the Chinese Communist Party.

In light of the minister's revelation today, will he finally act in the interests of Canadian seniors and put this sale on hold?

Oral Questions

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, under the Investment Canada Act we did our due diligence. We followed the process and we determined that this particular transaction was in the overall net economic benefit of British Columbians and all Canadians, because we are open to investments. It provides additional resources for Retirement Concepts. It allows the company to expand its facilities, which creates jobs and provides additional resources for seniors as well.

This is good for British Columbians. This is good for Canadians. This is good for our economy.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Wall Street firms have refused to do business with Anbang Insurance Group over the murky ownership structure of this Chinese conglomerate and yet the Liberals are hell-bent on pandering to their friends in Beijing. The Chinese conglomerate, dominated by a who's who of the Chinese Communist Party, should raise red flags. It certainly has among Wall Street firms.

This begs the question: How did we get to a place where the wolves of Wall Street have more integrity than the Liberal government?

• (1440)

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I find it ironic that members opposite are opposed to global investment. It is great that people want to invest in Canada. It is a tremendous opportunity for our economy, where we see additional resources coming in and creating jobs and growth and opportunities for future generations.

This transaction was reviewed under the Investment Canada Act. We looked at the overall net economic benefit. We made that determination because there are additional resources for Retirement Concepts, which is good for the economy and good for seniors and obviously good for British Columbians as well.

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PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, ever since the Liberal government helped pass Bill C-51, Canadians are concerned about the oversight of our security services. The House public safety committee significantly improved the security oversight bill but now the government wants to muzzle this new watchdog by restricting its access.

Why is the government ignoring all-party agreement and expert evidence, and stripping away the very oversight tools that the Prime Minister and the public safety minister and nine other cabinet ministers voted for in November 2014?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, before the House standing committee did its work with respect to Bill C-22, the University of Ottawa expert in this field Craig Forcese said, "this will be a stronger body than the U.K. and Australian equivalents, and a dramatic change for Canadian national-security accountability." That was before the committee amendments. The committee made some changes, some of those can be accepted and others cannot, but the

net result is the bill is even stronger now than when Mr. Forcese made those comments.

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THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Imperial Oil proposes to inject an untested solvent for in situ recovery of bitumen, potentially contaminating ground and surface waters. Yet the environment minister refused calls by three first nations and four Métis communities to trigger her power to assess any impacts to their treaty and aboriginal rights. The minister can call a review where she deems an activity may adversely affect the environment or cause public concerns.

Why has the environment minister denied the requests by these seven indigenous communities for an assessment of a toxic solvent that may contaminate their waters?

Mr. Jonathan Wilkinson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the environment minister has significant authority with respect to the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency and the work that is done. Typically, these types of matters fall under provincial jurisdiction and they are left to the provinces.

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FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj (Etobicoke Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Operation Unifier is critically important for our ally, Ukraine, whose territory has been militarily invaded and annexed.

Two hundred highly respected and talented Canadian Armed Forces members are providing invaluable military and medical training to Ukrainian soldiers and institutional capacity building through key defence reforms. It is a part of the west's stabilization and development of Ukraine.

Unifier is set to end this month. Will the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Minister of Defence renew this critical program?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague and friend for Etobicoke Centre for his hard work on this file and his hard work for his constituents.

I was so proud today, standing beside my colleague, the Minister of National Defence to announce that Canada is indeed renewing Operation Unifier, a critical piece of our multi-faceted support for Ukraine. In our new Operation Unifier, our brave men and women in uniform provide valuable military training, supporting Ukraine's defence of its sovereignty in the face of Russia's illegal occupation.

Canada is a steadfast friend and ally of Ukraine and we always will be.

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INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Hon. Gerry Ritz (Battlefords—Lloydminster, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals left out the one thing Ukraine really wants, which is satellite imaging.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs said in this House that when it comes to trade deals, “we need more transparency on what is happening. We need not just great photo ops, but the details of what is going on”.

Why is it then that secret bilateral trade meetings were held last month in Beijing before public consultations were gazetted here last week? Why is the minister not open and transparent with Canadians? What has already been agreed to with China besides the selloff of our seniors complexes?

Ms. Pam Goldsmith-Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as an MP from British Columbia, it is an honour to speak up for the fact that Canada is a Pacific nation.

A comprehensive relationship with China grounded in mutual respect and regular engagement will open the door to greater opportunities for the middle class. Exploratory discussions are a key step in this process, as the Prime Minister said on his trip in September. You might be interested to know what your former colleague John Baird said about this. Last week he said, “I think the direction that the government is going in terms of our relationship with China is good news for Western Canada.”

We look forward to our communications with the country.

• (1445)

The Speaker: I remind the hon. parliamentary secretary to direct her comments to the Chair.

The hon. member for Richmond—Arthabaska.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our economic issues with the United States have not been resolved and do not seem to be getting better: the trans-Pacific partnership, softwood lumber, diafiltered milk, and NAFTA.

In the meantime, the media are reporting that the Minister of International Trade has opened free trade talks with China.

We know that the government has not fixed a single problem with our main trading partner since being elected. Can it at least come clean with Canadians about secret talks with the Chinese government?

[*English*]

Ms. Pam Goldsmith-Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said, Canada is a Pacific nation, and we want to expand our trading relationships with large, fast-growing markets, including China.

We are building a foundation for closer commercial relationships and closer ties in order to benefit the middle class.

Oral Questions

Exploratory talks are under way, as the Prime Minister mentioned in September, and when we also talk about our progressive trade agenda, this means we are putting the environment, labour standards, human rights, and equity for women at the heart of our talks.

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FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our fear that the Liberal commitment to the defence of Ukraine is fading became reality today. After ignoring appeals from Ukraine for almost a year, we now have an 11th hour bare bones extension of Operation Unifier, but this extension does not speak to the recent deadly surge in the Russian-backed war. It does not respond to Ukraine's request for an expansion of Operation Unifier, or to the appeal for defensive military weapons.

Why are the Liberals coming up short for a democratic ally?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I hope the hon. member for Thornhill will have the honour to recognize, our government and I personally stand very strongly in support of Ukraine. That is why I was absolutely delighted for us to extend Operation Unifier. We are there in Ukraine, as is the U.S., as is the U.K., with our 200 men and women in uniform. That is why I was delighted to meet with President Poroshenko on the outskirts of the Munich security forum two weeks ago.

I know the Ukrainians appreciate our support and understand Canada is Ukraine's strongest ally.

Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Ukraine expects more. We know the minister used to speak much more directly to the Russian invasion and occupation of Crimea and to the Russian-backed war in eastern Ukraine. For example, a year ago the minister stressed emotionally, “the Ukrainian people have made their decision [for democracy] in blood and we need to support it. That is essential for Ukrainian democracy”.

Why has the minister slipped into Stéphane Dion mode and ignored what Ukraine so desperately needs?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yet again I would like to say that I believe Canadians of all parties, the Conservatives, the Liberals, and the NDP, stand together in our support of Ukraine. That is why we had unanimous support in this House for the Canada–Ukraine free trade agreement. Our government, I personally, and the Prime Minister stand absolutely firmly in support of Ukraine. That is why our troops are staying there for another two years. The Ukrainians know it.

As for Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea and aggression against Ukraine in the Donbass, we condemn that as well.

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FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Mr. Fin Donnelly (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we were just shocked to hear the Liberals' response and that they are passing the buck to the provinces on first nations health and the environment.

Oral Questions

A study funded by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans confirmed that a deadly disease has reached B.C. salmon farms. This disease is the third-largest killer of salmon in Norway, and now it is on our coast. If this disease grows, it will not only devastate farmed salmon but wild salmon as well. When will the minister do the right thing, strengthen the Fisheries Act, and protect west coast wild salmon? Thousands of jobs are at stake.

• (1450)

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I agree with my colleague that we need to strengthen the Fisheries Act. One of the things the Prime Minister has asked me to do is work with members of the standing committee, including the member who just asked the question, to strengthen the Fisheries Act and to restore lost protections, which were deleted some years ago. I look forward to that work with him.

With respect to investing in the science and the proper oversight to ensure that aquaculture operations on every coast can be done safely, the member knows we are committed to doing that. The member knows that we believe that middle-class economic opportunities on both coasts depend on aquaculture and wild fisheries, and we think the two can coexist safely together.

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canadians deserve to know what went wrong on Sunday, when 1,500 litres of diesel spilled from a fish farm on the B.C. coast. This spill threatens the biodiversity of our coast and first nations' traditional food sources. As my constituents watched, horrified, many questions remain unanswered. Our coastal communities will live with the impacts of this spill for a long time to come. Will the government please update Canadians on its response plan?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we share the member's concern and the concern of all Canadians when contaminants like this are leaked into Canada's marine ecosystems. I can confirm that on Sunday morning, when this spill was discovered, the Canadian Coast Guard and other partners, the Department of the Environment, Transport Canada, and the Province of British Columbia reacted very quickly to contain the spill, to clean up the spill. It would appear that some 600 litres of diesel fuel were released. Obviously, there will be an investigation. We believe firmly that the polluter should pay for a circumstance like this, but we also believe that we can do more to protect marine ecosystems and to invest in marine safety.

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INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in the last election, the Liberals promised to fund infrastructure projects, but I do not recall any promises about paying down Alberta's NDP debt. Alberta municipalities are furious. The NDP is funnelling hundreds of millions of dollars from the new building Canada fund to pay for its out-of-control spending.

In Okotoks, growth has stagnated, because we need a new water pipeline. A major flood-mitigation project in High River is on hold, because we need funding. What are the Liberals doing to ensure that

money from the new building Canada plan is actually going to pay for these vital infrastructure projects?

Hon. Amarjeet Sohi (Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to inform the hon. member that since taking office, we have approved 127 projects throughout Alberta. Of those 127 projects, with the exception of one, 126 projects are in municipalities of all sizes: Edmonton, Calgary, Red Deer, Lacombe, Lethbridge, and many others. We have committed to deliver infrastructure on behalf of municipalities, and we are delivering on that commitment.

Mr. Matt Jeneroux (Edmonton Riverbend, CPC): I am sorry, Mr. Speaker, but Alberta cannot wait. The infrastructure minister is taking his friendship with Rachel Notley to a new level. The minister is now looking the other way while Notley funnels \$300 million from the building Canada fund to pay down her debt, but none is going to job-creating infrastructure projects. Alberta is in a jobs crisis. This minister has chosen loyalty to Premier Notley over struggling Albertans. Why has this minister betrayed Albertans in crisis?

Hon. Amarjeet Sohi (Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me say what the president of the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association had to say:

We are pleased to have a federal colleague who is willing to work collaboratively with us. Our members value the ongoing infrastructure investment that is on the federal agenda, which will support significant and shovel-worthy municipal projects across Alberta.

There are 127 projects, 126 in municipal sectors, with a combined investment of \$4.2 billion going into Alberta's economy.

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NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Phil McColeman (Brantford—Brant, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we learned last week that defence plans on how to deter a 9/11 cell terrorist attack were inadvertently leaked to the CBC. On one hand, the minister puts a lifelong gag order on bureaucrats who are directly involved in executing his political orders, while on the other hand, the minister's department is openly sharing national security documents.

When will the minister stop playing politics with the defence department and take seriously the responsibility for Canadian security?

• (1455)

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces take the security of sensitive information extremely seriously. We are constantly working to balance the requirement for openness and transparency while safeguarding information related to the security and defence of Canada.

In the last fiscal year, the department received over 2,000 access to information requests and released over 200,000 pages of documents to the public.

The classified documents were inadvertently released as a result of a human error. To avoid this in the future, we are reviewing this process to ensure that such a situation does not reoccur, and we continue to meet our legal obligations.

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SCIENCE

Mr. Darshan Singh Kang (Calgary Skyview, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government was elected on a promise to make historic investments in infrastructure, because we understand that infrastructure plays an important role in driving growth while delivering the housing, bridges, and roads Canadians need.

My question for the Minister of Science is: What investment is our government making in research infrastructure so that scientists have the tools to make Canada a world leader in research and innovation?

Hon. Kirsty Duncan (Minister of Science, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to investing in the labs and tools researchers need to enhance their scientific research. Last week I announced more than \$50 million, through the Canada Foundation for Innovation, for research infrastructure so that researchers can continue to discover and innovate. Their discoveries improve our economy, environment, and communities while also growing a strong, vibrant middle class.

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FINANCE

Mr. Blake Richards (Banff—Airdrie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals have a habit of saying one thing and then doing another. First, there was a promise of a small deficit. Now it is out of control. Then they promised a balanced budget by 2019. Now it will not be until 2055. Now the Liberals are saying that principal residence reporting is about foreign investor compliance. It turns out that it may just be a new way to tax small businesses.

I want to ask: Will the new rules requiring Canadians to report the sale of their principal residences on their tax returns eliminate any portion of the capital gains exemption if they run a small business from their home, yes or no?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the capital gains exemption on principal residences continues. We have asked that people report on their tax returns when they sell a home so we can ensure that we understand when people are selling homes if they are in fact their principal residences.

There is an administrative approach to make sure that people who are running a small business from their homes can continue to be eligible for that principal residence exemption.

* * *

[Translation]

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Salaberry—Suroît, NDP): Mr. Speaker, citizens met with representatives from the RCMP, the United Nations, and an NGO in Hemmingford yesterday. I thank

Oral Questions

them all for participating. The people were very open, empathetic, and welcoming to refugees crossing the border on foot.

Trump's new executive order will soon be in force. Will the Liberal government suspend the safe third country agreement and give our border services and border communities more resources?

What will the government do to manage the ongoing influx of irregular migrants? Where is its plan?

[English]

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government has been recognized throughout the world for having a compassionate refugee system. We maintain that tradition.

The safe third country agreement is an agreement between the United States and Canada on the orderly handling of asylum claims in both countries. The head of the UNHCR in Canada is on record as stating that the domestic asylum system in the United States is intact, and therefore it would be irresponsible to withdraw from the safe third country agreement.

If the New Democratic Party wants to get into an argument with the UNHCR, which has expertise on this issue, it is more than welcome to do so.

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STATUS OF WOMEN

Ms. Ruby Sahota (Brampton North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on March 7, Meghan, from my riding of Brampton North, will be joining me in Ottawa to experience a day in the life of an MP as part of Equal Voice's Daughters of the Vote initiative.

Can the Minister of Status of Women please highlight what our government has done to encourage women to get involved in politics and government?

Hon. Maryam Monsef (Minister of Status of Women, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague for her effective advocacy on behalf of the people of Brampton North.

Our government is committed to removing barriers for women in politics. That is why we are providing over \$13 million for Canada-wide projects to empower women in political and community action, and it is why we are proud to support the work of Equal Voice and to be hosting the Daughters of the Vote here in Ottawa this week.

I hope all my colleagues will join me in wishing the Daughters of the Vote a memorable and inspiring week here in Parliament.

Routine Proceedings

● (1500)

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the previous Conservative government understood the severe threat that invasive species, such as the Asian carp, pose for Canadian waterways. We learned last week that under the Liberals' watch, Asian carp had made their way into the St. Lawrence River and nearby waterways. This will have a detrimental effect on the commercial and recreational fishing industry and could cost the Quebec economy millions.

When will the Liberals start taking these developments seriously and take aggressive action to mitigate the growth of such invasive species?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we share my colleague's view and the view of the provinces and many states about the threat posed by invasive species, specifically the Asian carp. That is why we have invested considerably in science to properly monitor what is happening with invasive species, not only the Asian carp, in other waterways across the country. More importantly, we are making investments in infrastructure that will help prevent invasive species from reaching our waterways.

We will work with partners like the Great Lakes Fishery Commission and others to ensure that those investments reach the intended target of reducing these invasive species.

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[Translation]

CANADA REVENUE AGENCY

Mr. Rhéal Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, KPMG allowed Canadian multimillionaires to violate the Income Tax Act with impunity thanks to an agreement with the Canada Revenue Agency, or CRA. This is no joke; as far as CRA is concerned, KPMG and its clients are above the law. It is not surprising that the Liberals voted against our motion to combat tax havens.

The Prime Minister said last spring that if the agreement was flawed, it would be reassessed.

My question is simple and is for the Prime Minister. Does he think that the agreement is flawed or that tax evasion is fine for the Liberals?

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the tax rules are the same for everyone. I would like to point out that the offshore tax avoidance scheme set up by KPMG was discovered thanks to the efforts of the CRA.

Let me be clear: tax evaders can no longer hide. We take this issue very seriously, and those who choose to participate in tax schemes will face consequences for their actions. Canadians expect no less.

Mr. Rhéal Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank the Prime Minister for his excellent response.

KPMG has received more than \$92 million in federal government contracts since 2006. That is what we call a good client, a very good client, a partner. This partner, KPMG, encouraged its private clients to evade taxes and avoid paying taxes like everyone else.

Until we get to the bottom of these schemes, will this government commit to cancelling its contracts with KPMG or are we to understand that there is nothing wrong with a company encouraging tax evasion?

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to point out, and my colleague knows full well, that the KPMG case is currently before the courts. We are continuing to take action against KPMG. The case is before the courts and we are going to see our measures through, as Canadians have asked us to. That is what we promised during the election campaign and that is exactly what we are going to do.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Simon Marcil (Mirabel, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal government's inaction and grovelling before the U.S. government has cost Quebecers dearly, as we have seen with softwood lumber, diafiltered milk, and spent fowl. We have seen it over and over again.

Now, the harmful cuts proposed by the U.S. President are threatening the quality of the water consumed by the vast majority of Quebecers. A tweet from the Prime Minister is not going to solve the problem.

What real action will the Liberal government take to prevent Quebec's main source of drinking water from being compromised?

[English]

Mr. Jonathan Wilkinson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Government of Canada has a long history of working collaboratively with the United States and invests significant resources in restoring and protecting the Great Lakes. Canada remains committed to implementing our obligations under the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement and to the delivery on the Great Lakes commitments.

We continue to work alongside the United States and our domestic partners, and we will continue to promote strong action by all levels of government.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

● (1505)

[Translation]

INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

The Speaker: I have the honour to lay upon the table the report of a Canadian parliamentary delegation concerning its visit to Norway on January 9 and 10, 2017.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Matt DeCourcey (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Minister of Foreign Affairs and pursuant to Standing Order 32(2), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the treaty entitled “Agreement between the Government of Canada and the Government of the Swiss Confederation under the Convention on Mutual Administrative Assistance in Tax Matters as amended by the 2010 Protocol”, done at Ottawa on December 22, 2016, and at Berne on December 9, 2016.

I also have the honour to table an agreement on air transportation between the Government of Canada and the Government of Jamaica, done at Kingston on December 20, 2016.

[English]

An explanatory memorandum is included in each treaty.

* * *

[Translation]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 23rd report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, entitled “An Interim Report in Response to the Chief Electoral Officer’s Recommendations for Legislative Reforms Following the 42nd General Election”.

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

[English]

At this time, I would also like to thank the officials from Elections Canada who were with us for many meetings while we debated these recommendations at committee, as well as the parties for working so co-operatively to come up with this lengthy report.

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PETITIONS

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Mr. Robert Sopuck (Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition signed by over 60 of my constituents, which emphasizes the importance of regional, local, and community broadcast programming, and asks the government to enable a network of community-operated media centres not served by public or private media. Furthermore, the petitioners request that all Canadian residents have access to multi-platform media skills training and content distribution in the digital economy.

TRANS-PACIFIC PARTNERSHIP

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present three petitions today. Therefore, I hope you will bear with me.

The first petition is from a group of constituents who have raised concerns about the trans-Pacific partnership, and who recognize that it will raise the cost of medications, ease the path for foreign

Government Orders

takeovers, and empower corporations to sue local levels of government. Therefore, the petitioners are calling upon the Government of Canada to not ratify the trans-Pacific partnership.

• (1510)

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is from constituents in Shawnigan Lake who are asking the Government of Canada to protect the Shawnigan Lake watershed from contaminated soil under the power of the Fisheries Act, and to work with provincial partners to stop the dumping of contaminated soil in this critical area.

The third petition is from residents in the riding of Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, who recognize that the Cowichan River is an area of important cultural heritage to first nations and is an index river to the federal government. Therefore, with the effects of climate change, they call upon the Government of Canada to immediately release funds to provide for the raising of the weir on the Cowichan River to a level that is necessary to ensure sufficient flow to protect fish, and the people who depend on it.

INSECTICIDES

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a very timely petition, given the work right now at the agriculture committee, from constituents who are calling for the federal government to take action against the neonicotinoid insecticides that are imperilling pollinator populations across Canada.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I have a second petition from constituents of Saanich—Gulf Islands, which calls upon the government to put muscle behind the plans to expand the marine protected areas of Canada, working closely with first nations.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

The Speaker: Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

PRECLEARANCE ACT, 2016

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-23, An Act respecting the preclearance of persons and goods in Canada and the United States, be read the second time and referred to a committee, and of the amendment.

The Speaker: The hon. member for Lethbridge has three and a half minutes remaining in her speech.

Government Orders

Ms. Rachael Harder (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, to be completely clear, Canadian criminal law is the only law that applies in these pre-clearance zones that we are discussing. The only power that American agents have that comes from the United States is the ability to deny entry to the United States or to fine someone for attempting to bring a banned item into the U.S. Travellers have the right to leave the pre-clearance area at any time should they choose to do so, unless, of course, the border agent believes they have committed a crime under Canadian law. In that case, the agent can detain them until they are turned over to Canadian authorities. Once again, I stress that it is Canadian authorities who will investigate if the law has been broken, and that will be according to Canadian law.

Any piece of legislation can always be improved through rigorous scrutiny at the committee stage. I know there are probably still some minute concerns with regard to this piece of legislation. However, I believe that these details should be explored by the committee and are not fatal to this legislation passing at the second reading stage. This is why I am comfortable in supporting this piece of legislation at this time.

Nevertheless, I am concerned with the lack of priority that the Liberals have placed on this legislation. The previous Conservative government negotiated with the United States for several years, and a final agreement was signed in March of 2015. It took the Liberals more than a year to come out with the enabling legislation for the agreement that we are discussing today. Since the introduction of this bill in June of last year, it has sat on the books waiting to be brought forward. That is a long time.

As I mentioned previously, the United States Congress and Senate, following a particularly divisive election, I might add, managed to pass the American version of this legislation before Christmas. That was two months before the Liberals even brought this bill to the floor for us to begin discussing it. That seems like an unnecessary delay.

For Quebec's international airport and Toronto's city airport, as well as the Montréal Central station, and the Rocky Mountaineer train between Vancouver and Seattle, passage of this legislation would enable pre-clearance, thus making transit through these facilities more convenient and accessible to passengers. Given the importance of Canadian exports to the United States, one is left to wonder why this has not been given greater priority by the Liberal government.

In conclusion, I am pleased to support this piece of legislation today, and I encourage all members of the House to speak in support of and to vote in favour of this legislation.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to what my colleague had to say. I agree with her when she says that some bills can be improved in committee following second reading. It remains to be seen how many amendments the government will be open to.

However, the thing I am wondering about the most is why the government is moving so fast, when we learned this morning that only 18 members have had the opportunity to speak to this bill. If we count those who speak today, approximately 30 members will have

had the chance to speak to this bill, which is not even 10% of members. I would like to hear what my colleague has to say about that.

Does she not believe that the government is undermining democracy in the House by moving a time allocation motion so quickly?

• (1515)

[*English*]

Ms. Rachael Harder: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member's question has less to do with the piece of legislation in front of us and far more to do with the procedures of the House.

The Liberals have been known for moving what is called time allocation in this place, which forces us into a premature decision. It forces the debate to move at a pace that is unnecessary, disallows members in the House having their opinions made known in speaking on these important pieces of legislation that come before the House. That was in fact done in this place today, and has been done many times in the past. It taints democracy. It prevents us from being able to bring our views to the table and speaking on behalf of our constituents, which is what this place is meant for.

With regard to this piece of legislation and the moving of time allocation, I do not believe it was in the best interests of the House or the Canadian public.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on the one hand the member says that the government is not moving quickly enough, and on the other hand she says that we should allow more time for debate on the issue.

We can look at time allocation as a tool for government to get legislation through the House. The Conservatives seem to want to support this legislation. The member asked why the government did not bring in the bill earlier. The government does have a very finite amount of time to get substantial pieces of legislation through the House.

Recognizing the importance of this legislation, and recognizing previously debated legislation before the House is also of importance, would the member not agree that the Conservative Party, while it was in government, used time allocation on many more occasions as an effective tool to get legislation through the House? Would the member not agree, as the NDP did on legislation, that there is value to having time allocation? As the member would know, the NDP does not support this legislation, which means we could be spending weeks in ongoing debate. Does the member believe that is in the best interests of Canadians?

Ms. Rachael Harder: Mr. Speaker, with regard to the hon. member's question, I have to highlight that the Liberals have had this bill on the table since June. They have waited nearly a year to bring this piece of legislation to the floor and finally allow debate on it. Now the member opposite actually wants to use this dithering as justification for moving time allocation, which is actually closing the debate in this place. That is an unfair allegation by the member across the floor.

Government Orders

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I know the hon. member for Lethbridge was not a member of this place in the 41st Parliament, but I can assure her that the predecessor government under Stephen Harper used time allocation consistently and more brutally, but that does not mean I accept that it is good when I see it coming from our Liberal friends. I really do believe it is time to see time allocation go the way of the dodo in this place, unless there is a really clear need.

As the hon. member mentioned, this legislation has been on the docket since June. There is no reason for time allocation at this point before, as the member rightly points out, we have an opportunity to fully debate it. Given that background, I wonder if she would like to agree with me that this bill needs a much more thorough study before it goes to committee.

Ms. Rachael Harder: Mr. Speaker, when it comes to talking about legislation versus process in this House, so far I have just spoken with regard to the legislation, and the questions I have been asked have had to do with process in this place. That tells me that perhaps we are a little out of touch with the average Canadian, because I think the average Canadian is far more interested in the legislation that we are discussing and the laws that we are putting in place that are actually going to serve everyday Canadians well. That is the discussion that should be taking place in this House. That is the discussion I want to have today. As far as the process is concerned, that is a discussion we need to have elsewhere.

• (1520)

Mr. Marwan Tabbara (Kitchener South—Hespeler, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to join the debate on Bill C-23, an act respecting the pre-clearance of persons and goods in Canada and the United States.

The bill would modify the legislative framework governing pre-clearance operations, the process that allows people travelling from Canada to the U.S. to go through American customs and immigration procedures while still on Canadian soil. This currently exists at eight Canadian airports, and as anyone who has taken advantage of it is aware, it makes travel to the United States much faster and more convenient.

With Bill C-23 in place, it will be possible to expand pre-clearance to new locations and modes of transportation, to implement cargo pre-clearance, and to establish for the first time Canadian pre-clearance operations in the United States. This entails substantial advantages for Canadian travellers and for the Canadian economy.

Certain members have raised concerns about the bill and the new legislative framework it would create. Obviously, that is fine. Each of us has the responsibility as members of Parliament to scrutinize legislation and bring any potential issues to the House's attention. However, we also have the responsibility to avoid exaggerated statements and keep our analysis tethered to the facts. Unfortunately, certain critics of Bill C-23, in particular the NDP candidate for Ottawa—Vanier, have been making, I assume unintentionally, blatantly incorrect assertions about the bill. It is important to set the record straight.

To begin, the candidate has written that Bill C-23 would allow American border security officers to arrest Canadians on Canadian soil. This is completely wrong. Under this legislation, U.S. officers

would have no powers of arrest whatsoever. She has also written that Bill C-23 would allow U.S. pre-clearance officers to detain, question, seize property, frisk, strip search, and arrest Canadian citizens on Canadian soil. Once again, the claim about powers of arrest is simply fictional.

As for the first four items in that list, U.S. officers have already had those authorities for decades. In fact, during the debate, NDP members have been calling for the current framework to remain in place. While the current framework empowers U.S. officers to detain, question, seize property, and frisk Canadian citizens on Canadian soil, it seems worth asking whether the NDP candidate in Ottawa—Vanier considers her own party's position in favour of the current pre-clearance arrangement to be an affront to Canadian sovereignty.

With respect to searches, the current framework allows U.S. pre-clearance officers to detain a traveller for the purpose of a search, and requires them to request a Canadian officer to conduct the search. This remains the case in Bill C-23. The only change is that in the exceptional circumstance that a Canadian officer is unavailable, the U.S. officer would be allowed to conduct the search himself or herself. If the NDP considers this a bridge too far, it is free to make that argument, but I think most Canadians would rightly see this as the minor adjustment that it is.

On the subject of travellers who enter a pre-clearance area and then change their mind and decide to withdraw, the NDP's candidate has written that there is no escape. She claims U.S. officers would have all the power they need to hold anyone they want. The reality is that travellers would be free to withdraw from pre-clearance, just as they are now. Bill C-23 merely adds that withdrawing travellers may have to say who they are and why they are leaving in order to guard against people probing the pre-clearance area for security weaknesses. Moreover, it is already the case under existing law. Anyone detained by a U.S. pre-clearance officer must be transferred to Canadian authorities as soon as possible.

• (1525)

She has also written that Bill C-23 would protect U.S. pre-clearance officers who abuse their powers from all prosecution. Once more, this is just plain false. The new pre-clearance agreement with the United States, the one that would be implemented by the bill, would establish a fully reciprocal framework for shared criminal jurisdiction. The U.S. would have primary jurisdiction over most acts committed by its officers in the course of their duties, just as Canada would have primary jurisdiction over most criminal offences committed by our officers in the United States. The host country would retain primary jurisdiction for the most serious offences, as well as any offence committed by an officer while off duty.

With respect to civil action, Bill C-23 maintains the existing rules. As is currently the case, a traveller who feels he or she has been mistreated could not sue an individual officer, but could sue the U.S. government. The same would apply in reverse for Canadian operations on American soil.

Government Orders

In all circumstances, American pre-clearance officers operating in Canada would be required to comply with Canadian law, including the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the Canadian Bill of Rights, and the Canadian Human Rights Act. The more we expand pre-clearance, the more Canadian travellers could undergo U.S. border procedures while protected by Canadian law and the Canadian Constitution. The alternative is for Canadian travellers to be searched and questioned in the United States with none of these safeguards.

Finally, the NDP candidate in Ottawa—Vanier has written that Bill C-23 “threatens the right of permanent residents of Canada to be able to return home from abroad”. Once again, this is incorrect. There is absolutely nothing in the bill that would prevent permanent residents from returning to Canada.

Her assertion seems to be a reference to the unlikely confluence of multiple hypotheticals that could result in a person with major admissibility issues having to return to Canada the usual way rather than through pre-clearance. In the event that Canada established pre-clearance operations in the U.S. and in the event that a permanent resident of Canada develops a major admissibility issue, such as committing a serious crime, and in the event that a person is nevertheless allowed into the United States, such a person may have to re-enter Canada through an ordinary port of entry rather than benefiting from pre-clearance, simply because pre-clearance officers may not be equipped to deal with that particular situation. Now the NDP is free to argue that this quadruple hypothetical, whereby a person with a record of serious criminality would be inconvenienced, is a good reason to deny millions of Canadians the advantages of expanded pre-clearance, but I strongly disagree.

That is the heart of the issue here. Do the concerns raised by the NDP justify saying no thanks to the huge upside of pre-clearance expansion? It seems quite clear to me that they do not.

The changes that would be made by Bill C-23 to the legislative framework governing pre-clearance are moderate and reasonable. They would pave the way for substantial benefits, benefits such as reducing congestion to 12 million passengers per year, benefits such as in 2015 when Canada exported over \$400 billion in goods and services, some \$50 billion in services, to the United States, benefits of 600,000 jobs, benefits of tourism activities. We are talking about reducing hassles and delays for Canadian travellers, making it more convenient for tourists and business travellers to come to Canada, and making it quicker and easier for Canadian businesses to ship goods to and from the United States. Bill C-23 would be good for travellers, good for business, and a major step forward for the Canadian economy.

I invite all hon. members to engage in thoughtful, informed discussion of this legislation both today and hopefully at committee. I certainly intend to support the bill.

• (1530)

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, of course we agree with the general position on the bill, although it was interesting that the member chose to spend a substantial amount of time refuting a specific NDP candidate’s comments in a by-election as opposed to focusing on debate among members here. Of course, I would have thought he would have been

more worried about the Conservative candidate in that by-election, but perhaps there are other places to make those points.

With respect to the issue itself, the bill deals with pre-clearance of individuals. It does not speak to the issue of pre-clearance of goods. He spoke about this, so I wonder if he could talk about the importance of moving on that front and share what the government’s timetable might be for moving forward on pre-clearance of goods as well.

Mr. Marwan Tabbara: Mr. Speaker, in terms of goods, about \$400 billion per year in goods and services are transported to the United States. Therefore, instead of having congestion at the border, we need to ensure the flow of our goods, services, and people from here to the United States is quick and easy, and that we can grow both our economies.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Mr. Speaker, everyone in the House agrees that the free flow of goods and people across our border with the United States is important. That is why debate on this bill is so important.

Since this debate is happening under a time allocation motion, time is very precious. My colleague should be ashamed of himself for wasting our precious time electioneering.

I was elected to represent the people of Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, who are very concerned about this bill. On February 19, people came out to join me for coffee and talk about Bill C-23. They have concerns about their rights and respect for the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

This is not hypothetical stuff. There have been very real cases of discrimination against transgender people and religious and ethnic discrimination. We must therefore ensure that this bill contains the proper guarantees to make sure people’s rights are respected.

All my colleague did in his speech was talk about a by-election. He offered no guarantees regarding rights. What are his thoughts on that?

[*English*]

Mr. Marwan Tabbara: Mr. Speaker, the reason I chose to present that in my speech is this. As we all know, as we were all candidates once, we need to ensure that our words and what we voice to the public are true. However, what the candidate in Ottawa—Vanier mentioned was untrue. I was trying to present that so we set the record straight. We know what is true about Bill C-23.

Government Orders

This gives me an opportunity to talk about the economic benefits that so many people have mentioned, such as with the Billy Bishop airport in Toronto, and the economic benefits that Bill C-23 will have with the pre-clearance of a lot of goods, services, and individuals to get across the border that much quicker.

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to stand in the House to speak in opposition to Bill C-23, a bill that we in the NDP have been clear that we oppose for a number of very key issues.

Before I begin, I want to reflect on the fact that my colleague from the Liberal Party spent an inordinate amount of time talking about what our friend, who is running for the NDP in the Vanier byelection, said. Emilie Taman is a legal expert who has worked in the area of human rights, whose passion is human rights. She has reflected the true analysis of the bill. The assertions made by my colleague to dispute her comments are false.

I would expect better from a member of the government. Instead of defending his party's positions, he is choosing to attack somebody running in a by-election. That seems beneath the role of somebody who is in government, in the context of serious legislation like this, and really speaks to the fact that the Liberals are playing cynical politics with legislation that we know will have an impact on people's human rights, on their privacy, legislation that certainly does away with potential safeguards that need to be in place.

We support allowing for greater fluidity of movement across the border, but this bill is not about that.

Just in the House today, we were talking about the latest executive order put forward by President Donald Trump and its implications on Canadians and obviously all those affected. Our leader, Tom Mulcair, rose in the House to talk about the latest incident of a Canadian, Manpreet Kooner, a resident of Montreal, born and raised in Canada, who was turned away at the border after six hours of investigation. She is a Canadian citizen.

This is the impact of Trump's America. This is what is happening at our borders right now. This is a major issue of concern for us. I do not know why the Prime Minister did not reflect that concern and denounce, as he should, the position of President Donald Trump. However, this is the reality of today. This is what is happening at our borders today.

Bill C-23 would only exacerbate the kind of disrespect of people's human rights and privacy rights. Instead of protecting Canadians, the Liberal government is trying to change the channel, deflecting to by-elections and not listening to the major concerns many have raised with respect to the legislation.

Why are we as New Democrats opposed to the bill?

First, it would allow for increased powers for U.S. officers on Canadian soil, provisions regarding carrying firearms, strip searches, detention, and interrogation.

A second reason is the lack of provisions protecting the rights and freedoms of transgender people during strip searches.

Another reason is the invasion of privacy on Canadian soil, the search of travellers' electronic devices and access to the digital universe, as it is known.

Another reason we are opposed is because of the additional difficulties for Canadian refugees and permanent residents going through pre-clearance on U.S. soil.

Finally is the ambiguity surrounding compliance with the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and its extraterritorial application.

These are critical reasons. We are talking about the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, a document of which the Prime Minister has indicated on numerous occasions he is very proud. This legislation allows searches and actions by U.S. border agents that could very well go against what is protected in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. People are beginning to see through the rhetoric put forward by the government because the actions do not match what is being said.

A number of well-respected individuals who know a great deal about the issue at hand have also shared their concerns and opposition to Bill C-23.

Peter Edelmann, a lawyer and member of the national immigration section of the Canadian Bar Association, said that he was concerned about the application of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. He asked how we could be assured that the U.S. CBP pre-clearance officers would be subjected to the charter as the bill did not specify their stature as agents of the state.

● (1535)

Howard Greenberg, an immigration lawyer who has chaired the immigration committee of the Canadian Bar Association and the International Bar Association, was speaking to the power of U.S. officers to detain and question travellers on their reasons for wanting to withdraw from the pre-clearance area. He indicated that at some point it may change from a situation where travellers were simply responding to a question to a situation where they were failing to respond to a direction of an officer. The ambiguity is somewhat dangerous for the traveller.

With respect to the fact that there was a lack of provisions protecting the rights and freedoms of transgender Canadians during potential strip searches, Brielle Beady-Linklater, a transgendered human rights activist who I have the honour of knowing, indicated that travelling as a transgender person was already complicated. Any additional measures that could bring humiliation might simply stop members of the community from going on vacations or a business trip.

Craig Forcese, professor at the Faculty of Law, University of Ottawa, indicated:

Put simply, in *Hape*, the Supreme Court concluded that the Charter typically does not follow the flag – that is, that it does not generally attach to the extraterritorial conduct of Canadian government actors. The Court did, however, raise caveats to that conclusion. Consent of the foreign state to the application of the law is an obvious exception. But so too is what the Court called “some other basis under international law”...The difficulty in deciding what those other bases are stems from the Supreme Court's rather unpersuasive approach to prescriptive and enforcement jurisdiction in international law.

Government Orders

Alex Neve, secretary general, Amnesty International Canada, a renowned organization when it comes to human rights, was speaking to biometric screening at the border. He indicated:

...we certainly have signalled the very real potential that there are serious human rights violations that can ensue if, for instance, those new technologies aren't used responsibly. That's number one. Number two, they do not have effective safeguards in place, so it often comes down to questions of safeguards and review and oversight, and we know, for the large part, that Canada's national security framework is lacking on that front.

We also heard from members of the Muslim community, a community that has been targeted repeatedly over the last number of years, certainly the targeting of which we have seen grow as a result of the politics of hate and racism that the policies of Donald Trump have been encouraging. We must take very seriously the concerns put forward by the Muslim community, particularly as it pertains to the potential for racial profiling and targeting of Muslim Canadians and Muslim travellers.

Safiah Chowdhury, a representative of the Islamic Society of North America, indicated:

Many of us have been arbitrarily questioned for no reason whatsoever, but simply because we are Muslim. We always build in extra time to go to the airport because of the extra screening we expect to go through. Right now when I travel through, say, Pearson, if I am questioned in a way I don't like or I think infringes upon my rights or I think is trying to put me in a position that makes me answer questions that typecast me in a certain way, I have the opportunity to leave and go back to my home. However, under these provisions that are being presented, there will not be that opportunity.

Ms. Chowdhury goes on to explain the concerns that many have raised in the Muslim community.

We do not stand here and take this issue lightly. We feel strongly that the human rights and rights to privacy of Canadians must be protected. We feel strongly that Bill C-23 does not do that. We are very concerned. We do not support the government's insistence on making this about other issues, while disregarding the major gaps that are at play here.

In the age in which we live, where Canadians are being turned back at the border, where they are being disrespected and, frankly, mistreated, this is not the time to pass a bill that would further endanger those travelling and that would certainly put them in a situation where they would be increasingly more vulnerable.

This is why I am proud that we are opposed to Bill C-23. We certainly would like to see the government change course.

● (1540)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Before we go to questions and comments, I want to remind hon. members that when referring to one of their colleagues in the chamber, we refer to them by their title or by their riding name, not by their name.

The hon. member for Mount Royal.

Mr. Anthony Housefather (Mount Royal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to extend my best wishes to the hon. member for Churchill—Keewatinook Aski on her announcement we are all expecting this week.

My question is as follows. We have all heard of some very unfortunate and scary incidents happening at border crossings. Pre-clearance means that people do not need to go to a border crossing but can actually go through pre-clearance. I would like to ask the

hon. member if she has heard of any incidents that have occurred in pre-clearance, because I have not heard of any. If not, would it not be better for more people to go through pre-clearance as opposed to going to the border?

Ms. Niki Ashton: Mr. Speaker, as I indicated in my speech, we certainly know from a number of human rights advocates, representatives of the Muslim community in Canada, and transgender activists that what is in Bill C-23 leaves a tremendous gap and puts at risk respect for human rights, the Charter of Rights, and Canadians' privacy rights as they pertain to procedures conducted by U.S. border officials.

We are living in an unprecedented time. I was blown away by the fact that a Montreal resident, a Canadian citizen, born and raised in Canada, Ms. Manpreet Kooner, was turned away at the border after six hours of being investigated. This is not the time to conduct ourselves as though nothing has changed. Clearly, the government has not caught on to that. This is the time to ensure that what we are doing is protecting Canadians' human rights, protecting their right to privacy, and standing up for the charter.

● (1545)

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I certainly agree that the House is not the place to be waging a by-election campaign, as she referred to at the beginning of her remarks.

I have a question, though, for the member with respect to the issue of U.S. border guards. Of course, Canadians who choose to travel to the U.S. are well aware of the questions that may exist, but a person who makes a choice to travel to the United States is making that choice and will either be screened in the United States or through pre-clearance in Canada. A person involved in pre-clearance does have the opportunity to leave eventually. This legislation would provide for limited detainment of that person for a period of time.

It is important for the NDP to acknowledge as well that although there are legitimate concerns, and I have expressed some of those concerns myself, about actions taken by the Trump administration, at the end of the day, the United States is a country with rule of law and strong institutions where people can bring those issues up through the American system. Those who choose to go to the United States are, in some sense, putting their faith in that system.

Does the member not acknowledge that, therefore, there is some degree of perspective needed, perhaps, and that again, pre-clearance is a better option compared to some of the alternatives?

Ms. Niki Ashton: Mr. Speaker, I am happy to agree on his initial point that the House is not the place to discuss by-elections, but I will say that it is perhaps an indication that the Liberals are considering the NDP candidate a threat in that election. We have certainly taken note.

Government Orders

Back to the topic at hand, what is clear, as has been pointed out, is that we are living in an unprecedented time. We are very concerned about what is happening day in and day out at the border. New Democrats are certainly in support of more fluid movement, but given what has been happening, and given the potential for Canadians' human rights and the right to privacy to not be protected, it is simply not something we can support. We are concerned that the government seems to be deflecting from this point or changing the channel. We believe that this is far too serious a point to ignore, and that is why we stand in opposition to Bill C-23.

Ms. Yasmin Ratansi (Don Valley East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to continue our second reading debate on Bill C-23, the legislation that would give us the opportunity to provide faster, charter-protected travel for Canadians. These crucial updates to the pre-clearance framework would enhance security, improve cross-border flow, and produce substantial economic and travel benefits for Canadians.

We have already benefited from over six decades of successful pre-clearance. It has been beneficial for businesses, for the economy, and for the ordinary traveller. We are now in a position to implement an agreement with the United States that would make these advantages available to more Canadians in more parts of the country.

We have heard supportive voices for the expansion of this bill from business, from chambers of commerce, from the tourism industry, from municipalities, from other levels of government, and from ordinary Canadians. Most recently, before we adjourned last week to spend time in our ridings, we heard from many members of this House that Bill C-23 would bring economic benefits and ease travel restrictions while protecting Canadian rights. It is on this note that we think we are on the right track to continue the legislative process.

However, we have also heard concerns from some members. Many of these concerns have already been addressed, both during debate in the chamber and through the technical briefing provided to journalists last week by Public Safety Canada and the Canada Border Services Agency, and live-streamed by the media. This was on top of technical briefings provided to parliamentarians last year. However, to ensure that there is clarity on some of these issues, I would like to focus my remarks today on two specific topics: travellers' rights and reciprocity between Canada and the United States.

First, on rights, we all know that both Canada and the U.S. set and enforce their own rules with respect to who or what enters their countries. However, for Canadians undergoing U.S. customs and immigration procedures while still in Canada, Bill C-23 would ensure that Canadian legal and charter standards would apply to that process. This is a distinct advantage over entering the United States at a border through a regular port of entry inside U.S. territory, where Canadian charter standards do not apply to the conduct of U.S. officers.

Let us take the example of withdrawal. If travellers wanted to withdraw from a pre-clearance site in Canada and not continue on to the U.S., they would be able to do so under Bill C-23, just as they can under the current pre-clearance agreement. The only adjustment here is that American officials could ask travellers to identify themselves and give their reasons for withdrawing. This is to avoid

illicit probing of pre-clearance sites. The alternative would be to go to the United States and submit to examination by the U.S. authorities on U.S. soil. At that point, it would not be possible to withdraw from the process at all, because the person would already be in the United States.

I have heard some members argue that travellers are already protected under the current pre-clearance arrangement, and so no change is needed. The problem is that we have pre-clearance right now at only eight airports in Canada. If people are travelling from anywhere else, the protection of undergoing U.S. border procedures in Canada and therefore having the right to withdraw is not available to these people. With Bill C-23, we could begin expanding pre-clearance so that more Canadian travellers could enjoy the benefits and protections.

Another point that needs to be clarified regarding travellers' rights is that U.S. pre-clearance officers would not have the authority to enforce U.S. criminal law or make arrests in Canada. If U.S. pre-clearance officers have reasonable grounds to believe that a traveller has committed an offence under Canadian law, they can detain that traveller without making an arrest, but only in order to transfer the person to Canadian authorities right away. This is not new. Rather, it is part of the existing pre-clearance framework that has been in place since 1999.

In other words, contrary to what has been speculated, there is no compromise here on rights and values. On the contrary, Bill C-23 would expand the protective umbrella of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms so that it can apply to Canadians flying out of airports such as Billy Bishop and the Jean Lesage airport in Quebec City. They are not currently covered. It would also be applicable for the first time to Canadians travelling using other modes of transportation, beginning with train routes in Montreal and British Columbia.

Canadians expect us to make sure that their rights and values, and the protections afforded by the charter, our Bill of Rights, and the Canadian Human Rights Act, are front and centre in all legislation we consider in this House. By making charter protections more widely available, Bill C-23 is a step forward for the rights of Canadian travellers.

The second issue I would like to address concerns the question of reciprocity. It must be stressed that the updated and expanded approach to pre-clearance being discussed here would be absolutely and fully reciprocal. There would be no authorities conferred on the border officers of one country that would not be conferred on those of the other.

Government Orders

Each country, as well, would retain primary jurisdiction over most criminal offences that might be committed by an officer in the course of his or her duties, while the host country would retain primary jurisdiction for the most serious crimes. As such, fears that this bill constitutes the ceding of our sovereignty are misplaced. Rather, Bill C-23 would implement a mutually beneficial agreement that would impose the same obligations and confer the same authorities on both parties.

The bill would improve safety and security for both countries. It would make travel and trade more efficient and expeditious. Also, as is clearly laid out in article II of the agreement with the United States, it would ensure that each country's laws and constitutions would apply to all pre-clearance operations. This means that U.S. officers operating in Canada would have to abide by the charter, as would Canadian border officers in the United States.

I cannot reiterate enough that more than 400,000 people flow across the border every day. There is close to \$2.5 billion in two-way trade that moves between our two countries each and every day. It is therefore mutually beneficial for both countries to build on the success of existing pre-clearance operations while simultaneously protecting, even enhancing, the rights of Canadian travellers. This is the backbone of the bill before us today.

I encourage all members to support Bill C-23.

• (1555)

[Translation]

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as a preamble to my question, I would like to reference something on the U.S. Customs and Border Protection website regarding search procedures for transgendered people. It states that, if the person being searched has undergone sex reassignment surgery, the individual's current sex will determine whether the search is conducted by a male or female customs and border services officer. This suggests that, if the individual has not undergone surgery, this right will not be recognized.

I could give many examples, but since we do not have a lot of time, this is simply one example that tells me that not all rights guaranteed by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms have been taken into account in the new agreement that the Liberals want to bring in.

Can my esteemed colleague assure me that all measures in this new agreement will guarantee the same rights that are protected by our Charter of Rights and Freedoms?

[English]

Ms. Yasmin Ratansi: Mr. Speaker, as MPs, we see a lot of bills come before us, and not all bills are comprehensive or totally perfect. It is our job as MPs to debate the issues and to bring them forward to committee. It is at committee where this bill will be very well debated and looked at thoroughly. Any questions or concerns people have can be raised at committee. They can bring in witnesses and the right people.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will make a quick response to the comment that was just made about the work of committees. A lot of experts came before committee with respect to Bill S-201 and Bill C-22 and

made recommendations that were unanimously adopted by that committee, only to have the government completely ignore and refute those recommendations.

In asking us to put faith in the committee process and in the government respecting that process, I am sorry to say that my patience with that line of argument is wearing very thin at the moment.

My question to the member is about the part of the bill that gives authorization to U.S. customs officials to carry firearms on Canadian soil. I have yet to hear a convincing argument from the Liberal benches as to why this is necessary. Why, when we have a perfectly capable police force in Canada, would we cede this kind of sovereignty to U.S. agents on Canadian soil?

• (1600)

Ms. Yasmin Ratansi: Mr. Speaker, things are not always perfect in a democracy, so therefore whether the committee process will work or will not work, it is important to note that we can vote bills down in the House or eliminate them.

With regard to U.S. border guards carrying arms, whatever the Canadians can do, the U.S. border guards can do at the pre-clearance point. Reciprocity is contained within the bill. If there are any clauses that make no sense to committee members, they should have the chance to review and refuse or eliminate those clauses.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is a good news bill. We are talking about pre-clearance for many Canadians travelling to the U.S.

My question is about recognizing the economic value, and I will use the Lester Pearson airport as an excellent example. Virtually half of U.S. airports do not have U.S. customs officers, and this prevents aircraft from flying into those jurisdictions. That is why, over the years, pre-clearance has been seen as a positive thing that both Canada and the U.S. benefit from.

I am wondering if my colleague could comment on the benefits that Canadians get as a result of pre-clearance.

Ms. Yasmin Ratansi: Mr. Speaker, pre-clearance has been in place since 1999, and this legislation would enhance the economic benefits. There are 400,000 people who cross the border, and \$2.5 billion a day in business. Economic benefits will be greatly enhanced if people utilize the pre-clearance process.

Mr. Kyle Peterson (Newmarket—Aurora, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to discuss Bill C-23, which would provide the necessary authority under Canadian law to implement the land, rail, marine, and air transport preclearance agreement, thereby expanding U.S. pre-clearance operations in Canada, and, for the first time, enabling pre-clearance of cargo, and Canadian pre-clearance operations in the U.S.

Government Orders

Pre-clearance makes travel faster and easier for tourists and business travellers alike, and makes it faster and easier for Canadian companies to do business with Americans. It also allows Canadian travellers to undergo U.S. border procedures while under the protection of Canadian law, and, most importantly, our Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

The proposed expansion of pre-clearance enabled by Bill C-23 has been greeted with enthusiasm by chambers of commerce across the country, by the tourism industry, the trucking industry, and by government partners, among others. The mayor of Quebec City, for example, has called it a great victory.

Pre-clearance operations for passengers have been a success story for more than 60 years, but they currently exist in only eight Canadian airports, and they do not exist for cargo at all. It is time to build on that success. Expansion to new locations and modes of travel require an agreement with the United States. That agreement has been reached, and the U.S. has passed the legislation needed for implementation in their country with unanimous support in both houses of Congress. That is no small feat. However, if we do not pass Bill C-23, the agreement will come to naught, and the benefits of pre-clearance will remain limited to those Canadians who already enjoy them.

Nevertheless, throughout this debate, the NDP members have been advocating in favour of the existing pre-clearance framework. According to the member for Vancouver East, the current pre-clearance system is working well. Similarly, the member for Beloeil—Chambly has said that the current pre-clearance system works well. The member for Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke has said that pre-clearance works just fine. To quote the member for Windsor—Tecumseh, “I understand about pre-clearance. It is working. It exists today.”

Yes, it does, and I agree that the current framework, which has been in place since 1999, has served Canada well. The NDP support for it is interesting, because in 1999 when this framework was proposed and debated, that party had a very different take. At the time, the then member for Winnipeg—Transcona said that he had concerns about the bill having to do with privacy protection, with the power of U.S. authorities to detain people, and concerns that this would be a further application of U.S. law on Canadian soil.

The then member for Winnipeg Centre said that he had serious reservations about the bill. He said it was too intrusive and a breach of Canadian sovereignty. He was worried that foreign officers would have the right to hold people and to stop people from leaving. He argued that by passing the bill, the House was granting foreign powers on our soil which the NDP did not think was necessary. He went on to declare that the NDP remained firmly opposed to the creation of Canadian offences for resisting or misleading a foreign pre-clearance officer. He accused MPs in favour of the bill of being ready to trample on Canadian sovereignty. He said, and this is my favourite part, that the bill opened up such a can of worms that it should be sent back to the other place for them to try again, and to take into consideration such basic things as national pride.

Clearly, a couple of decades later, the NDP realizes that its concerns back then were overblown. However, here we are again. A new pre-clearance framework is being proposed, and, once more, the

NDP is sounding the alarm about perceived threats to Canadian sovereignty and perceived powers granted to foreign officers. It would not surprise me one bit if 20 years from now New Democrats leap to the defence of Bill C-23 while insisting that any further changes would mark the demise of the sovereignty of Canada.

My point is, let us be reasonable. In most respects, Bill C-23 is very similar to the current framework. Regarding authorities to detain, question, search travellers, and seize goods, Bill C-23 is either identical to the existing law or very nearly so. The same is true regarding penalties for obstructing or lying to an officer. The right to withdraw from a pre-clearance area is maintained; a traveller just has to say who they are and why they are leaving. The totality of U.S. pre-clearance operations in Canada would be subject to Canadian law, the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the Canadian Bill of Rights, and the Canadian Human Rights Act.

● (1605)

The motion put forward by the member for Beloeil—Chambly asks us to reject Bill C-23 because of what he referred to as the climate of uncertainty at the U.S. border. However, it is precisely, with legislation like this, that we are best able to reduce uncertainty for Canadian travellers. The bill provides a clear legal framework governing the actions of U.S. officers on Canadian soil, and requires U.S. officers in Canada to adhere to Canadian legal and constitutional standards.

Today, for instance, a Canadian taking the train from Montreal to New York has to disembark after crossing the border and submit to U.S. customs and immigration processes without any Canadian legal protection. With Bill C-23 in place, that traveller could be processed at the train station in Montreal, with Canadian constitutional safeguards in force and with Canadian authorities on site. In other words, not only would the legislation bring about substantial economic benefits, not only would it make trips to the United States quicker and more convenient for Canadian travellers, it would also enhance constitutional and legal protection for those very travellers.

With that in mind, I encourage all hon. members to give the bill their full support.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is true that political parties and the NDP sometimes change their position. It sometimes takes decades. That stands in stark contrast to the Liberal Party, which changes its direction from one election to when it turns into government.

That aside, I would be curious to hear about the hon. member's views on a particular section of the bill which gives the powers of U.S. agents on Canadian soil the right to carry firearms. I do not see why this is necessary on Canadian soil. Is it the fact that the Liberal government has so little faith in our own police forces that it is willing to cede our sovereignty in this area? I have yet to hear a plausible explanation as to why this particular provision in the bill is necessary. I would be eternally grateful to the member if he could shed some light on that.

● (1610)

Mr. Kyle Peterson: Mr. Speaker, given that party's propensity to change its mind, I am not sure if his gratitude will actually be eternal if he offers it to me.

Government Orders

I think a lot has been made about the firearms component of the bill. Let us be clear. U.S. officers are given no greater power than what Canadian officers already have, so U.S. officers will not be armed in Canadian airports.

However, Canadian officers are already armed at land and sea points of entry. It only stands to reason that U.S. officers will have the same authority and the same powers that Canadian officers do in those situations. Frankly, I do not see why that is a problem that needs any more explanation. They need to be treated the same as Canadian officers doing the same job in the same area. I think that is reasonable.

Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened to my colleague on the trade committee on this file, and I am curious. Looking forward, we do not have cargo included in this piece of legislation. I understand the minister has said to the media that the government will include cargo somewhere in the future.

Can the hon. member give us an idea what that may look like, and roughly the time schedule before we see that before committee?

Mr. Kyle Peterson: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the hon. member's question, and I also appreciate working with him on the trade committee.

I am not privy to any firm schedule, but I share his enthusiasm for seeing cargo treated in a manner that would make sure that businesses on both sides of the border are able to tap into both markets. It would ensure that small and medium enterprises are able to create the jobs and create the growth that they do for our economy.

I look forward to working with the hon. member to make sure that we can get that framework in place. I share his enthusiasm that sooner is probably better.

Ms. Kate Young (Parliamentary Secretary for Science, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I know my hon. colleague and I will agree that a secure, well-functioning border is essential for Canada's economic prosperity. There is no question.

I have to wonder why the opposition is so worried about this pre-clearance. I wonder if the hon. member could tell us what would happen if we did not have the pre-clearance. How would Canadian travellers deal with going across the border?

Mr. Kyle Peterson: Mr. Speaker, it is fair to say that the pre-clearance system in the eight airports that have it now is functioning quite well. Business travellers and people who travel on vacation think it is working well. However, it needs to be expanded. It is not fair for only those eight airports to have that benefit, and it should be expanded across the country. I know a lot of people who make decisions on where they travel and what airports they fly from based on whether or not they can get pre-clearance into the U.S., especially in my home riding of Newmarket—Aurora, which is close to two airports, one being Pearson International Airport, and the other being Billy Bishop airport. Right now, people who want to fly to the United States from Billy Bishop airport are not entitled to use pre-clearance. I think it would be of benefit to travellers in my neck of the woods to have that choice as a consumer when they decide on their flight options.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Claude Poissant (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak to Bill C-23 to expand pre-clearance activities. Pre-clearance is a system that has been around for more than 60 years. It allows travellers in Canadian airports to go through U.S. customs and immigration procedures in Canada. This prevents travellers from having to spend a lot of time waiting in line to go through customs when they arrive in the United States, allows for direct flights to U.S. airports that would otherwise only accept domestic flights, and allows Canadians to follow U.S. border procedures, while remaining protected by Canada's laws and Constitution. This arrangement, which is already in place in eight of our airports, has been very successful for Canadian citizens, Canadian businesses, and especially Canada's tourism industry.

In listening to the debate on this bill, I noticed that hon. members generally seem to agree that pre-clearance is a good thing. I am thrilled to hear that. However, I also heard members of the NDP and the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands say that, although they are in favour of pre-clearance, they would like to keep it under the current legislative framework and they do not understand why new legislative measures are necessary.

I am pleased to have the opportunity to explain. I will give a detailed explanation, but here is the short answer: if we stick with the existing legislation, we will be limited to the existing pre-clearance locations. However, if we want more Canadians in more parts of the country to enjoy the benefits of pre-clearance, including easier travel to the U.S. and increased trade with the U.S., we must pass this bill.

Pre-clearance activities require action by two countries, in this case Canada and the United States. Any expansion of pre-clearance requires the consent of both parties. Such an agreement has just been reached and is known as the agreement on land, rail, marine and air transport pre-clearance. An implementation act must be passed by both countries in order for the agreement to be implemented.

We can choose to either pass Bill C-23 so that we can establish pre-clearance in new Canadian locations and for different means of transportation, the pre-clearance of shipments, and Canadian pre-clearance in the United States, or not pass the bill and not reach any of these objectives.

Given the considerable positive impact of expanded pre-clearance, this bill would have to have a major downside for anyone to justify denying Canadians the economic opportunities and the benefits to travellers of expanded pre-clearance.

Government Orders

Reacting to provisions that set out powers granted to American pre-clearance officers, the NDP and the Green Party would have us believe that this bill is downright apocalyptic. However, on reading the provisions of the bill, it is clear that they are modest and reasonable and very similar to the existing legislative framework. For example, under the current law, U.S. pre-clearance officers can frisk travellers. Under Bill C-23, U.S. pre-clearance officers can frisk travellers.

• (1615)

Under the current law, a U.S. pre-clearance officer can detain a traveller if there are reasonable grounds to believe that he or she has committed an offence, and the traveller must be transferred as soon as possible to Canadian custody. Under the current law, a U.S. pre-clearance officer can detain a traveller for the purpose of a strip search and must request a Canadian officer to conduct the search. Under Bill C-23, a U.S. pre-clearance officer can detain a traveller for the purpose of a strip search and must request a Canadian officer to conduct the search. The only difference here is that U.S. officers could conduct the search themselves in the very unlikely event that Canadian officers are unavailable.

In the existing law and in Bill C-23, the provisions governing use of force by American officers are virtually identical. The provisions laying out the penalties for lying to or obstructing pre-clearance officers are exactly identical. In addition, neither the existing law nor Bill C-23 confers any powers of arrest whatsoever on U.S. officers in Canada.

Under the existing legislation and Bill C-23, travellers can leave the pre-clearance area. The only difference now is that travellers who do leave the pre-clearance area may have to show some identification and say why they are leaving. The intention here is simply to address the problem of people who enter pre-clearance areas looking for weaknesses in border security before leaving undetected.

As far as firearms are concerned, U.S. pre-clearance officers would only be authorized to carry the same firearms as Canadian border services officers in the same environment. In other words, since Canada Border Services Agency officers do not carry firearms in Canada's airports, the same would be true for their U.S. counterparts.

This provision and the entire pre-clearance agreement with the United States are reciprocal. That means that, when Canadian pre-clearance officers start to conduct activities in the United States, they will have the authority to carry the same firearms as American officers in the same circumstances. Contrary to what some are saying, this is not about ceding our sovereignty. This is about a mutually beneficial agreement that confers the same powers and obligations to both parties.

Most importantly, U.S. pre-clearance officers operating on Canadian soil would have to conduct themselves in accordance with Canadian law and the Canadian Constitution, including the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

To put that in practical terms, a traveller flying today from Quebec City to New York has to submit to U.S. border procedures after landing in the U.S., with no Canadian legal protections. With

Bill C-23 in place, that traveller could be processed by U.S. officials while still in Canada.

If people are concerned about how they might be treated by American border officers, would they not rather undergo questioning and searches under the umbrella of Canadian Charter protections, rather than fending for themselves in a U.S. airport?

I appreciate that it is the role of the opposition to put legislation through the wringer, and I certainly do not begrudge the opposition members their right to raise concerns and vote against the bill if they so choose. However, we are talking about a measure that would bring tremendous benefits to Canadian travellers and businesses. The worst criticism that the New Democrats can muster is that a person who wants to leave a pre-clearance area may have to say why.

• (1620)

To me that seems an odd hill to die on. For my part, I will be supporting this legislation and looking forward to the advantages of expanded pre-clearance. I encourage all hon. members to do the same.

• (1625)

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member from La Prairie for that impressive speech to do with folks being up in arms about the pressing issue of travellers being frisked at the border. People sometimes get confused when they try to go too fast, which is, incidentally, exactly what the Liberal government is doing today by putting closure on this bill.

Does the member agree that many people on this side of the House support the bill? The fact is that it will speed the flow at the border. Nevertheless, members should have been given more time to express their support for a bill that will make crossing the border easier. Those are the pressing matters before the House.

Mr. Jean-Claude Poissant: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question. The bill will be studied in committee. There will be more time to discuss issues of concern to those who oppose the bill. I am satisfied with this process, and I am confident about the future of this bill.

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to round out what my colleague from Mégantic—L'Érable said and add that while many people may want to support this bill, a number of other people want to raise some serious concerns and clear reservations. We learned this morning that only 18 out of 338 parliamentarians had the opportunity to speak to this issue before we resumed debate today.

Add to that those who will have had the chance to speak today and deliver speeches to convey the concerns of their constituents, and we will not even reach 10%. Only 10% of parliamentarians in this House will have the opportunity to speak to such an important issue.

Government Orders

When I hear the argument that this is not about leaving Canadians to deal with American customs officers on American soil, but rather about bringing those practices here to Canada, I think the difference is very subtle and deserves to be examined more closely.

Does the member not agree that it is beyond the authority of the House to put this bill under time allocation when no Canadian lives are in danger, it does in fact overstep the powers of this House and constitutes a clear denial of democracy for all Canadians?

Mr. Jean-Claude Poissant: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question. In the meantime, I would like people to understand that this bill simply seeks to expand on the existing pre-clearance stations. It think it will benefit Canadians to be able to access these tools more quickly.

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I too want to denounce the fact that we are under time allocation to debate this very important bill. We are talking about security and upholding the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. We recently saw all sorts of activity at the border that verges on racial discrimination. People are being detained and turned away at the border because of their ethnic origin or religion.

Is this not in fact an important debate that deserves more reflection to ensure that we are not in fact legislating this manner of overstepping and borderline racist and xenophobic behaviour? We know that things are not going so well with the Trump administration, which just signed another order barring entry of nationals from predominantly Muslim countries.

Where does the government stand on this issue?

• (1630)

Mr. Jean-Claude Poissant: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

I do not want to mix up the two files. There is the issue of people arriving from the United States. However, today, we are debating Bill C-23, which seeks to make improvements and to increase the number of pre-clearance stations. I have confidence in the committee that will be studying Bill C-23 and making recommendations.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): It is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, Freedom of the Press; the hon. member for Elgin—Middlesex—London, Taxation; the hon. member for Calgary Rocky Ridge, Ethics.

[English]

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House today to speak to Bill C-23, the pre-clearance act. This act is another example of quality negotiations completed by the previous Conservative government and left for the current government to carry over the finish line. I am glad it is managing to do so, despite needing closure.

I have had the privilege on several occasions to speak about the importance of strengthening ties with our allies and I have spoken in favour of new trade agreements many times since I was elected. It is no surprise that I am generally in favour of legislation that finalizes a cross-border initiative with our greatest friend and ally, the U.S. Pre-clearance and cross-border initiatives with the U.S. are important and

help to enhance security, strengthen the integrity of the border, and create jobs and growth in Canada by improving the flow of legitimate goods and people.

I am going to speak to two specific aspects of Bill C-23 today. The first is the manner in which it would open up potential for greater business ties between Quebec City, Montreal, Toronto, and the U.S. and the second is to respond to some criticisms from some members of the House regarding security provisions of the act and the powers of Homeland Security officials on Canadian soil.

Trade and travel between the U.S. and Canada are obviously key to the economic success of both nations. More than \$2 billion travels daily across the border and we should always be taking steps to ensure that this relationship is strengthened and made more efficient and secure. Our relationship with the U.S. is a constantly changing dynamic and we must work together to make sure that our agreements and existing laws reflect the evolving challenges of global security, technological innovation, and 21st century trade.

Specifically, Bill C-23 pertains to legislation for the agreement on land, rail, marine, and air pre-clearance that was negotiated by the previous government. The bill is significant to our security and prosperity as it safeguards legitimate travel and trade while leveraging the work done by CBSA officers and customs and border protection officers to maintain our national security at the border.

As my colleague from Parry Sound—Muskoka has done, I would like to first discuss pre-clearance as a concept, what it is and how it has worked for Canadians over the past several decades. It is important to dispel the idea that this bill establishes wholly new concepts in Canadian commerce and security. It does not. Pre-clearance is not new to Canada. Pre-clearance operations were first implemented in Canada in 1952, when American pre-clearance officers began screening travellers for U.S.-bound planes at Toronto's international airport. This screening was informal, but it set the stage for the first air transport pre-clearance agreement reached between Canada and the U.S. in 1974.

What are the objectives of pre-clearance? Pre-clearance is designed to push the border away from the homeland. That means that travellers are screened in their country of origin before boarding a flight or train, rather than after the fact when they arrive at their destination. This distinction is important because it means that security and customs officials can identify and stop potential security threats before they enter a new country.

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Of course, for Canadian travellers to the U.S., pre-clearance screening has the immensely added benefit of being able to avoid going through customs on arrival in the U.S. If travelling from a pre-clearance-equipped airport, Canadian travellers can arrive at a domestic U.S. terminal, collect their bags, and depart as if they were regular travellers. This avoidance of customs and immigration at destination is important for two reasons. First, it saves time and Canadian travellers can avoid long customs lines. Second and more importantly, for trade, business, and leisure travel, pre-cleared Canadian travellers can travel directly to U.S. destinations that do not have customs facilities.

A great example of the benefits of pre-cleared air travel is demonstrated by travellers to Washington D.C. Members of the House who have travelled to our southern neighbour's capital will know that there are two airports that serve Washington D.C.: Reagan National, which is about 15 minutes from downtown, and Dulles International airport, which is about 45 minutes away in Virginia. Reagan National does not have customs facilities. Therefore, the only Canadian-origin flights that can fly into this highly convenient airport are those from airports with pre-clearance facilities. Flights from Toronto's downtown Billy Bishop airport cannot fly into Reagan National, because Billy Bishop is not equipped with pre-clearance facilities.

We disincentivize internationally focused businesses from pursuing growth if we do not facilitate easier access to newer and larger markets. Our job, among other things, is to make things easier for Canadians. Bill C-23 would have a substantial impact for travellers and businesses that make use of facilities covered by this bill, including those based in Quebec City, those who use Billy Bishop Airport in Toronto, Montreal Central station, and Rocky Mountaineer, so that we have a fairly clear tourism and trade benefit through enhanced pre-clearance facilities, which would improve and expedite the flow of legitimate trade and travel while continuing to ensure border security and integrity.

● (1635)

If there was no pre-clearance, Canadians and returning U.S. tourists would not be able to take advantage of nearly half the direct flights between Canadian and U.S. destinations. They instead would need to fly to an intermediary city in the U.S. and go through customs. This would increase the cost of those trips, increase the amount of time the trips take, and ultimately make travel more difficult and therefore less likely to take place.

There is also a security benefit to pre-screening passengers. The United States and Canada have a long-standing tradition of working together to ensure that the border remains open to legitimate trade and travel and closed to terrorists, criminals, and illegal or unauthorized goods, which brings me to my second point today. Some members of the House and some media have reported concerns that this bill would enable U.S. customs and border protection officers to detain Canadians on Canadian soil. I have a few responses.

First, the legislation is clear that customs and border protection officials are not peace officers, and that the powers of arrest lie only in Canadian hands. Travellers would not lose their rights or be detained indefinitely in a Canadian airport. This legislation does not

enable that behaviour. However, CBP officials may hold individuals for questioning at the discretion of the inspecting country officer. In treating the customs checkpoint as if it was an actual physical border checkpoint, the inspecting country should have the ability to determine the security risks posed by an individual in question. This evaluation is critical. Once a flight takes off, there is no other checkpoint for the inspecting country to stop a potential threat.

It is also important to remember that the bill is only at second reading. In committee, we can hear grave concerns from individuals, groups, and stakeholders about the legislation itself, and the recommended changes. The Minister of Public Safety is obligated to explain to members of this House and Canadians how the legislation would work, how it would protect our borders, enhance our security, and how it would not violate our rights. Sending the bill to committee will enhance our understanding of the broader effect of the legislation and clarify any concerns.

There is always work to be done on legislation before it becomes law. We must ask the minister and his officials important questions about balancing liberty, security, and trade. We have to hear from stakeholders, civil liberty groups, and customs and immigration officials, the important groups that deal with the issues raised in the legislation.

It is easy to support measures which on the surface, streamline our border and make it simpler to travel to and from the U.S. However, there are practical concerns that we have to highlight, and I would like to do so with my remaining time.

First, the government has not received adequate assurances from U.S. officials yet on Canada's evolving marijuana policy. We want to make sure it is not an issue for Canadians travelling to the United States. The government has to address this issue.

Second, there would be an assumed increase in airport fees, as airports offset the costs of including pre-clearance facilities and infrastructure. We need to ensure that they have received adequate testimony from the relevant individuals so that we can be certain of the financial implications of this legislation.

Third, airlines and air carriers are important stakeholders with respect to border security and public safety, and this legislation would impact their operations. Given that airlines are a critical stakeholder affected by this bill, we have to ensure that they are substantially consulted as this legislation proceeds through the House.

Last, and this is what we have heard much about today, we must ensure that the concerns expressed by some senior members of the Canadian Bar Association's immigration section about checks on investigative powers given to U.S. border officials on Canadian soil are heard.

Government Orders

Bill C-23 is an important piece of legislation that can streamline our border operations to enhance trade and prosperity while balancing national security concerns. I support sending this bill to committee to further study the balancing effects of Bill C-23 on liberty, security, and prosperity.

● (1640)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member's comments with respect to the former government. It is important to recognize that these pre-clearances have been going on for decades. We have had different administrations, whether they be under Jean Chrétien, Paul Martin, Stephen Harper, or our current Prime Minister, that have taken the relationship between Canada and the U.S. seriously. What is important to Canadians is how we can better foster that relationship, and one of the ways is through pre-clearance.

I like to think that good, sound policy goes through different governments at different points in time. The member across the way made reference to this in his comments. We have talked a lot about the idea of Canadian passengers in particular being able to travel to the United States more easily. I would like the member to reflect on the importance of expanding from those original eight airports. For example, we are looking at the Billy Bishop airport in Toronto. Toronto, as a community, would benefit immensely by this, as would other communities, as would Quebec and B.C., with the new pre-clearance that would be taking place on rail. I would ask the member to expand on his thoughts on the benefits to those communities.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Mr. Speaker, there are a lot of benefits to this bill.

I used to be in the tourism industry. I was a very proud hotelier and convention centre manager. I grew up and have worked throughout B.C., and I can say that Rocky Mountaineer is an excellent example of a private sector company which took over a failing government railway, expanded it, and created many thousands of jobs throughout B.C. This program would only help it.

It is going to be wonderful to be able to fly from the Billy Bishop airport in downtown Toronto to Reagan airport in Washington. This is an excellent opportunity. Also, it is a wonderful opportunity, along with Bill C-23, to revisit allowing jet planes to fly out of the Billy Bishop airport and sell some of those wonderful C-Series Bombardier jets.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will add to my colleague's comments. This bill is obviously important to us, but it does not warrant having the government impose time allocation. This evening we will be voting on the bill, but we will do so gagged.

Will my colleague admit that other members of our party would also have liked the opportunity to speak and to remind us of the good decisions made on this file by the previous government?

[*English*]

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Mr. Speaker, I am for the bill, but I am against time allocation. There have been a lot of grave concerns brought forward by our colleagues in the NDP, and these issues have

to be addressed. They are very serious issues. We are not served by bringing in closure on debate. I wish the government had chosen a different path. As I mentioned, I am supporting the bill, but I do not support invoking closure on the issue. There are too many important things to debate on the bill, and that debate should be heard by Canadians.

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the words that were shared by the hon. member, and I have a couple of questions.

Could the member elaborate on the benefits to tourists and people who will be visiting this great country for Canada's 150th anniversary? We do expect to have many visitors. I wonder if the member thinks there would be a more thorough debate at committee, as there is the ability to bring in witnesses, and to study the legislation at committee.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Mr. Speaker, I support the bill, but there are questions that have to be answered. We want to get the bill to committee, but I see no value in invoking closure on this debate before the elected representatives for the Canadian people have had a chance to stand here and ask the government their questions.

Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to rise in debate today at second reading of Bill C-23, the preclearance act, 2016. One of our government's top priorities is to ensure that the border is run smoothly, efficiently, and securely.

Pre-clearance was high on the agenda last March in Washington, at which time we reached an agreement in principle with the United States to expand pre-clearance to new Canadian sites and modes of travel. During the trip to Washington earlier this month our two countries made a firm commitment to establish pre-clearance operations for cargo.

On the American side, the legislative measures necessary for these expansions were included in the Promoting Travel, Commerce, and National Security Act of 2016, which was enacted this past December with unanimous support in both houses of Congress. The necessary Canadian legislation is the bill before us today.

Pre-clearance is a vital border management program that enhances border security, improves the cross-border flow of legitimate goods and travellers, and allows for border infrastructure to be used more efficiently. Quite simply, it involves determining whether individuals and goods may enter another country while those individuals and goods are still physically located in the country of origin.

As members of the House know, pre-clearance is not a new concept. In fact, with this agreement, we are building on a long-standing, productive collaboration between Canada and the United States. This is a highly successful, cost-effective program that produces economic benefits on both sides of the border.

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Air passengers have enjoyed these benefits for more than a half century, and currently do so at eight major airports across Canada. As well, some pre-inspection sites serve rail and cruise ship lines on the west coast. In the airline industry alone, every year some 12 million passengers are pre-screened before boarding planes in Canada, avoiding lengthy customs lines in the U.S. and improving air security. It also allows airlines and travellers to gain direct access from Canada to airports in the U.S. that do not have local customs facilities.

We know that pre-clearance already provides tangible economic benefits to our national and local economies while enhancing security and border integrity. It only makes sense to find ways to make these benefits available to a greater number of Canadians. That is exactly what Bill C-23 would do.

This legislation would replace the current Preclearance Act, 1999, which only applies to air transportation. In doing so, it would preserve the benefits of the existing regime for air travellers and the airline industry while opening up opportunities for pre-clearance in other modes of travel, as well as pre-clearance of cargo. In general, travellers familiar with existing pre-clearance operations would not notice a difference, beyond the fact that pre-clearance would be available in more locations. Let us look in broad strokes at the key elements of the bill.

First, it puts in place the legislative authorities required to allow the United States to conduct pre-clearance operations in Canada in all modes of travel. That includes: one, defining where and when pre-clearance can occur; two, who has access to the pre-clearance area; three, the authorities of the U.S. pre-clearance officers working in Canada, in other words, what they can and cannot do; and four, how Canadian police and Canadian border services officers can assist U.S. pre-clearance officers.

• (1645)

Much of this is very similar to the existing pre-clearance act. In addition, Bill C-23 explicitly requires U.S. pre-clearance officers to exercise their powers and duties in a manner consistent with Canadian law, including the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the Canadian Bill of Rights, and the Canadian Human Rights Act. These safeguards are not in place when Canadians are processed by U.S. customs and border protection in the United States. In other words, Bill C-23 would allow more Canadian travellers to undergo American border procedures while under the protective umbrella of Canadian law and the Canadian Constitution.

The second part of the bill provides the authorities and provisions required to enable Canadian pre-clearance operations in the United States. With the appropriate agreements in place, this would mean that for the first time travellers and goods could be pre-cleared before arriving in Canada, something that has long been sought by industry and government on both sides of the border.

This part of the bill authorizes the Canadian border services officers and other Canadian public officers to administer in the United States all of the acts that are regularly applied at ports of entry in Canada such as the Customs Act. It also clarifies how the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act applies in the pre-clearance context.

Eventual Canadian pre-clearance sites in the United States would be determined based on factors such as economic benefits and competitiveness, traffic flows, existing border infrastructure, and other considerations.

With this legislation in place, Canada and the U.S. would be able to move forward with the implementation of pre-clearance operations at new locations and in new modes of transportation, as well as with the pre-clearance of cargo.

The expansion would begin with four new sites agreed to in Washington last year: Billy Bishop airport in Toronto, Jean Lesage International Airport in Quebec City, Montreal Central Station, and Rocky Mountaineer in B.C. This marks the first ever expansion of pre-clearance in Canada to travel by rail. Our hope is that it is only the beginning of further expansion to new locations and modes of transport on both sides of the border.

I look forward to a full discussion of the bill with members on all sides of the House. I hope hon. members will support this legislation that would benefit the Canadian economy and further strengthen the economic and interpersonal ties between Canadians and Americans that underpin so much of our mutual security and prosperity.

• (1650)

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

Mr. Speaker, my colleague highlights a very important fact. We have two airports, one in Quebec and one in Ontario, that would be getting pre-clearance and the economic benefits and the convenience of Canadians and permanent residents being able to use pre-clearance is of critical importance.

I like to use the comparison of the Toronto Pearson International Airport, where because of pre-clearance, they are able to fly to something like 20 destinations in the U.S. today that do not have U.S. customs located there. If they did not have the pre-clearance, they would not be able to fly into those destinations.

When we look at the bill and the agenda of the government, would the member not agree that there is immense economic and social value to see pre-clearance expanded here in Canada, not only by plane, but also by train?

Mr. Chandra Arya: Mr. Speaker, indeed every year 12 million passengers use this facility. This has been there for the last several decades, and with this bill we would leap forward into much higher numbers of passenger pre-clearances for travellers from Canada.

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•(1655)

Hon. Gerry Ritz (Battlefords—Lloydminster, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it has been great to be a part of the debate here today. I had to get up and ask a question because Billy Bishop airport has been mentioned a couple of times. It is going to have pre-clearance now which is a great thing, but at the same time the Liberals, about two minutes after the election without any science-based data or all of this data they were going to have before making a decision, shut down the ability of Billy Bishop airport to extend its runway to make this worthwhile, to fly farther, and make use of pre-clearance. Will you reconsider that untimely shutting down of the expansion of the Billy Bishop airport to allow it to really make use of this pre-clearance?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): I would love to reconsider, but I am sure the member meant the hon. member for Nepean.

The hon. member for Nepean.

Mr. Chandra Arya: Mr. Speaker, it is beyond me to consider that request.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to address my question for the member concerning part 3 of Bill C-23. I have asked this question at various times today, and it seems the Liberals' answers are slowly progressing. My question is about the authorization to allow U.S. agents on Canadian soil to carry firearms, and the latest line of reasoning from the Liberals is that they would only be permitted to carry firearms if their Canadian counterparts were carrying firearms. That still begs the question as to why it is necessary to arm the U.S. officers on Canadian soil in the first place. Does the member have a lack of confidence in our own forces to do the job properly, our own forces who have taken an oath of allegiance to the crown, to Canadian institutions, and to the Constitution? Does the member feel comfortable with arming U.S. agents on Canadian soil when our own forces are perfectly capable of doing the same job?

Mr. Chandra Arya: Mr. Speaker, we have full confidence in our Canadian Forces. As the member also pointed out, this would be available only on a reciprocal basis where Canadian officers would be armed on the U.S. side.

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I know the hon. member has been an advocate for small businesses, so I would like to ask him if he feels that this legislation would actually support the pre-clearance of goods and services that will be going to the U.S. and that in fact it would help our small businesses become more export oriented.

Mr. Chandra Arya: Mr. Speaker, absolutely this bill would provide for greater trade of goods and services and for travel for many small-business people from Canada to the U.S.

Ms. Filomena Tassi (Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to continue our second reading debate about Bill C-23, legislation that gives us the opportunity to provide faster, charter-protected travel for Canadians. These crucial updates to the pre-clearance framework would enhance security, improve cross-border flow, and produce substantial economic and travel benefits for Canadians.

We have already benefited from over six decades of successful pre-clearance. It has been a boon for business, for the economy, and for ordinary travellers. We are now in a position to implement an agreement with the United States that would make these advantages available to more Canadians in more parts of the country.

We have heard the support of voices of key partners for the expansion that this bill would allow, from business, from chambers of commerce, from the tourism industry, from municipalities, and from governments and ordinary Canadians alike.

Most recently, before we adjourned last week to spend time in our ridings, we heard from many members of this House that Bill C-23 would bring economic and travel benefits while protecting Canadian rights and that it is on the right track to continue through the legislative process.

We also heard concerns from some members. Many of these concerns have already been addressed, both during the debate in this chamber and through the technical briefing provided to journalists last week by Public Safety Canada and the Canada Border Services Agency, and live-streamed by the media. This was on top of the technical briefings provided to parliamentarians last year.

However, to ensure the clarity on some of these issues, I would like to focus my remarks today on two specific topics: travellers' rights and the reciprocity between Canada and the United States.

First, with respect to rights, everyone knows that both Canada and the U.S. set and enforce their own rules with respect to who or what enters their country. For Canadians, undergoing U.S. customs and immigration procedures while still in Canada ensures that Canadian legal and charter standards apply to that process. That is a distinct advantage over entering the United States through a regular port of entry inside U.S. territory where Canadian charter standards do not apply to the conduct of U.S. officers.

Let us take the example of withdrawal.

If travellers want to withdraw from a pre-clearance site in Canada and not continue to the U.S., they would be able to do so under Bill C-23, just as they can under the current pre-clearance arrangement. The only adjustment would be that American officials could ask the travellers to identify themselves and give their reason for withdrawing in order to avoid illicit probing of pre-clearance sites.

The alternative is to go to the U.S. and submit to examination by U.S. authorities on U.S. soil. At that point, a traveller cannot withdraw from the process at all because they are already in the United States.

I have heard some members argue that travellers are already protected in this way under the current pre-clearance arrangement and so no change is needed. The problem there is that we only have pre-clearance right now at eight airports in Canada.

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If people are travelling from anywhere else, the protection of undergoing U.S. border procedures in Canada, and therefore having the right to withdraw, is not available to them. With Bill C-23, we can begin expanding pre-clearance so that more Canadian travellers can enjoy its benefits and protections.

Here is another point about travellers' rights that is important to clarify. U.S. pre-clearance officers would not have the authority to enforce the U.S. criminal laws or make arrests in Canada.

If a U.S. pre-clearance officer has reasonable grounds to believe that a traveller has committed an offence under Canadian law, they can detain that traveller without making an arrest, but only in order to transfer the person to Canadian authorities right away. This is not new; rather, it is part of the existing pre-clearance framework that has been in place since 1999.

In other words, there is no compromise here on rights and values.

• (1700)

On the contrary, Bill C-23 would expand the protective umbrella of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms so it could apply to Canadians flying out of airports such as Billy Bishop in Toronto or Jean Lesage International Airport in Quebec City, which are not currently covered. It would also be applicable for the first time to Canadians travelling by other modes of transportation, beginning with train routes in Montreal and B.C.

Canadians expect us to ensure their rights and values and the protections afforded by the charter, our bill of rights, and the Human Rights Act are front and centre in all legislation we consider in the House. By making charter protections more widely available, Bill C-23 is a step forward for the rights of Canadian travellers.

Next I would like to address some of the questions we have heard about reciprocity.

It must be stressed that the updated and expanded approach to pre-clearance we are discussing is absolutely and fully reciprocal. There are no authorities conferred on the border officers of one country that would not be conferred on those of the other. Each country retains primary jurisdiction over most criminal offences that might be committed by its officers in the course of their duties, while the host country retains primary jurisdiction for the most serious crimes. As such, fears that the bill constitutes the ceding of our sovereignty are misplaced. Rather, Bill C-23 implements a mutually beneficial agreement that imposes the same obligations and confers the same authorities on both parties.

The bill would improve safety and security for both countries. It would make travel and trade more efficient and expeditious. As is clearly laid out in article II of the agreement with the United States, it would ensure that each country's laws and constitutions would apply to all pre-clearance operations. That means U.S. officers operating in Canada will have to abide by the charter as will Canadian border officers in the United States.

It cannot be stated enough that more than 400,000 people flow across our border every day. Close to \$2.5 billion in two-way trade moves between our countries each and every day. It is mutually beneficial for both countries to build on the success of existing pre-clearance operations, while simultaneously protecting, even enhan-

cing, the rights of Canadian travellers. That is the backbone of the bill before us today.

The legislation would ensure that more Canadians would have access to the protections provided by pre-clearance, while making cross-border travel and trade easier, more profitable, and more secure.

I encourage all members to support Bill C-23.

• (1705)

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is important legislation and it will benefit many communities across the country. Small businesses in my riding will benefit by being able to pre-clear goods and services.

I would like to hear the member's comments on the tourism industry and the benefits tourists will see with pre-clearance.

Ms. Filomena Tassi: Mr. Speaker, the government House leader is keenly interested in tourism and supporting tourism in our country. Tourism alone, including 12.5 million overnight travellers from the U.S., accounted directly for \$35.5 billion of Canada's GDP and over 600,000 jobs. It is this pre-clearance that encourages tourism, that makes it easier, and makes those travelling have a pleasant experience. This is absolutely vital to improving tourism and making the travel experience easier and more enjoyable.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech on Bill C-23.

I have had an opportunity to speak several times now about the time allocation motions moved by the Liberal government. This is the twelfth time allocation motion, and yet, the discussions on this bill were going very well. A number of my colleagues had an opportunity to discuss this, because this is a bill that we, too, on this side of the House, are very familiar with.

Does my colleague think that rushing the passage of Bill C-23 was the right thing to do?

[*English*]

Ms. Filomena Tassi: Mr. Speaker, I consider the debate that has gone on in the House to be very thorough and has provided an opportunity for many members to engage in this wholesome debate. We do have an agenda where we want to ensure that legislation is carefully considered, and this legislation has been carefully considered.

We have a lot of work to do. Our government wants to provide change. That is what the government was elected to do. In order to do that, we need to ensure we have the time to bring forward all legislation and provide the changes we promised in the election.

My response is, yes, we have had very wholesome debate, over three days of debate, and it has been very worthwhile. We are ready now to move on with the vote on the legislation.

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Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to rise today to speak to Bill C-23 and to argue in support of the reasoned amendment by my colleague, the member for Beloeil—Chambly. His amendment instructs the House to decline to give second reading to the bill because of several important reasons, which I will be happy to explore later in my speech.

I also want to note that it is very unfortunate we are conducting this debate today under a time allocation passed by the Liberal government earlier today.

The tone of this debate on the legislation has heated up considerably over the past few days during which it has been debated. In particular, there have been some misleading and grossly exaggerated statements from Liberal members of Parliament. There has been a general mischaracterization of the NDP's concerns, combined with over-the-top and fiercely partisan attacks, which have at times sunk this debate to a new low.

I hope to raise the tone of this debate with reasoned arguments against letting Bill C-23 pass at second reading.

Let me make one point perfectly clear. The New Democrats are in favour of measures that will facilitate fluid movement across the U.S. border, but not at the expense of human rights, respect for privacy of Canadians, and Canada's sovereignty.

I support pre-clearance as it currently operates. In fact, I have used the service several times in my life at the Vancouver International Airport when travelling to the United States, and it certainly works well as it currently exists.

I understand that pre-clearance is an important part of the Canada-U.S. relationship and to the free flow of trade and travellers between our two countries, but the provisions contained in Bill C-23 are too problematic for me to give my support.

Bill C-23 neglects to take into account the climate of uncertainty at the border following the discriminatory policies and executive orders of the Trump administration. Canada and the United States signed the agreement on land, rail, marine, and air transport preclearance on March 16, 2015, under the previous Harper government.

Bill C-23 was introduced by the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness on June 17, 2016. There was little fanfare at the time, as Parliament was more consumed by Bill C-14's progress through the Senate, and we were certainly all looking forward to the upcoming visit of then President Obama and his address to the House of Commons, which I think we can all agree was a tremendous speech.

The times have changed dramatically since that time, and they provide an even starker contrast to the reasons why this bill is so problematic. The Liberals are moving ahead with the agreement signed under Obama's presidency as if everything was simply business as usual. However, we must take into account the change in U.S. leadership.

The legislation was problematic before the inauguration of President Trump, but recent discriminatory orders and invasions of

privacy now leave no doubt about the potential dangers and abuses that will result from the agreement. This is a president who excels at making statements with no empirical evidence to back them up. The most recent example is his shocking allegation that former President Obama ordered wiretaps on his phone during the election.

This man has little understanding of what a warrant is, of the checks and balances of the United States system, the constitution, and he has undermined the judiciary of the United States on repeated occurrences.

The U.S. customs and border protection agency is the largest federal law enforcement agency of the United States Department of Homeland Security. It is an extremely powerful arm of the executive branch of government, but it is now headed by someone who I do not think is fit for that office.

Agencies take their cue from the people at the top. This is a fact. Bill C-23 is proposing to give more power to foreign agents that are led by an administration that routinely uses fear, lies, and personal attacks on its political opponents to advance its agenda. I cannot, in good conscience, support such a bill.

The third point I wish to address are the increased powers that Bill C-23 would provide for U.S. officers on Canadian soil, provisions regarding carrying of firearms, the power to conduct strip searches, detention, and interrogation.

• (1710)

In particular, I feel strongly that it is unacceptable to see officers of a foreign country who are in a position of authority bear and ultimately use firearms in the performance of their duties on Canadian soil. As is provided for in the summary of the bill, part 3 of the enactment makes related amendments to the Criminal Code to provide the United States pre-clearance officers with an exemption from criminal liability under the Criminal Code and the Firearms Act with respect to carriage of firearms and other regulated items. Bill C-23 would violate our precious Canadian sovereignty by increasing the powers of American pre-clearance officers on Canadian soil with respect to carrying firearms and by not properly defining a criminal liability framework.

There are those within the Liberal and Conservative ranks who dismiss this concern or see it as simply irrelevant. In fact, repeated speakers from the Liberal Party have used rather poor reasoning, in that U.S. agents would only be granted firearms if their Canadian counterparts were similarly armed in the same area. This sidesteps the issue and avoids the question as to why this measure is necessary.

I fully realize that with the combined Liberal and Conservative support for the bill, it is most definitely going to pass second reading. The troubling thing for me is that not one Liberal or Conservative MP has bothered to raise any concerns about this erosion of Canadian sovereignty.

Government Orders

The Liberals like to call themselves the party of the charter, but not one of them has addressed Canadians' concerns about being interrogated, detained, or turned back at the border based on race, religion, travel history, or birth place, as a result of policies that may contravene the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The Liberals have also failed to speak up about the lack of provisions protecting the rights and freedoms of transgendered persons during strip searches, in spite of the government's support for Bill C-16.

The Conservatives like to wrap themselves in the flag, and they talk a good game when it comes to protecting our border and our sovereignty, but not one of them has stood to address the fact that we would be giving more powers to agents of a foreign government on Canadian soil.

The final point I want to make is that Canada Border Services agents and the RCMP are filled with great men and women, who do their job in a most capable way every day. They are required to take the oath of allegiance before they can assume their duties as uniformed officers. Allegiance is given to the crown and other institutions that the sovereign represents within the federal and provincial spheres, including the state, its constitution, and traditions. On the other hand, U.S. customs and border patrol agents give their oath of allegiance to the United States Constitution and promise to faithfully discharge their duties in the office that they are about to enter, which is fully an institution of the United States government. This is the crux of the problem. United States officials operating on Canadian soil owe their allegiance to a foreign government, and yet we are prepared to give them powerful new measures, such as carrying firearms on our sovereign soil.

I think that borders matter and that they certainly need to be treated with respect. Also, sovereignty matters and precedents matter. Therefore, I think this is a slippery slope. If we pass Bill C-23, if we allow agents of a foreign government to operate on our soil in this matter, what more demands will be presented at a future instance from the United States government?

All I ask hon. members to do is pause and think about the wishes of their constituents. Did their constituents send them to this place to pass legislation to give agents of a foreign government the power to carry firearms on Canadian soil? This is a real sticking point for me, and I know from the correspondence that I and many of my colleagues have received that this is a major concern. We will certainly be raising it at every opportunity that we can.

• (1715)

Ms. Kate Young (Parliamentary Secretary for Science, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, does the member not agree that it is better for Canadians to be questioned on Canadian soil than on American soil?

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Mr. Speaker, at the beginning of my speech, I said that New Democrats support pre-clearance. We know that eight Canadian airports currently have pre-clearance operations, and, as I stated in my speech, I have used them. Having the ability to be pre-cleared on Canadian soil is a good thing, but this bill goes beyond that. If we were simply expanding the service to include other airports without all of the powers that the United States is demanding, we would look at that in a favourable light.

The member across the way has failed to address the concerns I presented in my speech, and indeed no member of Parliament on the

Liberal side has addressed my concerns about U.S. agents carrying firearms. I would love to hear a plausible explanation as to why that is necessary. I am still waiting after an entire day's debate.

• (1720)

[*Translation*]

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his excellent speech.

He said that a number of improvements still need to be made, because several concerns are still being raised. The problem we have with the Liberal government is that we are having a hard time trusting it when it comes to committee work.

We saw some concrete examples just recently. For instance, the government completely ignored the results of all the hard work done by the committee that was examining electoral reform. It also ignored the work of another committee that was studying a bill on health.

How could we possibly trust this government, especially after it imposed a time allocation motion on this bill today? It is limiting debate as well as the work we can do in the House of Commons to improve the bill and better understand it.

After so many examples to the contrary, can we really trust the government when it says that the bill will be improved upon in committee?

[*English*]

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Drummond raises an excellent point. Let us go through the examples.

We can look at the clear recommendation that was made by the committee on electoral reform. We can look at the clear recommendation that was made by the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights on Bill C-201. We can look at the clear recommendations that were made by the public safety committee with respect to Bill C-22. In each one of those instances, the committee did its due diligence, listened to the experts, and presented its recommendations to the House, only to have the government completely ignore the evidence and recommendations and proceed along a predetermined path.

Therefore, my friend raises a valid concern. In every instance, the Liberals tell us to trust in the committee process. I have trust in it, but I have no trust in the government following the recommendations and hard work that those committees do on behalf of the House.

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to ask the member if he is clear on the notion that U.S. customs officers in airport terminals will not be carrying weapons. They must comply with the same rules as the host nation, and customs agents in Canada do not carry weapons. I want to make sure that he understands that. I would like to hear if he does.

Government Orders

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Mr. Speaker, in response to the minister, I am absolutely aware of that fact, and nowhere in my speech did I make that allegation. What I was pointing to—

Hon. Marc Garneau: You did.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: No, I simply did not. What I was pointing to was part 3 of the bill, which gives U.S. customs officials the power to carry firearms if Canadian officials carry firearms. My question with regard to this specific provision was why it is necessary. Why are the Liberals ceding our sovereignty to U.S. agents? Why are they writing it into the bill?

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Things were going so well this afternoon, and suddenly we are starting to lose it again. I want to remind hon. members that there is a process, and it usually starts with someone making a speech and then being asked questions, but not shouting across the floor while someone is answering.

Resuming debate, the hon. Parliamentary Secretary for Science.

Ms. Kate Young (Parliamentary Secretary for Science, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise in debate today about Bill C-23, the preclearance act, 2016. This legislation has a number of significant implications for Canada. It is important to our economy and security, just as it is for our most important bilateral relationship with the United States.

As members well know, Canada and the United States share a proud history of working together, particularly when it comes to the management of our shared border. Our government is committed to building on this relationship in many ways, including through the pursuit of border measures that facilitate the free flow of people and goods and keep us safe.

Border management is a top priority for our government, with officials from Public Safety Canada and its portfolio agencies working closely with their counterparts in the U.S. on a wide range of issues that ensure we keep our borders effective and functional. This includes putting in place the best frameworks and policies that allow for the smooth flow of people and goods while securing our borders from shared threats.

It should therefore come as no surprise that we have been especially enthusiastic to make further bilateral progress on the pre-clearance initiative. As members know, pre-clearance has long been a part of our strong border relationship, and it will be key to our future relationship. With Bill C-23, we have an opportunity to usher in even greater security and economic benefits when it comes to Canada-U.S. cross-border travel.

Let me highlight the key elements of the bill and why it is so important that members join me in supporting its passage. Once passed, the bill will essentially open the door for us to move ahead with ratification and implementation of the land, rail, marine, and air transport preclearance agreement, which was signed by Canada and the United States in 2015. That door, once opened, offers tremendous economic and security benefits for both nations. It does this in two key areas. One is by setting out the legislative authorities governing pre-clearance operations conducted by the United States and Canada, including possible future expansion to additional sites

and modes of travel. Two is by providing the authorities and enacting the provisions necessary for Canada to eventually conduct pre-clearance in the United States, as the U.S. has long done in Canada. Indeed, the United States has conducted pre-clearance at Canadian airports for many decades. From its early days at Toronto Pearson International Airport, to its current presence in eight major Canadian airports and five pre-inspection sites in B.C. for rail and marine, pre-clearance has been a boon for business and leisure travel for both nations.

The first part of the bill would allow for potential expansion of U.S. pre-clearance to other forms of transport in Canada, defining important aspects, such as where and when these new sites can operate, who would have access to the pre-clearance areas, what

U.S. pre-clearance officers can and cannot do while working on Canadian soil, and how Canadian police and CBSA officers would work with these U.S. officers. As has been clearly stated, all pre-clearance operations in Canada must be conducted in accordance with Canadian law, including the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. There is no compromise on this. Canadians expect us to keep their rights and values top of mind in all of our work, and this is no exception. On this point, the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness has been abundantly clear.

The second part of the bill is where we see the reciprocal element come into play. Along with enforcement authorities that would be provided under U.S. law, it would give the Canada Border Services Agency the authority to conduct pre-clearance in the U.S. in all modes of transport: land, air, rail, and marine. CBSA officers and other Canadian public officers, as appropriate, would have the authority to administer, at designated sites in the United States, the Canadian laws that they regularly use at ports of entry in Canada, including the Customs Act.

• (1725)

The bill also clarifies how the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act applies in the pre-clearance context.

As we have heard, this legislation will pave the way to expanding the benefits of pre-clearance to any site and any mode of transport in either country, pursuant to future agreements.

Already Canada and the United States have announced the intention to begin that expansion with Quebec City's Jean Lesage International Airport, Billy Bishop airport in Toronto, Montreal's Central Station, and the Rocky Mountaineer in B.C. These sites were the object of agreements in principle reached during the state visit to Washington last March.

The necessary American legislation was adopted last December. It is now time for Canada to do likewise so we can move forward with this important initiative.

Government Orders

Bill C-23 will allow us to build on more than 60 years of pre-clearance co-operation, further enhancing our two countries' mutual security and facilitating the cross-border movement of travellers and goods in all modes of travel. This is vital to Canada's prosperity.

I encourage all members to give this legislation their support.

• (1730)

Mr. Dave MacKenzie (Oxford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member from London north centre. She lives in the same part of the world as I do, and we know how important it is to have clearance at the border. Our industries rely on that. We have many pieces of equipment that go back and forth across that border on a regular basis, so pre-clearance is essential.

Our Conservative government obviously took a major role in that and committed to putting in the Gordie Howe bridge, which will certainly enhance industry in my riding and also industry in the city of London, which this member represents.

I have a serious concern. I wonder if there has been any discussion about what the Americans will do about it when and if we legalize marijuana. We know that the border crossing gets thick. Frequently, when we have members who drive trucks with shipments, and they admit to being users of marijuana, they get shut down at the border.

I am wondering if there have been discussions with the American government about that particular issue, because it will thicken the border.

Ms. Kate Young: Yes, Mr. Speaker, it is great to be able to talk about this with my colleague who lives very close. Actually, I am the member for London West. London North Centre is adjacent to my riding, but I wanted to clarify that in case anyone was watching and thought I had jumped over a riding.

I think the member has a good point. It is something the committee could ask, and certainly that is one of the questions we should be concerned about. Of course, we have a lot of questions that are still to be answered about the legislation dealing with marijuana. I look forward to those questions being raised at the committee level.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, in the debate today, government members have tended to pooh-pooh the concerns of the Green Party and the NDP about the changes in pre-clearance. I just want to add a voice in posing my question to the hon. member, not from a political party but from the former chair of the Canadian Bar Association, citizenship and immigration section. Michael Greene notes the following:

Under the new proposed bill, [a prospective visitor to the U.S.] wouldn't be able to walk out. They can be held and forced to answer questions, first to identify themselves, which is not so offensive, but secondly, to explain the reasons for leaving, and to explain their reasons for wanting to withdraw. And that's the part we think could be really offensive and goes too far.

Mr. Greene also notes the change in administration since this was originally negotiated. In the Trump administration we have a more volatile and potentially more discriminatory approach to travellers to the U.S.

I ask my hon. colleague if she is at all troubled by the change from working with the Obama administration, when this was negotiated, and now working with Mr. Trump.

Ms. Kate Young: Mr. Speaker, as is currently the case, travellers will be entitled to withdraw from pre-clearance at any time. Under Bill C-23, withdrawing travellers may be required to identify themselves and give their reasons for withdrawing. This is simply to avoid the illicit probing of pre-clearance sites by people trying to discover weaknesses in border security before leaving the area undetected. That is part of the bill.

We have this agreement, and it is time for Canada to move forward. I hope the committee will, again, discuss this at the committee level.

• (1735)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the member could expand on the idea that we are going beyond the eight airports that currently have pre-clearance. In particular, could she focus some of her thoughts on the rail lines in Quebec and in the province of British Columbia, where we will have pre-clearance for two companies?

Ms. Kate Young: Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt that making sure that goods cross our borders quickly is very important, whether it be by rail or by air. There is no question that we have to ensure that our borders are open for our goods for Canada to prosper.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to speak to this debate today. I have been looking at this issue very closely for some time now. Obviously, when we review a bill our constituents ask us questions about that bill and what it entails. These discussions with constituents keep our democracy strong.

I am pleased to continue our debate at second reading of Bill C-23, a legislative measure that allows for quicker, charter-protected travel. These essential updates to the pre-clearance framework will improve security and cross-border traffic, and will bring with it great economic and travel benefits.

We already have more than six decades of successful pre-clearance under our belts. It has been a boon to business, the economy, and regular travellers. We are now well placed to implement an agreement reached with the United States that will help provide these benefits to an increased number of Canadians in more regions of the country than ever before.

Government Orders

There has been a positive response from leading stakeholders, including businesses, chambers of commerce, the tourism industry, municipalities, governments, and ordinary Canadians, about the growth this bill can generate. More recently, before we adjourned the week before last to spend time in our ridings, we heard from a number of MPs who said that Bill C-23 will generate benefits for the economy and for travel while protecting Canadians' rights. It is on the right path in terms of the legislative process. We also heard from some members who expressed concerns.

We have already addressed most of those concerns in debate here and during last week's media technical briefing by Public Safety Canada and Canada Border Services Agency, which was broadcast live. That was in addition to technical briefings for parliamentarians last year. However, to ensure clarity with respect to some of those issues, I would like to focus my remarks today on two specific subjects: travellers' rights and Canada-U.S. reciprocity.

First of all, let us talk about rights. Everyone knows that Canada and the United States establish and enforce their own rules about who or what enters their own country. However, for Canadians, undergoing U.S. customs procedures while they are still on Canadian soil ensures that the Canadian legal and charter standards apply to that process. This is a distinct advantage over entering the U.S. through a regular point of entry where Canadian charter standards do not apply to the conduct of American officials.

Let us consider withdrawal, for example. If travellers changed their minds and wanted to withdraw from a pre-clearance area in Canada and not go to the United States, they would be able to do so under Bill C-23, as they can under the current pre-clearance arrangement. The only change would be that the U.S. officials could ask the travellers to identify themselves and give their reasons for withdrawing in order to prevent the illicit probing of pre-clearance areas.

The other option would be for travellers to go to the United States and be cleared by U.S. officials on American soil.

● (1740)

At that point, travellers can no longer withdraw from the process because they are in the United States. Travellers who change their mind or want to withdraw once in the United States are stuck on American soil in a U.S. airport.

Some members have stated that, because travellers already have that protection under the existing pre-clearance arrangement, no change is needed. The problem is that we currently have pre-clearance at only eight Canadian airports.

Travellers coming from elsewhere have no protection with respect to U.S. border procedures in Canada, so they do not have the right to withdraw. Bill C-23 will enable us to expand pre-clearance so that more Canadian travellers can enjoy its benefits and protection.

It is important to clarify another point about travellers' rights. U.S. pre-clearance officers will not have the power to enforce American criminal law or arrest people in Canada. If a U.S. pre-clearance officer has reasonable grounds to believe that a traveller has committed a crime under Canadian law, let me emphasize that I am talking about Canadian law, the officer can detain the traveller without arresting him or her, but only for the purpose of immediately

transferring that person into the custody of Canadian authorities. This is not a new procedure. It is part of the pre-clearance regime that has been in place since 1999.

In other words, rights and values are not being compromised here. On the contrary, Bill C-23 extends protection guaranteed under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms to Canadians whose flights depart airports such as Billy Bishop and Jean Lesage in Quebec City. That protection will also apply for the first time to Canadians who employ other modes of transportation, beginning with train stations in Montreal and British Columbia.

Canadians expect us to ensure that their rights and values, the protections found in the charter, the Canadian Bill of Rights, and the Canadian Human Rights Act, remain a priority in all legislation that we examine in this House. By further guaranteeing the protections set out in the charter, Bill C-23 is a step forward for the rights of Canadian travellers.

I would like to address some of the questions we have heard regarding reciprocity. I think it is important to emphasize that the updated and broad-based approach to pre-clearance that we are discussing is absolutely fully reciprocal. No power or privilege is conferred upon the border officers of one country and not the other. Accordingly, each country preserves the primary jurisdiction regarding most criminal offences that could be committed by its officers in the performance of their duties, while the host country retains the primary jurisdiction regarding most serious crimes. Accordingly, any fears that this bill jeopardizes our sovereignty are unfounded.

On the contrary, Bill C-23 implements a mutually beneficial agreement that imposes the same obligations and confers the same authorities on both parties. It helps improve security for both countries and makes travel and trade more efficient and expeditious. Also, as is clearly laid out in article II of the agreement with the United States, it would ensure that each country's rights and constitutions would apply to all pre-clearance operations. This means that U.S. officers operating in Canada would have to abide by the charter, just as Canadian border officers in the United States would have to respect the laws of that land.

We cannot emphasize enough that more than 400,000 people cross the border every day. Nearly \$2.5 billion in two-way trade moves between our countries every day. It is mutually beneficial for both countries to build on the success of existing pre-clearance operations while simultaneously protecting, even enhancing, the rights of Canadian travellers. That is the backbone of the bill before us today.

Government Orders

•(1745)

This legislative measure will ensure that more Canadians have access to the protections provided by pre-clearance, while making cross-border travel and trade easier, more profitable, and more secure.

I encourage all hon. members to support Bill C-23.

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to my colleague's comments. I must say that, if it were merely a matter of increasing the number of pre-clearance stations in Canada, a consensus would be reached fairly quickly.

This week, a woman was questioned for six hours. She is a Canadian citizen who wanted to go to the United States. Six hours is a long time, especially since the individual in question did nothing wrong. For those who decide that they have had enough of being questioned, that they no longer want to go to the United States, and that they would prefer to return home, Bill C-23 does not indicate what constitutes a reasonable period of time before a person can withdraw. It is often said that the devil is in the details, and this is a good example of that.

According to my colleague, how long does a normal interrogation last, if the interrogation of a Canadian citizen who simply wants to visit the United States can be considered normal?

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Mr. Speaker, that is a good question.

It all depends on what is said. The member is presenting a theoretical example. If an individual wanted to withdraw and it was not a complex case, I imagine that it would be fairly easy to do so. There are standards set out in Canada's jurisprudence. These standards will be applicable under Bill C-23. If Bill C-23 had been in effect, perhaps authorities would not have been able to question this woman for six hours.

[*English*]

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I certainly appreciate my hon. colleague's speech. I hold him in high regard from the time that we served together on the electoral reform committee.

The member made reference to the fact that concerns over sovereignty are unfounded. I would like to argue that point, because if we take the concept of sovereignty as an actor, such as a state, having the exclusive jurisdiction over the use of force within a prescribed border, if we take that as a basic definition of sovereignty, what this bill is proposing to do through part 3 is to allow U.S. agents, foreign agents, the power to carry firearms. Yes, I know they will not be carrying them at airports, but they will still be able to carry them where CBSA officers can carry them.

Would the member not agree that giving a foreign entity the power to use force on Canadian soil in some way violates our sovereignty according to the definition of the concept? I would like to hear the member's thoughts on that.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member mentioned in his very thoughtful speech, which I listened to intently, he uses pre-clearance when he travels by air. I would imagine that at pre-clearance, if there was an incident and there was some kind of struggle, obviously the pre-clearance officer at the airport where the

member uses pre-clearance would no doubt be engaged in some kind of altercation. That would probably also be considered a use of force, even though it does not involve a firearm.

The fact remains that if there is a problem, under this law the American officer on Canadian soil would be required to bring a Canadian officer into the picture as soon as possible. I think that is a reasonable provision in this legislation.

•(1750)

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise here today but disappointed in many respects, because Bill C-23 is being expedited through the House. It is unfortunate. Many times Liberal members criticized the Conservatives for using time allocation as an archaic way of processing legislation through the House, and today it seems to have become the regular way of doing business. It was an exception to the rule no less than 15 years ago, but now time allocation has become the standard operation of Conservative and Liberal governments. That is unfortunate because errors in bills continue to happen because they do not have a full examination.

The Liberals are starting to see that come true by what is taking place. Not only is there the arming of U.S. border patrol agents but also the basic disregard of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. It is quite alarming that the so-called party of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms has disavowed standing up for Canadians. We saw that today in the House of Commons with the weak-kneed approach of Liberal members to what is taking place on the border where Canadians are being denied entry into the United States for racial and ethnic reasons. The website states why they cannot enter into the United States but racial and ethnic profiling is not one of the reasons. The Liberal government has had plenty of opportunities to speak strongly to the United States, but it has not done that. That is a charter right. It is quite clear that the way the United States processes individuals entering the country violates our strong relationship with that country.

Before I move from that topic, it is important to note that the Liberal government is compliant with the U.S. behaving in such a manner. We have signed agreements with the U.S. on several issues relating to border security, relating to processing at the border, relating to immigration and other things, and that country has decided to dump those agreements, go it alone, without a peep from our government. It is shameful.

Back in 2002-03 I was at the Canadian embassy when then ambassador Raymond Chrétien identified that there were going to be five to seven nations, such as Pakistan, that were going to be put on a separate list for going into the United States. I said that we should object to this because a Canadian is a Canadian is a Canadian, and that once an individual has been vetted through our process, that person should be treated as such. To this day we have yet to have a prime minister, whether it was Prime Minister Chrétien or Prime Minister Martin, stand up against this. We knew Prime Minister Harper was not going to do that. However, this body here has had plenty of opportunities to do so.

Putting closure on this debate brings up a number of sensitive issues that need to be vetted.

Government Orders

I grew up near the border. I live and work there. I am raising my family there. I have been crossing the border all of my life. One of my first negative experiences with crossing the border was at the age of 18 when my best friend Jeet Pillay and I were going over to watch a baseball game. He was asked by U.S. officials what country he was from. He said that he was from Canada. I am as white as a bag of milk on a beach but he happens to be brown skinned. These border officials said, "No, no, no. We want to know what country you are from. Where were you born?" He said that he was born at Hôtel-Dieu Grace hospital, which is only three blocks away from where we were crossing on the Canadian side. The officials pulled us in and detained us for about three hours just because of Jeet's skin colour. We missed most of the game.

I have become very used to what is taking place at the border and also what happens under the leadership of presidents and others. The Department of Homeland Security, which has become the overarching thing, is a relatively new phenomenon. We forget about this. It has become one of the biggest bureaucracies, if not the biggest, in the world, but it is only a recent creation by the United States government.

We have problems with customs and border protection and also having their agents on Canadian soil and making decisions about our citizens. We also have problems with its agents on Canadian soil being able to make decisions about Canadian citizens, decisions that could affect their livelihood, decisions that could prevent them for social reasons from entering the United States. Decisions that could embarrass them publicly and shame them are being made by U.S. officials on our soil.

• (1755)

On top of that, they could now be armed on our soil. People say, "That is not too bad, they would have to go under these rules, terms, and conditions; they are really good fellows and there is no problem there, it is fine", but what have we done in this act? We have not done any oversight as in making sure that we are actually going to screen and have accountability there. It is very weak. Who are we talking to?

We are talking about a problem that they have in the United States, that the customs and border protection system right now has a corruption issue. The Americans have a serious corruption issue that has been growing in the United States. Those recent problems that they have faced involved everything including drug trafficking, bribery, human smuggling, false statements, and breaking of personal privacy. These are real things that are actually happening. These are real men and women who have done those wrong things in the hire of the U.S. government for many different reasons that I do not know, but they are real cases. I am going to talk about a couple of those cases because it is important that we know the type of people who could be on our soil doing our yeoman's work that should be done by Canadians, and without the proper checks and balances. The Liberals know because they are getting squeamish about this. There is no doubt about it. When they allow another country to come in with arms and put their beachhead down here, then they ultimately have to be overseeing this properly, which the Liberals have not done.

Hence, there is the rush to put this through. At a time when the U.S. is basically tearing up agreements that we have had and denying people entry into the United States for reasons that the Americans describe as normal cause and at a time when we have more people from the United States coming to Canada as refugees, the Liberals want to rush this out the door. It does not make any sense, aside from political pressure and political damage, as opposed to doing the right thing and going through this every single step and every single way to make sure every voice is heard. In watching the debates today, it might be one of the reasons Liberals often do not take their full allotted time. That is the reason to shorten their time in the House.

I want to talk about a few of the cases because they are important. Manuel Eduardo Pena, customs and border protection officer, was convicted by a federal grand jury in Brownsville. Special agents witnessed Pena take the firearm from the store and deliver it to another person in exchange for money. He was sentenced to five years' probation. Adam Bender, from my neck of the woods, worked on the Windsor-Detroit border crossing at the tunnel, minutes from my home. He admitted that he used his position to allow illegal immigrants to enter through his lane at the Detroit-Windsor tunnel and the Ambassador Bridge. For human smuggling, he got 24 months in prison. John Ajello is another customs and border protection officer. He got a misdemeanour of supplementing federal salary. He was accepting payments during an operation related to information sharing that he should not have done. He was making money during an investigation. Luis Alarid got seven years in prison for trafficking and bribery, conspiracy to smuggle more than 100 kilograms of marijuana into the United States, and receiving more than \$200,000 in bribe money. They were all convicted. Noe Aleman Jr.'s crime was encouraging and inducing illegal immigrants to stay in the country. He was a veteran of six to 10 years. A lot of them, well over half, are veterans of the service. It goes to show us that the danger is not just with the new people who are hired, but it actually can be corruption through the system that the Americans have.

There are many good officers out there. I deal with this. I travel. I have season's tickets to sporting events in the United States. I go through all the time. There are wonderful people there, but there is also this shadow of conspiracy, conviction, and unauthorized behaviour that now we are actually empowering at a time when there is investigation.

• (1800)

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

Mr. Speaker, I have listened and cannot help but think of this fear factor that the New Democrats have. They come up with some ideas that are so much outside the ballpark in their opposition to this particular piece of legislation. On the one hand, we have the Conservatives, and we appreciate the support that is being given by the Conservative Party. The NDP's opposition to the bill just does not make sense. It seems that there is this fear thing that it has. The member is making reference to the Americans coming over with arms and it is almost as if we go to an airport where there is pre-clearance, there are going to be American customs officers with guns in their hands. Canadians should be fearful.

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I have news for the New Democratic Party. Canadian border control officers at our airports do not have guns and, therefore, American customs officers cannot have guns. The fear factor is unbelievable that is coming from the New Democratic Party.

Canadians should understand and appreciate this is good legislation; legislation that is going to have more economic activity. If people have gone through pre-clearance, they will appreciate that this is positive legislation.

My question for the member is, why the fear? Why is the NDP promoting things that just are not true on this legislation?

Mr. Brian Masse: Mr. Speaker, it is unfortunate the member likes to wind himself up and let himself go like that. At any rate, I think it is important to note that we were not talking about just at airports. We were talking quite clearly about some of the crime and corruption that is taking place and the fact that we are actually increasing the flexibility, the rights, and the provisions at this time. There is clearly a distinct difference between what the Liberals want to do here with unaccountability, with no thorough process and due diligence later on, versus that of right now of making sure we clearly understand what we would be dealing with. Having done this and grown up on the border, being in Washington all the time, working with customs and also working with American senators and Congress as well, they are very aware of the fragility of what is taking place. Ironically, they are also some of the strongest advocates who are also concerned about this empowerment.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, the member was speaking about his experience at the borders and being with a friend from an ethnic minority. I just today saw an article from Global News about a Montreal woman named Manpreet Kooner, born and raised in Montreal, being refused access at the border. She was with her Caucasian girlfriends who were not stopped. They were going to go to a spa on the U.S. side of the border and were turned away. It was clearly racialized. It was clearly profiling. It was clearly an attitude from U.S. customs officials and border guards.

In this pre-clearance process, which we generally support, it is very convenient to be able pre-clear before we go through the border. What I do not understand and no government member has explained it to me, maybe the hon. member from the NDP can explain it, is why we have this change in Bill C-23. We have pre-clearance now, in the Ottawa airport, before going to the U.S. It is a good idea to expand it to other places. Why do we need to give permission to U.S. border guards, in the current climate of racial profiling, to behave in this way? I think that is one of the key things the Trump White House is telegraphing to border guards: they can discriminate and it will be okay. Why give them active powers?

• (1805)

Mr. Brian Masse: Mr. Speaker, that is exactly the point. There is no valid reason that can be provided. These are simply best practices that are operating now and that are working very well. In fact, what we should be doing is expanding those opportunities in the current guide and model that is actually working. What we are talking about right now, and that is the reason I mentioned some of those cases, is that those are officers who are coming to work on our border and some of them could have issues like that. We will not be able to have those types of checks and balances. When they have the question of

this going on right now, there is no question that there should be that accountability.

Again, there is no reason to arm them at this particular point in time. It is a seceding of jurisdiction. It is a seceding of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. There are many cases as I have worked the border file over a number of different years of problems related to that. Most recently, we even had an American police officer discharge his firearm on himself while he was smuggling it into Canada. That is a recent one that took place over the last five years. There are other ones, as well, but none of the things that we have mentioned here will solve those problems if we do not have these accountability measures.

[Translation]

Mr. David de Burgh Graham (Laurentides—Labelle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to discuss Bill C-23, which would provide the necessary authority under Canadian law to implement the land, rail, marine, and air transport pre-clearance agreement, thereby expanding U.S. pre-clearance operations in Canada and, for the first time, enabling pre-clearance of cargo and Canadian pre-clearance operations in the United States.

Pre-clearance makes travel faster and easier for tourists and business travellers alike, and makes it faster and easier for Canadian companies to do business with Americans. It also allows Canadian travellers to undergo U.S. border procedures while under the protection of Canadian law and our Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

The proposed expansion of pre-clearance enabled by Bill C-23 has been greeted with enthusiasm by chambers of commerce across the country, by the tourism industry, which is in fact extremely important in Laurentides—Labelle, by the trucking industry, and by government partners, among others. For example, the mayor of Quebec City has called it a great victory for his city.

Pre-clearance operations for passengers have been a success story for more than 60 years, but they currently exist in only eight Canadian airports, and they do not exist for cargo at all. It is time to build on that success.

The proposed expansion to new locations and modes of travel requires an agreement with the United States. That agreement has been reached, and the United States has passed the legislation needed for implementation in their country with unanimous support in both houses of Congress. However, if we do not pass Bill C-23, the agreement will come to naught, and the benefits of pre-clearance will remain limited to those Canadians who already enjoy them.

Nevertheless, throughout this debate, the NDP members have been advocating in favour of the existing legislative framework. According to the member for Vancouver East, the current pre-clearance system is working well. The member for Beloeil—Chambly has said that the current pre-clearance system works just fine. The member for Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke said that pre-clearance is working very well already. In addition, the member for Windsor—Tecumseh said that she understood that pre-clearance is a process that exists today and it works.

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Yes, it does, and I agree that the current legal framework, which has been in place since 1999, has served Canada well, but the NDP support for it is interesting because, in 1999, when this legal framework was proposed, the NDP had a very different take.

At the time, the member for Winnipeg—Transcona, Bill Blaikie, said that the bill raised questions about privacy protection. Mr. Blaikie stated reservations concerning the power of U.S. authorities to detain people, in particular, and he was afraid that U.S. law would be applied on Canadian soil. This sounds somewhat familiar.

The then member for Winnipeg Centre, Pat Martin, said he had serious reservations about the bill. He said it was too “intrusive” and “a breach of Canadian sovereignty”. He was worried that foreign officers would have the right to hold people and stop people from leaving. He argued that by passing the bill, the House was granting foreigners powers on our soil, which the NDP did not think was necessary. He went on to declare that the NDP remained firmly opposed to the creation of Canadian offences for resisting or misleading a foreign pre-clearance officer. He accused proponents of the bill, a group that now seems to include the NDP caucus, of being ready to trample on Canadian sovereignty. The best part is that he said that the bill opened up such a can of worms that it should be sent back to the other place for them to try again and take into consideration such basic things as national pride.

Clearly, a couple of decades later, the NDP realizes that its concerns back then were overblown, not to say unfounded, but here we are again. A new legal pre-clearance framework is again being proposed and the NDP is again sounding the alarm about perceived threats to Canadian sovereignty and perceived powers granted to foreign officers. It will not surprise me if 20 years from now New Democrats leap to the defence of Bill C-23 while insisting that any changes to it would mark the demise of the sovereignty of Canada.

Let us be reasonable. In many respects, Bill C-23 is very similar to the current framework. As concerns authorities to detain, question, search travellers, and seize goods, Bill C-23 is either identical to the existing law or very nearly so.

• (1810)

The same is true regarding penalties for obstructing or lying to an officer, and the right to withdraw from a pre-clearance area is maintained. A traveller just has to say who they are and why they are leaving.

The totality of U.S. pre-clearance operations in Canada would be subject to Canadian law, the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the Canadian Bill of Rights and the Canadian Human Rights Act. That is an improvement over the present situation, where travellers arrive in the United States and clear customs without any of those protections.

The motion put forward by the member for Beloeil—Chambly asks us to reject Bill C-23 because of what he referred to as the climate of uncertainty at the U.S. border, but it is precisely with legislation like this that we are best able to reduce uncertainty for Canadian travellers.

The bill provides a clear legal framework governing the actions of U.S. officers on Canadian soil and requires U.S. officers in Canada to adhere to Canadian legal and constitutional standards.

Today, for instance, a Canadian taking the train from Montreal to New York has to disembark after crossing the border and submit to U.S. customs and immigration processes without any Canadian legal protection. With Bill C-23 in place, that traveller could be processed at the train station in Montreal with Canadian constitutional safeguards in force and with Canadian authorities on site.

In other words, not only would the legislation bring about substantial economic benefits and make trips to the United States quicker and more convenient for Canadian travellers, it would also enhance constitutional and legal protection for those very travellers.

That helps regions like mine. In my riding, we have the Mont Tremblant International Airport at La Macaza, where flights coming from outside Canada land. At present, it is very difficult to get customs services at that airport, even though it is a port of entry, since it is very costly to bring customs officers from Mirabel.

In the long term, it would help us if U.S. airports already had Canadian customs officers, since they would be able to go to any airport in Canada. That would save a lot of time and improve the economy in the Laurentians. It would solve a problem that has existed for a very long time: the fact that La Macaza is unable to accommodate enough flights from outside Canada, since the costs associated with customs services are too high.

I therefore think this bill is very important for the Laurentians region. I hope it will pass and we will see a number of U.S. airports offering Canadian services. I think that will benefit our entire economy. I know of a number of situations where it will save a lot of time.

When I was younger, I often travelled to the United States. I attended secondary school there, and I took the train or drove to get there. If I had had the option of clearing customs before getting on the train, I would have saved a lot of time. The train left Toronto at 7:00 a.m. and arrived in Buffalo at 2:00 p.m., when the trip by car took less than two hours. That enormous waste of time was caused by customs procedures.

Often, when the train gets to the border as it leaves the country, whichever direction it is going, customs officers check exports, and that takes an hour and a half. Then, when the train gets to the other side of the border, customs officers check imports, and that takes another hour and a half. That means that, altogether, passengers spend three hours at the border, something that simply would not happen if that checking were done at the outset.

Bill C-23 is an improvement over the existing situation. It gives Canadian officers on American soil the same rights as American officers on Canadian soil. It will also improve the economy in all of Canada’s tourist regions.

I am very eager to see this bill come into force.

• (1815)

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

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He just said that Bill C-23 changes almost nothing in terms of the current situation, but what about the fact that the current law does not allow a U.S. customs officer to conduct a strip search without a Canadian officer of the same gender present? This has been changed, which is rather troubling, considering the eagerness of U.S. personnel. Earlier my colleague from Windsor said he was very familiar with borders. In fact, people from Detroit and Windsor spend much of their lives going through customs.

The fact that a strip search could be conducted from now on by a U.S. officer without a Canadian officer of the same gender present is a huge change.

Mr. David de Burgh Graham: Mr. Speaker, we have heard this many times today.

Clearly, this right is something new. The difference is that if there is an unreasonable delay, the search may proceed. I do not think this is unreasonable. If someone travels to the U.S. without pre-clearance, and they arrive without Canadian protections, the same thing will happen. Accordingly, it is much more efficient to go ahead with the system proposed in Bill C-23. That does not really bother me.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for my colleague because many of the things that are new in this bill really are troubling.

For example, in the past, people in the pre-clearance area on Canadian soil had the right to say that they did not like the interrogation, that they were uncomfortable, and that they were going to go home and not travel to the U.S. Now people no longer have the right to halt the interrogation. Canadians can be detained and forced to answer U.S. officers' questions.

What does my colleague think of that? Is he okay with it? Does he think Canadians should be okay with it?

Mr. David de Burgh Graham: Mr. Speaker, I understand the question. To me, this is not a major departure from what is currently happening. If someone currently travelling to the United States gets off the plane and changes their mind, what are they going to do? Get back on the plane and leave? That does not work. Clearing customs in Canada is more efficient. Rights are protected under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, but nothing really changes. When someone arrives in the United States, they will be subject to the same restrictions as they are right now.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague talks a great deal about the province of Quebec, his home province. Quebec will benefit in two ways directly. One is through the new airport and rail line where pre-clearance service will be offered, which was not there before. There are many benefits through pre-clearance. We have heard the debate for many hours in regard to how Canadians and the U.S. benefit by pre-clearance.

Could my colleague expand on why it is so important that we not only settle for the eight airports we currently have, but also look at other airports because then more Canadians will actually benefit by it?

Mr. David de Burgh Graham: Mr. Speaker, the fact that there is only a handful of airports that have this and it only goes in one direction does not really benefit us nearly as much as it possibly could. If we have pre-clearance in the U.S. to come to Canada, that is a huge advantage for Canada, a huge advantage for regions like mine in the Laurentians where we have an international airport without international flights because it is too difficult to offer customs. It is very important we have this system expanded a little everywhere for rail, for goods, for people, and flights. This is a terrific expansion of this service. I am very much looking forward to it being implemented.

• (1820)

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today in the House to speak to the legislation before us, Bill C-23, an act respecting the preclearance of persons and goods in Canada and the United States.

As members know, the Prime Minister pledged to Canadians that our government would work hard to renew the relationship we had with the United States and that we would provide greater security and opportunity for Canadians. The legislation before us is part of the action we are taking to fulfill that pledge.

Last week, I spoke with grade 10 civic students in Guelph at Bishop Macdonell High School. This topic came up with the students talking about the benefits of doing clearances in Canada versus on foreign soil, so it is great to be part of this discussion this afternoon. We have strong evidence from long-standing operations at eight Canadian airports that pre-clearance is an effective and efficient way to move millions of people from Canada into the United States every year, some 12 million people, in fact. It offers many benefits, both directly and indirectly, to both nations.

For example, it allows travellers from Canada to fly directly to a larger number of U.S. cities, including to smaller American airports, with no customs presence. It makes for faster connections. Pre-cleared passengers do not have to go through customs inspection upon arrival in the United States, which means shorter connection times and early arrival at final destinations. It adds predictability to travel plans, with passengers knowing they are already screened and can just collect their luggage and leave the airport on the other side. It enhances security by better managing risks and threats.

While pre-clearance formally exists only at airports at the moment, we also know that pre-inspection of rail and marine passenger exists and works with great success at several locations in British Columbia. For the past 20 years, U.S. customs and border protection has safely and successfully used passenger pre-inspection to streamline travel and security for travellers in that province.

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In addition to the concrete direct benefits, there are a number of positive impacts that flow directly and indirectly from pre-clearance operations. For example, reduced border costs and fewer delays for commercial operations can lead to increased trade and increased foreign investment. The reduced wait times for passengers can lead to increased tourism and business travel.

The economic and security benefits of these pre-clearance and pre-inspection operations have led to calls from stakeholders and governments on both sides of the border for expansion to all modes of travel and to more locations. With the proposed legislation, we are taking an important step toward making that happen. Bill C-23 will enable us to continue moving ahead with expanded operations and modes of transportation that were agreed to in principle by the Minister of Public Safety and the U.S. Secretary of Homeland Security in March 2016.

In brief, the bill has two key elements.

First, it will put in place the necessary legislative authorities to allow the United States to conduct pre-clearance operations in Canada. Today, pre-clearance is authorized only at Canadian airports under the Preclearance Act of 2001. The new authorities will allow for expansion subject to site-specific agreements to marine, rail, and land modes, as well as to pre-clearance of cargo.

Second, it will provide authorities for Canada to conduct pre-clearance in the United States in all modes of travel. The bill sets out where and when pre-clearance can occur, who has access to the pre-clearance area, the authorities of U.S. pre-clearance officers working in Canada and vice versa, and how police and border services officers can assist and work with pre-clearance officers. It also includes provisions affirming that pre-clearance operations in both countries must be conducted in accordance with Canadian law, including the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

● (1825)

Our government is firmly committed to moving ahead with pre-clearance measures and building on our strong partnership with the United States. Indeed, this legislation is good news for Canadians and Americans. It would strengthen Canada's economic competitiveness by accelerating legitimate trade and travel, while keeping our borders secure.

In fact, after Canada and the United States signed an agreement in principle for new pre-clearance operations in March 2016, the president and CEO of the U.S. Travel Association said, "Customs pre-clearance is one of the innovative programs that demonstrates there need not be a zero-sum choice between security and an efficient travel experience".

Similar sentiments have been expressed by Canadian businesses and associations like the Tourism Industry Association of Canada. With specific reference to rail travel, its vice president of public policy and industry affairs, Rob Taylor, has pointed out that pre-clearance makes sense from a security standpoint because border officials can intercept people before they cross the border. It makes sense for travellers, because if they get cleared before they get on the train, it is so much easier than having to stop that trip half way through.

This is exactly what pre-clearance offers. It is a way to encourage legitimate trade and travel, while keeping our borders secure. It is an idea that is gaining ground around the world, with more and more countries looking to introduce or expand pre-clearance at their airports.

This brings me back to the importance of Bill C-23.

The benefits of expanded pre-clearance have been touted by everyone from the Canadian Chamber of Commerce and the Canadian Council of Chief Executives to local tourism operators, as well as mayors and airport authorities. Pre-clearance improves the competitiveness of Canadian business and the experience of Canadian travellers. Now is the time to expand these operations in Canada and to examine how and where the Canada Border Services Agency could implement pre-clearance facilities in the United States.

Our government is committed to working with our allies, particularly the United States, to increase travel and to enhance North American competitiveness, as well as our collective security. I urge all members to support Bill C-23 and ensure its swift passage.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as we get closer to an actual vote on this important legislation, it bears repeating just how important pre-clearance is to Canada's economy. Both Canada and the U.S. benefit from it.

I often talk about and use the example of Folklorama. It is one of the best multicultural events in the world. Many Americans fly into Winnipeg to participate in Folklorama. That is not unique. We get many tourists coming from the U.S. They use pre-clearance. Millions of Canadians use pre-clearance to go to the U.S. The convenience of pre-clearance has proven to be beneficial, both to Canada and the U.S.

Would my colleague agree that the more the government can move toward making it easier for Canadians and Americans to cross our shared border the better it is?

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: Mr. Speaker, I agree that we need more travel between Canada and the United States and we need less barriers to that travel, provided our security is intact.

One of the great things about the bill is that all the clearance happens on Canadian soil, which means that people who are going through the process of pre-clearance fall under the regulations and the Charter of Rights and Freedoms within Canada. If they have a problem, it is better to have it in Canada than on foreign soil. The easier it is for Canadians to welcome Americans and for Americans to visit our country, the better it will be for tourism.

More important, as the Chamber of Commerce has said for many years, thinning out the borders so goods can travel between the borders is also as important, in fact more important in terms of dollars per GDP. Having that border opened up, securely, is very important to both countries.

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• (1830)

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to draw the hon. member's attention to part three of the bill, which provides related amendments to the Criminal Code and to the Firearms Act. It basically provides the United States pre-clearance officers with an exemption from criminal liability under both those acts with respect to the carriage of firearms. It seems to me that in our current pre-clearance system, if a United States agent on Canadian soil needs assistance that necessitates the use of a firearm, why does that person not simply use the services of the RCMP, or if a CBSA officer is similarly armed, the services of that officer?

This is the crux of the matter on our sovereignty. Why are we allowing U.S. agents to carry a weapon, which is an extreme use of force, on Canadian soil? Why do we not have faith in Canadian police authorities and CBSA officers to do that job for us? They have been authorized by this Parliament and by the government to do that force on behalf of the Canadian people. It is a jurisdictional issue, and I would like to hear the member's response on that.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his continued questions on this topic.

I think we have answered this in the past, but to continue our answer, the border patrols on both sides of the border would be equal in terms of carrying arms. If we do not have arms, as in our airports, they do not have arms. If at some point we have arms at the land crossings, then there would be arms. However, in both cases, the laws of Canada would apply when we are on Canadian soil.

There is no threat to Canadians by using the types of force that Canadian border officials would be using, which is very much identical to what the American border officials would be using as well.

Mr. Matt DeCoursey (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise toward the end of this evening's debate to talk about this important piece of legislation. Bill C-23 will implement the agreement reached with the United States to expand pre-clearance operations to new locations and modes of travel, and it opens the door to cargo pre-clearance as well as Canadian pre-clearance operations in the U.S.

I am pleased that throughout the course of today, and over the last week or so, we have seen lively debate about Bill C-23. However, I do think it is important that as we study and discuss this proposed legislation, we ensure that we are working from a sound understanding of the bill, and a full appreciation of the significant benefits that we stand to gain from expanding our pre-clearance operations with the United States.

After the many hours of debate that have taken place for this bill, we certainly know by now what pre-clearance is, and we know that it works. We have heard how it has been a part of the Canada-U.S. border management success story. Many of us have been pre-cleared ourselves before boarding flights to the United States. As has been noted, we have been operating pre-clearance successfully in the air mode since the 1950s.

In terms of volume, we know that Canadian pre-clearance facilities process 12 million passengers headed to the United States

annually. We know that the eight airports that have pre-clearance operations are far more competitive than they would be without them. With pre-clearance, Canadian airports have special direct access to non-international U.S. airports. For example, Canada is the only country serving Reagan airport with direct air services. Without pre-clearance, Toronto Pearson airport, for example, could only serve 27 U.S. cities instead of the 50 that it serves now. Pearson is the fourth-largest point of entry into the United States worldwide.

It is not only in air travel where we have seen the benefits. As members have heard, some pre-inspection sites serve rail and cruise ship businesses on the west coast. The cruise ship industry brings \$435 million in economic benefits to British Columbia's coastal region, including 4,600 local jobs. Pre-inspection, which is a kind of partial pre-clearance, is important to that success. The legislation before us will enable full pre-clearance operations for those sites, with considerable advantages for the tourism industry on the west coast. Therefore, it is not surprising that there is a clear demand for more pre-clearance facilities and that both the current and previous administrations in Canada and the U.S. have been working diligently together to put the legal frameworks in place to make that happen. With the legislation before us, we will be able to further expand on these unquestionable economic benefits by paving the way for additional sites in all modes of travel and in both countries, as well as the pre-clearance of cargo.

We have heard the concerns raised about the protection of Canadians' rights, and we are certainly all sensitive to that. That is why I am proud to highlight that the protection of Canadians' rights and the requirement for compliance with Canadian law and the charter are central elements of this bill.

Pre-clearance operations in Canada must be conducted within Canadian law. It is explicitly set out in part 1 of the bill, which sets out the powers, duties, and functions of U.S. officers under the act. It states:

A preclearance officer must exercise their powers and perform their duties and functions under this act in accordance with Canadian law, including the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the Canadian Bill of Rights and the Canadian Human Rights Act.

This includes powers of questioning, examination, search, seizure, and detention, powers that already exist in the current pre-clearance arrangement. Similarly, Canadian officers conducting pre-clearance in the U.S. would also be bound by the charter. That is specified in article II of the agreement with the U.S. being implemented by this bill, Bill C-23.

By undergoing U.S. customs and border procedures while still on Canadian soil, Canadian travellers will be protected by our laws and the Canadian Constitution.

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• (1835)

I know that certain members of the opposition have argued that because this is already the case in eight Canadian airports, Bill C-23 is unnecessary. However, pre-clearance is not in place at all Canadian airports or at train stations and marine ports. Bill C-23 would pave the way for travellers in those locations to have legal and constitutional Canadian protections that are unavailable to them now.

For those who remain unconvinced of the benefits of this, I would ask that they consider the alternative. Without pre-clearance, travellers are required to submit to immigration and customs processing once they arrive on American soil. That processing is done entirely on American soil and therefore on American terms.

Another concern that has been raised is the issue of withdrawal from pre-clearance areas. It must be noted that should travellers change their minds about entering the United States and wish to leave the pre-clearance area, withdrawal will be allowed under the new act. Officers will have limited latitude to question withdrawing travellers as to their identities and reasons for withdrawing. Without this, people of ill intent can approach, enter, examine, and then leave these controlled areas, potentially weakening our border security.

To conclude, I simply wish to reiterate that pre-clearance is a crucial border management tool for Canada, both economically and from a security perspective. It also has the added benefit of allowing Canadian travellers to undergo American border procedures while protected by Canadian law and the Canadian Constitution, including our Charter of Rights and Freedoms. By adopting this important piece of legislation, which is necessary to implement the Land, Rail, Marine and Air Transport Preclearance Agreement with the United States, the advantages of pre-clearance would become available to many more Canadian travellers and businesses.

I urge all hon. members to keep these significant benefits front of mind as we further examine and study this bill, and I look forward to more constructive debate in the House.

• (1840)

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened to the parliamentary secretary's speech with great attention, and I could not help but feel that maybe there was a slight incoherence lurking in the argument. I am hoping to give him the opportunity to address that.

We hear, on the one hand, that the great virtue of Bill C-23 is that Canadians will not have to submit to American processes, American law, and American officers on American soil. However, when we talk about the safe third country agreement and the travel ban, Liberals say that they are quite comfortable with the American processes, that there is no problem at all with those processes, that Canadians have nothing to fear, and that they are treated normally at the border and get good treatment. Which is it? Do Canadians have something to fear from being subjected to American border security processes, or do they not? If they do, maybe the member would reconsider his position with respect to suspending the safe third country agreement.

Mr. Matt DeCoursey: Mr. Speaker, I am not sure that my hon. friend was listening that intently, because I was entirely coherent in explaining that Bill C-23 would provide all Canadians undergoing

pre-clearance with U.S. border officials the security of having that pre-clearance done under Canadian law, the Canadian Constitution, our Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the Canadian Human Rights Act, and the Canadian Bill of Rights all at play.

This is an important piece of legislation that would allow for the timely exchange of people and goods, something that for many years has been central to our strong trade relationship with the United States. This is another step in ensuring that the important relationship we have with the United States continues to grow and prosper for the benefit of Canadians.

[*Translation*]

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

If he ended up at customs and an overeager and cranky U.S. customs officer proceeded to conduct a strip search, and only a female officer was available on the Canadian side, would he be comfortable with that? Bill C-23 generally looks a lot like the existing system, but there are some very serious exceptions like this one.

Does my colleague have a problem with that? I know that there are many people who would have a very serious problem with that.

Mr. Matt DeCoursey: Mr. Speaker, I have the great honour of living very close to the United States. Ever since I was born I have been crossing the border with my family, my friends, or alone and this situation has never presented itself. I would say to Canadians watching us this evening that under the current conditions, whenever a U.S. officer has problems with a Canadian traveller, the latter is transferred to Canadian officers as soon as possible.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with respect to pre-clearance, we recognize that it is reciprocal between the United States and Canada. We will see many Americans who will also be pre-cleared coming into Canada.

From a tourism perspective, whenever we can enable tourism in our country, the better it is for Canada as a whole and for our middle class. In fact, all Canadians benefit the more we get American tourists coming to Canada.

Can the hon. member provide some thoughts on that?

Mr. Matt DeCoursey: Certainly, Mr. Speaker, we want to see American tourists coming to Canada. My colleague sitting right in front of me will emphasize along with me that we want to see those tourists coming to Atlantic Canada to enjoy all there is to offer in New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, and Newfoundland and Labrador. We are open to having tourists from right across the United States come to visit our lovely country. I would ask them all to take an opportunity to visit us on the east coast, specifically as we celebrate Canada's 150.

However, for the next 150 years, we want a border that allows the flow of people to come and visit and enjoy all we have to offer.

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• (1845)

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. It being 6:45 p.m., pursuant to an order made earlier today, it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill now before the House.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

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

And five or more members having risen:

The Deputy Speaker: Call in the members.

• (1910)

[*Translation*]

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

(*Division No. 204*)

YEAS

Members

Ashton	Aubin
Blaikie	Blaney (North Island—Powell River)
Boudrias	Boulerice
Boutin-Sweet	Brosseau
Cannings	Choquette
Christopherson	Cullen
Davies	Donnelly
Dubé	Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)
Dusseault	Duvall
Fortin	Hardcastle
Johns	Julian
Kwan	Laverdière
MacGregor	Malcolmson
Marcil	Masse (Windsor West)
Mathysen	May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
Mulcair	Nantel
Plamondon	Quach
Ramsey	Rankin
Saganash	Sansoucy
Ste-Marie	Stewart
Thériault	Weir— 42

NAYS

Members

Aboultaif	Albas
Albrecht	Aldag
Alghabra	Allison
Ambrose	Amos
Anandasangaree	Anderson
Arnold	Arseneault
Arya	Ayoub
Badawey	Bagnell
Bains	Barlow
Baylis	Beech
Bennett	Bergen

Berthold	Bibeau
Bittle	Blair
Block	Boissonnault
Bossio	Brassard
Bratina	Breton
Brisson	Brown
Caesar-Chavannes	Calkins
Carrie	Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)
Casey (Charlottetown)	Chagger
Chen	Clement
Cooper	Cuzner
Dabrusin	Damoff
DeCoursey	Deltell
Dhaliwal	Dhillon
Di Iorio	Diotte
Doherty	Dreeshen
Drouin	Dubourg
Duguid	Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Dzerowicz	Easter
Eglinski	Ehsassi
El-Khoury	Ellis
Erskine-Smith	Eyking
Eyolfson	Falk
Fergus	Fillmore
Finnigan	Fonseca
Fragiskatos	Fraser (West Nova)
Fraser (Central Nova)	Freeland
Garneau	Généreux
Genuis	Gladu
Godin	Goldsmith-Jones
Goodale	Gould
Gourde	Graham
Grewal	Hajdu
Harder	Hardie
Harvey	Hehr
Hoback	Holland
Housefather	Hussen
Hutchings	Iacono
Jeneroux	Joly
Jones	Jordan
Jowhari	Kang
Kelly	Kent
Khalid	Kitchen
Kmiec	Lake
Lametti	Lamoureux
Lapointe	Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)	LeBlanc
Lebouthillier	Lefebvre
Leslie	Liepert
Lightbound	Lobb
Lockhart	Long
Longfield	Ludwig
Lukiwski	MacKenzie
MacKinnon (Gatineau)	Maguire
Maloney	Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)
May (Cambridge)	McCauley (Edmonton West)
McColeman	McCrimmon
McDonald	McGuinty
McKay	McKenna
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)	McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)
McLeod (Northwest Territories)	Mendès
Mendicino	Mihychuk
Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Soeurs)	
Monsef	
Morneau	Morrissey
Motz	Murray
Nassif	Nater
Nault	Nicholson
O'Connell	Oliphant
Oliver	O'Regan
O'Toole	Ouellette
Peschisolido	Peterson
Petipas Taylor	Philpott
Picard	Poilievre
Poissant	Qualtrough
Ratansi	Rayes
Reid	Rempel
Richards	Rioux
Ritz	Rodriguez
Rota	Rudd
Ruimy	Rusnak
Sahota	Saini
Sajjan	Sanson
Sangha	Sara

Government Orders

Saroya
Scheer
Schmale
Shanahan
Shields
Sidhu (Brampton South)
Simms
Sopuck
Stanton
Sweet
Tan
Tilson
Trudeau
Van Loan
Vandenbeld
Vecchio
Virani
Warawa
Watts
Webber
Wilkinson
Wong
Young
Zahid

Scarpaleggia
Schiefke
Schulte
Sheehan
Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)
Sikand
Sohi
Sorbara
Stubbs
Tabbara
Tassi
Tootoo
Van Kesteren
Vandal
Vaughan
Viersen
Wagantall
Warkentin
Waugh
Whalen
Wilson-Raybould
Wrzesnewskyj
Yurdiga
Zimmer — 236

PAIRED

Members

Moore

Sgro — 2

The Speaker: I declare the amendment lost.

[*English*]

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please say ye.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Speaker: All those opposed to the motion will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Speaker: In my opinion, the yeas have it.

And five or more members having risen:

● (1920)

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

(Division No. 205)

YEAS

Members

Abouttaif
Albrecht
Alghabra
Ambrose
Anandasangaree
Arnold
Arya
Badawey
Bains
Baylis
Bennett
Berthold
Bittle

Albas
Aldag
Allison
Amos
Anderson
Arseneault
Ayoub
Bagnell
Barlow
Beech
Bergen
Bibeau
Blair

Block
Bossio
Bratina
Brison
Caesar-Chavannes
Carrie
Casey (Charlottetown)
Chen
Cooper
Dabrusin
DeCoursey
Dhaliwal
Di Iorio
Doherty
Drouin
Duguid
Dzerowicz
Eglnski
El-Khoury
Erskine-Smith
Eyolfson
Fergus
Finnigan
Fragiskatos
Fraser (Central Nova)
Gameau
Genius
Godin
Goodale
Gourde
Grewal
Harder
Harvey
Hoback
Housefather
Hutchings
Jeneroux
Jones
Jowhari
Kelly
Khalid
Kmiec
Lametti
Lapointe
Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)
Lebouthillier
Leslie
Liepert
Lobb
Long
Ludwig
MacKenzie
Maguire
Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)
May (Cambridge)
McCauley (Edmonton West)
McCrimmon
McGuinty
McKenna
McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)
Mendès
Mihychuk
Soeurs)
Monsef
Morrissey
Murray
Nater
Nicholson
Oliphant
O'Regan
Ouellette
Peterson
Philpott
Poilievre
Qualtrough
Rayes
Rempel
Rioux
Rodriguez
Rota
Ruimy
Sahota
Sajjan
Sangha

Boissonnault
Brassard
Breton
Brown
Calkins
Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)
Chagger
Clement
Cuzner
Damoff
Deltell
Dhillon
Diotte
Dreeshen
Dubourg
Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Easter
Ehsassi
Ellis
Eyking
Falk
Fillmore
Fonseca
Fraser (West Nova)
Freeland
Généreux
Gladu
Goldsmith-Jones
Gould
Graham
Hajdu
Hardie
Hehr
Holland
Hussen
Iacono
Joly
Jordan
Kang
Kent
Kitchen
Lake
Lamoureux
Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
LeBlanc
Lemieux
Levitt
Lightbound
Lockhart
Longfield
Lukiwski
MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Maloney
McColeman
McDonald
McKay
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
McLeod (Northwest Territories)
Mendicino
Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-
Morneau
Motz
Nassif
Nault
O'Connell
Oliver
O'Toole
Peschisolido
Petitpas Taylor
Picard
Poissant
Ratansi
Reid
Richards
Ritz
Romanado
Rudd
Rusnak
Saini
Samson
Sara

Saroya
Scheer
Schmale
Shanahan
Shields
Sidhu (Brampton South)
Simms
Sopuck
Stanton
Sweet
Tan
Tilson
Trudeau
Van Loan
Vandenbeld
Vecchio
Virani
Warawa
Watts
Webber
Wilkinson
Wong
Young
Zahid

Scarpaleggia
Schieffe
Schulte
Sheehan
Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)
Sikand
Sohi
Sorbara
Stubbs
Tabbara
Tassi
Tootoo
Van Kesteren
Vandal
Vaughan
Viersen
Wagantall
Warkentin
Waugh
Whalen
Wilson-Raybould
Wrzesnewskyj
Yurdiga
Zimmer — 238

NAYS

Members

Ashton
Blaikie
Boudrias
Boutin-Sweet
Cannings
Christopherson
Davies
Dubé
Dusseault
Fortin
Johns
Kwan
MacGregor
Marcil
Mathysen
Mulcair
Plamondon
Ramsey
Saganash
Ste-Marie
Thériault

Aubin
Blaney (North Island—Powell River)
Boulerice
Brosseau
Choquette
Cullen
Donnelly
Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)
Duvall
Hardcastle
Julian
Laverdière
Malcolmson
Masse (Windsor West)
May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
Nantel
Quach
Rankin
Sansoucy
Stewart
Weir — 42

PAIRED

Members

Moore

Sgro — 2

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried. Accordingly, the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security.

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

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

• (1925)

[Translation]

FREEDOM OF THE PRESS

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on November 4, I asked the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness exactly how many journalists were under surveillance following revelations about attacks on freedom of the press in Quebec.

Adjournment Proceedings

At the time, the minister said that was not happening at the federal level. The reply was surprising to say the least because we know that two journalists working for *La Presse* were in fact spied on by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police in 2007 and that the Canadian Security Intelligence Service was able to illegally collect data.

We also know that on many occasions the Department of Public Safety authorized these same services to use devices to spy on Canadians' communications, as reported by the CBC/Radio-Canada in September.

Freedom of the press is one of Canadians' fundamental rights. Without freedom of the press there can be no freedom of conscience, and without freedom of conscience there can be no democracy.

We cannot accept that journalists are spied on to identify their sources. Freedom of information allows each one of us to form an opinion about the decisions made by those who govern us. To threaten that right is to abandon all the principles on which we have built our democracy.

How can the government justify breaking the bond of trust between journalists and their sources, who supply information of interest to the public in exchange for guaranteed anonymity?

I would like to remind the government that protection of sources was recognized and confirmed by the Supreme Court in a 2010 ruling relating to the sponsorship scandal. Are the Liberals making a habit of choosing surveillance and manipulation over democracy?

Right now, I am thinking of the people of my riding, where I have studied, lived, and worked almost my whole life. Like me, many of them read our local papers, such as the *Courrier de Saint-Hyacinthe* and *La Pensée de Bagot*. How are they supposed to feel well-informed knowing that the journalists who write the articles in the papers they read every day can be under surveillance by their own government?

Every day, men and women from coast to coast work to keep us informed about what is going on in Quebec, Canada, and the world. That includes journalists, but it also includes sources who reveal vital information of interest to the public. How can these men and women, many of whom risk their careers and even their lives to keep us informed, feel safe and secure if their anonymity is threatened by the very government that is supposed to protect them?

Enough with the broken promises and half-truths. I want to know when this government is going to start respecting our democracy. After backing away from electoral reform, championed by the NDP and then promised by the Liberals, and having the press under surveillance, what will the government do next?

The government also claims that safeguards for protecting the freedom of the press were still in place. However, investigators can spy on journalists for nine days without their supervisors realizing it. How much are these so-called safeguards really worth? Are we to still bank on the Liberals' promises and assurances? Unfortunately, we learned all about their values the hard way.

No, the uncertain assurances and empty promises will not cut it this time. Quebecers and Canadians need proof and clear and precise answers. This Parliament should no longer tolerate the government's half-truths. I expect answers.

Adjournment Proceedings

[English]

Mr. Mark Holland (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, freedom of the press is a fundamental Canadian value enshrined in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Democracy depends on the ability of the media to freely and independently collect information and share it with the public, so that members of the public can develop informed opinions and make informed choices. Our government has therefore been and will remain a vigorous and unremitting champion of press freedom.

The recent reports about police activity in Quebec are troubling, and I note that these reports about the Sûreté du Québec and the Service de police de la Ville de Montréal investigating journalists in an effort to identify their sources have led to action by the provincial government.

Let us be clear. As has been confirmed by the commissioner of the RCMP, the director of CSIS, the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, and the Prime Minister, this is not happening at the federal level. I will reiterate for clarity, this is not occurring at the federal level. There are safeguards in place regarding federal national security investigations to ensure that journalistic freedom is protected. The RCMP, for example, is governed by a ministerial directive on sensitive sector investigations that outlines the special care required for investigations that impact fundamental institutions of Canadian society, including the media, academia, religion, and unions.

So too is CSIS subject to ministerial direction in this regard. Accordingly, the rules governing CSIS require a similar level of care, and indeed, a review by the Security Intelligence Review Committee summarized in its 2009-10 annual report found that CSIS has long exercised special care in the conduct of operations that affect, or even appear to affect, fundamental institutions like the media.

Nevertheless, the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness is reviewing these safeguards to ensure that they are appropriate and sufficient to protect freedom of the press in Canada. As he has said, and as our Prime Minister has said, our government welcomes input about any possible adjustments that might be required, including from the hon. member opposite, all hon. members and senators, as well as from members of the media. In fact, the minister has been quite clear that long before these reports in Quebec, he was reviewing all ministerial directives to ensure that they safeguard the rights and freedoms of Canadians.

Indeed, it has been a fundamental principle of our government since before we became the government that public safety and rights and freedoms must be protected simultaneously. We know that our national security and law enforcement agencies must have the tools and resources they need to keep Canada safe, and that these agencies must also be subject to effective and vigorous oversight, to hold the highest standards when it comes to respect for civil liberties and the rights and freedoms protected by the charter.

Among these fundamental rights and freedoms is certainly freedom of the press. It is critical for the open and democratic character of our country that press freedom be passionately and effectively defended. Our government has done that and will continue to do so.

● (1930)

[Translation]

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy: Mr. Speaker, now more than ever, it is our duty in this House to protect democracy. We have a duty to represent the people of our respective ridings here today, as well as to ensure that there is nowhere in Canada, whether in Quebec or anywhere else, where Canadians are not protected and their fundamental rights are not respected.

Freedom of the press is not a partisan issue, but rather everyone's concern. My hon. colleagues of the House should all be outraged by this government's action, just as I am.

The parliamentary secretary's response is nowhere near sufficient. While strong evidence brought forward by journalists proves that some of their colleagues have been spied upon in order to identify their sources, the government is once again asking us to blindly trust it.

The safeguards are far from adequate, and the parliamentary secretary cannot guarantee us here this evening that journalists have full freedom of the press and that their sources are fully protected. The Liberals are once again shirking their responsibilities and are not fulfilling their duties as the government in power.

I must ask once again: can the parliamentary secretary explain to us how his government is protecting freedom of the press and how it is ensuring that the self-interest of our leaders does not take precedence over our rights?

[English]

Mr. Mark Holland: Mr. Speaker, again, let us be very clear. This is not happening at the federal level. This has been stated unequivocally by not only the directors of CSIS and the RCMP, but by the Prime Minister and the minister.

Let me go one step further. Not only is this government relying on the fact that it has not happened, not only are we relying on the vigorous and strong mechanisms to protect freedom of the press, we are going further, both in Bill C-22, which will be before the House and which allows for political oversight of our security and intelligence framework, and in the review we are doing. In fact, very soon the committee will be tabling its recommendations on the security and intelligence framework to ensure there is vigorous oversight of all departments, so that not only are the powers in place but also the oversight mechanisms to ensure oversight is effective and is as strong as it can be.

Let me state unequivocally our support for freedom of the press, and to ensure that it is guarded in all forms with the utmost protection.

Adjournment Proceedings

● (1935)

TAXATION

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today I want to continue with a follow up on a question I had the other day regarding a comment made by the mayor of Medicine Hat. During our HUMA committee, he was asked what he would do to help those in need. This had to do with money being taken out of the pockets of taxpayers, because of a government tax, to the point where they could not afford things. He was very open and said he would not charge it at all.

Many different provinces will be putting forward different solutions when it comes to the climate change development. In Ontario, Premier Kathleen Wynne is not only charging the carbon tax but also a tax on tax because part of that delivery charge also includes the HST. Therefore, when we talk about money grabs, that is exactly what Canadians see right now.

We talk a lot about climate change and what it means. Unfortunately, what we see is a mandate put in by the Prime Minister where, at the end of the day, we do not know where the money is going. It is no different than in the province of Ontario when it is puts something forward. It gets health care dollars and ends up building roads. Therefore, will we see concerns like this?

When people cannot afford to put food on their tables or pay for heat and hydro for their home, how can we honestly add another 4% to 15% on their taxes, or ask them to spend more when they can barely spend enough?

Of the 10 municipalities I have, some are doing very well and some are falling a bit behind. I know people in the communities that are falling behind will have to pay more in fuel to go to their jobs. Therefore, not only are they already behind the eight ball, they will now be paying more tax because of the carbon tax. I have heard the Prime Minister talk about how he will try to separate province to province and what they will do. However, as I indicated earlier, when we see the premier of Ontario have a tax on tax, this is just not right, especially for the people who cannot afford it.

My good friend from Carleton also stated this. When we look at an annual salary of \$45,000, we are hurting those people who are below the middle-class line. There is actually no ceiling when it comes to the carbon tax. We are not targeting it, we are just saying that it is *carte blanche*, “take all the money you want.” We see this a lot, especially from the Ontario government. I suspect we will see it from other governments as well. Some may be putting in plans where they will take the money and put it into innovation and technology, so they can come out with great state-of-the-art programs that will reduce fuel emissions. However, we are sitting here talking about a carbon tax.

I know the parliamentary secretary will talk about us not doing so well. In the last 10 years, prior to the Liberal Party forming government, we actually reduced the carbon footprint. Therefore, part of my concern is that we are talking about spending money and about having polluters spend more money, but we are not taking into consideration the taxpaying people who cannot afford to put loaves of bread on their tables.

Those are some of my grave concerns. Therefore, I really want to hear the parliamentary secretary for the environment tell us how we will deal with this when there is tax on tax, when people cannot afford to put fuel in their vehicles to go their job because they are paying more and more.

In Ontario, we saw a jump immediately following the introduction of the carbon tax, and we will see more of that, just like we did on our hydro bills with the delivery charge. Therefore, I would like to have some comments on that, and on how Canadians will be able to afford this.

Mr. Jonathan Wilkinson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in our platform we were pretty clear about our intention to provide comprehensive and national leadership on the climate change file, including ensuring that a price on carbon pollution existed across the country.

To respond to the member opposite's question, let me just talk a little about some of the actions we are taking and why.

Climate change is not a distant threat. It requires action now. Unlike the party opposite, which did virtually nothing for 10 years, effectively pushing the bill for future generations to worry about, our government intends to act.

Annual insurance claims for severe storms are up from \$300 million in the year 2000 to an average of \$1 billion today. The National Roundtable on the Environment and the Economy estimated that total costs associated with climate change could reach \$43 billion a year by 2050.

There are real and significant costs to not acting, but there is also a significant opportunity if we do act. As someone who was a senior executive in the clean technology space for 20 years, it is something I have seen first-hand. In 2015, there was nearly \$350 billion of investment in the global clean energy sector, almost a sixfold increase since 2004.

To make the transition envisaged under the Paris agreement, it is estimated that a further investment of \$13.5 trillion in low carbon and energy efficiency technologies will be required between 2015 and 2030. However, in Canada, our share of global clean tech exports has shrunk during the past decade by half, due to Conservative inaction. Our government, by contrast, knows that we must take advantage of this economic opportunity.

A key part of driving innovation and clean growth will be putting a price on what we do not want, pollution, in order to foster things that we do want, clean growth, innovation, and middle-class jobs.

British Columbia's introduction of a carbon price demonstrates well that we can reduce emissions while growing our economy. Not only that, but British Columbia used its revenue-neutral carbon price to cut taxes by 5% for the middle class and to provide rebates. British Columbia now has the lowest overall personal income taxes in Canada thanks to its carbon pricing system.

Adjournment Proceedings

Many of the world's largest economies price carbon as a means to incent clean growth, and it is not just the countries of Europe. China, for example, is moving to implement a country-wide carbon pricing system.

Many leading Canadian businesses, economists, and even leading Conservative politicians are on board. They include Preston Manning, Mark Cameron, Patrick Brown, Brian Pallister, and MPs from the other side of the House. These people all know well that pricing carbon pollution is the most efficient way to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and to reach our objective of protecting the economy and creating a clean growth environmental future. For this reason, it is a key part of the pan-Canadian framework on clean growth and climate change.

We on this side of the House understand that pricing carbon pollution will make our businesses more competitive and innovative, will reduce the pollution that threatens the health of Canadians and of the planet, and will give us an edge in building a clean growth economy going forward.

● (1940)

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the raft of talking points his government has been giving for the last year and a half.

We have been asking about families, and that is something the member, in his response, did not once talk about. He talked about the regular things we are hearing from the Liberal government but did not take into consideration those people who are making \$45,000 or less a year. Those are people who cannot afford a hybrid car and therefore are not getting a \$10,000 or \$15,000 rebate. Instead, they are having to drive cars that may still be emitting, because that is what they can afford, because the government has not focused on jobs.

These are some of the concerns. We can sit here and talk about the price of carbon and having people emit less, but what is happening to those families that have to use an older car because they cannot afford a new one or find a new job or a job that may pay more money, or anything like that? How are we going to do on that?

The government continues to talk about what it is doing for the middle class. What it has done here is target the lower class. They are going to be paying more and more money. They cannot afford those rebates the provincial governments are giving people for automobiles.

I want to know from the member specifically, what is he doing for low-income families who cannot afford the carbon tax?

Mr. Jonathan Wilkinson: Mr. Speaker, there are a number of different things the government has done with respect to addressing the needs of middle-class Canadians and those working hard to join it. They include the middle-class tax reduction we did in the last budget. It includes the Canada child benefit, which nine out of 10 Canadians benefit from, raising 300,000 Canadian children out of poverty.

The focus of a carbon price is actually pricing pollution, which we do not want, in order to incent the things that we do want. The provinces have the ability to structure the use of the funds that are generated through a carbon price in a way they so choose. Alberta,

for example, is actually giving it back in rebates to ensure that it is protecting people who are not earning a lot of money. British Columbia does that and actually reduced personal income taxes to achieve the lowest personal income tax rate in Canada.

There are many ways we can have a carbon price that tries to get at the issue, which is climate change and carbon pollution, while also protecting and fostering middle-class growth and helping those working hard to join it.

● (1945)

ETHICS

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the opposition has raised numerous questions about the government's habit of creating real or apparent conflicts of interest when cabinet ministers and the Prime Minister attend cash for access fundraisers.

The Liberal Party of Canada organized fundraisers, exclusively invited wealthy donors, used search engine protocols to hide them from Google search results, and specifically mentioned that ministers like the Minister of Finance, the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, or the Prime Minister himself would be available for an intimate talk.

Such meetings create conflicts of interest when attended by registered lobbyists, since the latter pay to meet with ministers who make decisions which affect their clients. This is clearly a breach of the ethical standards that Canadians demand of elected representatives.

Such meetings also breach the Prime Minister's own code of ethics as laid out in his publication, "Open and Accountable Government, 2015". Indeed, this document instructs ministers to avoid even the appearance of conflict of interest, explicitly stating that the commitment to accountability is not discharged merely by following the letter of the law.

My second point would be funny if it were not so disturbing. At last count, the government House leader has claimed over 200 times in the House that Canada has the strictest rules in the world. Well, we know that the rules are strict. The issue is that the rules are not being followed.

When I asked the government House leader why she continued to defend cash for access fundraising when the Commissioner of Lobbying was investigating the fundraisers, she replied, "When the rules are followed, no conflict of interest can exist." That statement is naively optimistic to the point of absurdity, and the whole government knows this. The Prime Minister knows it, since he acknowledged in "Open and Accountable Government" that avoiding the appearance of conflict of interest is not limited to simply following the technical compliance of the law. Cabinet members know it, since they have recently announced that they will introduce new ethics rules to further clarify expectations for fundraisers.

Adjournment Proceedings

Canada does not need new rules to supplement what are perhaps the strictest ethics standards in the world; we just need the government to start obeying the rules that are already on the books. Liberals need to actually live up to the expectations they created in the statement on open and accountable government.

I ask again, why does the government defend cash for access fundraising? Why does it not listen to the lobbying commissioner when she says that a sense of obligation is created when a lobbyist organizes or hosts a political fundraiser and when the practice is known to be under investigation?

Why do the Liberals not listen to the Ethics Commissioner who calls their fundraisers unsavoury, who has asked for jurisdiction to enforce the standards in “Open and Accountable Government”, and who has launched the first-ever ethics investigation by her office of a sitting Prime Minister? Why do they not raise the standards that their own leader sets out in the mandate letters and in his own code of ethics?

Canadians want to know why ministers and the Prime Minister allow registered lobbyists to host and organize fundraisers for them, why the Prime Minister attends fundraisers with foreign nationals when he knows that only Canadians can legally donate to a party, and why the Prime Minister allows lobbyists at his fundraisers when he is on record stating that he is lobbied all the time since people want to talk about their issues?

Canadians want to know why the Prime Minister and his cabinet keep getting into conflicts of interest, real or apparent, and keep prompting investigations of their unethical and possibly illegal behaviour. We want to know why Canadians should trust the Liberal government to govern in the interests of all Canadians when it has shown time and time again that it puts its own party's finances above the rules for public office holders.

Mr. Jonathan Wilkinson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians very much value their democratic institutions. One of the most important features of our democratic institutions are the rules that have been put in place to limit barriers to participation to ensure that every Canadian who wishes to do so can participate, and to protect the integrity of electoral processes, one of which is political financing.

Over the years, the rules have been put in place to regulate political financing with a view to ensuring transparency and a level playing field for all political parties. Limits have been established with respect to annual contributions that can be made to candidates and to political parties. Only citizens and permanent residents are allowed to contribute. These rules are much stricter than in many other western countries. These rules exist for a reason. Canadians want their leaders to be accountable to all Canadians and not to a select few, to voters and not to corporations or to special interests. Rules are also in place to make political financing transparent. All contributions over \$200 are publicly reported. No anonymous contribution is allowed over \$20. Again, there is a stark contrast compared with many other countries where the requirements are not nearly as strict.

The objectives of transparency and equity are not only reflected in how political parties collect funds, but also in how they use them.

There are established limits and reporting requirements as to how much political parties and candidates can spend during an election campaign. Further rules have been established for third party actors who wish to get their views out and heard during an election campaign. Overall, these strict rules contribute to ensuring a level playing field and to fostering a healthy political debate within Canadian society.

Our political financing regime is sound. However, the strength of our democratic institutions also lies in the fact that we are continuously looking at ways to improve these institutions. That is why the Minister of Democratic Institutions has been mandated to take steps to further enhance transparency in political fundraising. For example, when cabinet ministers, party leaders, and leadership candidates are present at fundraisers, we believe the fundraisers should be conducted in publicly accessible spaces, advertised in advance, and reported on in a timely manner after the fact. We believe that measures to increase transparency on fundraising activities will positively impact Canadians' trust in their democratic institutions. The minister has also been mandated to review the limits for electoral campaign expenses and also to propose measures to ensure that spending between elections is subject to reasonable limits.

These measures are the types of actions that we believe will constitute concrete steps toward the overarching objective of enhancing the integrity of our democratic processes. Our government is committed to demonstrating leadership in seeking to maintain and deepen Canadians' trust in our democratic institutions.

• (1950)

Mr. Pat Kelly: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the recitation of the strict rules that exist, and for the aspiration for even greater transparency and accountability. It is absolutely incredible, though, to hear the member talk about how the rules are set up so that, for example, as he said, citizens only can participate in fundraising activities and in our democratic processes, when the Prime Minister attends fundraisers with foreign nationals. It is incredible that the member would go to the trouble of explaining the strict nature and the goal of enhancing participation of Canadians, while his own party and own government have so flagrantly, obviously, and completely ignored, abandoned, and paid no heed to any of these aspirations.

Mr. Jonathan Wilkinson: Mr. Speaker, as I said, there are very strict rules in Canada that relate to political financing and to electoral expenses. We on this side of the House have abided by and will always continue to abide by all applicable rules. The Government of Canada is committed, though, to taking concrete steps to further improve the system, as we are looking to improve things across all ministries in this government. The government intends to proceed with increased transparency requirements for fundraising events and will also review things like spending limits, including considering options to establish reasonable limits between elections. This an important issue, and I thank the hon. member for raising it in the House.

*Adjournment Proceedings**[Translation]*

The Deputy Speaker: The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly the House stands

adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 7:53 p.m.)

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