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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Wednesday, May 10, 2017

—

Speaker: The Honourable Geoff Regan

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, May 10, 2017

The House met at 2 p.m.

Prayer

• (1405)

[*English*]

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

[*Members sang the national anthem*]

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*Translation*]

SOFTWOOD LUMBER

Mrs. Marilène Gill (Manicouagan, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Fédération des chambres de commerce du Québec says that loan guarantees are vital to companies affected by the U.S.'s countervailing duties on softwood lumber.

Everyone in Quebec agrees: the National Assembly, the Union des municipalités du Québec, and forestry workers. Everyone, that is, except for the 40 Liberal government members who are doing nothing to help our people.

The Liberal government is refusing to commit to providing loan guarantees because it does not want to give loan guarantees. The government would see our regions empty out, our workers lose their jobs, and our forestry companies close up shop rather than support the industry, which is not even asking for money, only loan guarantees.

The Fédération des chambres de commerce is meeting with the ministers responsible for this crisis today. If the government refuses to make promises yet again, we will be forced to conclude that Ottawa has finally turned its back on Quebec for good.

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[*English*]

VOLUNTEERISM

Mr. Omar Alhabra (Mississauga Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to share a special story of altruism.

The other day I was at Coffee Culture, on Eglinton Avenue in my riding. I met the family that owns that shop. Prior to owning that business, Michael Reid was a successful engineer. His wife, Jessie, was a successful salesperson at Leon's. Their son Aaron was struggling in finding a job, because employers seemed concerned about his needs. Michael and Jessie quit their careers and purchased the coffee shop to create an opportunity for Aaron to develop his skills.

However, Michael and Jessie did not stop there. They decided to participate in planning an independence program to provide other young people with special needs with employment opportunities. Their effort will support families and individuals who may be denied a chance elsewhere to improve their lives.

Michael and Jessie deserve our gratitude. They are an example of heroes who are quietly making our community a better place for all.

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STATUS OF WOMEN

Mrs. Kelly Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Margaret Atwood novel *The Handmaid's Tale* has been adapted for television. It depicts a dystopian society in which birth rates have plummeted for unknown reasons. A fascist, theocratic state has assumed power, and fertile women are conscripted into sexual slavery and forced to breed children for the wealthy and powerful. What happens to the women in *The Handmaid's Tale* is horrific. Women are treated as property, and those who dare speak out are permanently maimed.

I raise this in the House today because what is fictional in Canada is reality in many parts of the world. Saudi Arabia is a gender-segregationist theocracy where women are regularly harassed by religious police. That is why I was shocked and appalled by the election of Saudi Arabia to the UN's women's rights commission.

Margaret Atwood's horrific vision does not exist only in our imaginations; it exists right now, today, and it is a shame that the government is so unwilling to confront it.

Statements by Members

●(1410)

MULTICULTURALISM

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal (Surrey—Newton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize a fantastic event that was organized by some of Surrey's finest entrepreneurs. This past weekend, led by the efforts of Sukh Brar, Harman Brar, and their team from Next Level Music and Famous Studios, international recording artist and actor Diljit Dosanjh energized thousands of fans at a concert in British Columbia.

An international sensation in the Punjabi community, Diljit helped create an exciting atmosphere, showing yet another example of how dynamic our multicultural landscape truly is. It was amazing to see all in attendance embrace their cultural heritage while also displaying their Canadian pride.

Diversity is our strength, and especially in the times we are living through today, Canada remains a model for the rest of the world. We thank the Brar brothers, we thank Diljit Dosanjh for an incredible performance, and we thank all the fans.

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RENEWABLE ENERGY

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, despite strong momentum from the Paris climate talks, Canada will still miss its climate targets. Instead, by 2030, we will reduce our carbon emissions by less than 1%. Clearly we need to move quickly toward a more sustainable energy future focused on renewable energy and energy efficiency. Not only will this transition be a critical step in reducing carbon emissions, but these measures will support economic development and create meaningful new jobs in local communities across the country. Renewable energy development will require skilled trades, equipment operators, engineers, and other skills that many Canadians already have and want to continue to use.

Canada has a vast array of resources suitable for renewable energy development. Our diverse geography means that green energy jobs can be distributed across the country, from our biggest technology hubs to small and rural communities.

This future is within our reach. It is critical that Canada make meaningful reductions in our fossil fuel use and carbon emissions. Doing so will create good jobs in all our communities. Let us get started on this now.

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GRAND FALLS-WINDSOR CATARACTS HOCKEY CLUB

Mr. Scott Simms (Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I rise today to congratulate the Grand Falls-Windsor Cataracts Senior A hockey team. Last month the boys took home the Allen Cup, making them the national senior amateur men's hockey champs. This marked only the third time a team from Newfoundland and Labrador has won the cup since it began in 1908. Led by head coach Tom Coolen and team captain Mike Brent, the Cataracts beat out the Lacombe Generals in a 7:4 win. Congratulations to goalie Bryan Gillis, who stopped 30 of 34 shots.

Senior hockey started in Grand Falls in the 1920s, and the team was known as the Grand Falls All-Stars. In 1956, the All-Stars were renamed the Grand Falls Andcos. In 1991, the towns of Grand Falls and Windsor amalgamated, and the team became the Grand Falls-Windsor Cataracts.

Among the great players was one young man named Alex Faulkner, of Bishop's Falls. He was a member of the Andcos before he became the first Newfoundlander to play in the National Hockey League in 1961.

Congratulations, Cats.

* * *

HALIBURTON—KAWARTHA LAKES—BROCK

Mr. Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the annual MS walk was held in Lindsay this past Sunday, and I was proud to participate on behalf of my mother, who suffered from a progressive form of MS. It raised \$14,000.

Special thanks to all the volunteers and organizers, who went above and beyond to ensure a well-run event, and to this year's ambassador, Shane Orr, for all his hard work raising awareness about this terrible disease.

I also want to recognize the people living in northern Kawartha Lakes and the townships of Haliburton County who are dealing with extremely high water levels, and in some cases, like Minden, severe flooding. Families, friends, and neighbours have come together to lend a hand in this time of need. In Minden, township staff are working tirelessly under the leadership of reeve Brent Devolin, CAO Lorrie Blanchard, community services director Mark Coleman, and many others.

I send my appreciation to all the community organizers, emergency services, hydro, public works staff, and the countless volunteers who are demonstrating how small towns pull together in times of crisis.

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ANTI-SEMITISM

Mr. Marco Mendicino (Eglinton—Lawrence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, every year B'nai Brith publishes an audit on anti-Semitism that aspires to educate and reduce hatred toward the Jewish community in Canada.

●(1415)

[Translation]

Each year for the last 10 years, reports have shown that anti-Semitic groups are becoming increasingly common. In fact, there was an increase of 26% in 2016 compared to 2015.

[English]

We have to reverse this trend. Our government is committed to a safe and inclusive society where people of Jewish faith, and indeed all Canadians, can live free of intolerance. The annual audit is good work to advance this cause, and B'nai Brith should be commended for its work.

*Statements by Members***GLOBAL CENTRE FOR PLURALISM**

Ms. Yasmin Ratansi (Don Valley East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, May 16 will be the official opening of the international headquarters of the Global Centre for Pluralism at 330 Sussex Drive. Founded by His Highness the Aga Khan, in partnership with the Government of Canada, the centre promotes research, learning, and dialogue on the necessity of pluralism. Inspired by Canada's experience as a diverse and inclusive country, the centre is helping the world to see diversity as a benefit and not a risk.

To quote the Aga Khan:

Tolerance, openness and understanding towards other peoples' cultures, social structures, values and faiths are now essential to the very survival of an interdependent world. Pluralism is no longer simply an asset or a prerequisite for progress and development, it is vital to our existence.

I would like to thank His Highness for his significant contributions to Canada and the world.

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BAHÁ'Í SEVEN

Mr. David Sweet (Flamborough—Glanbrook, CPC): Mr. Speaker, being terrorized, persecuted, beaten, imprisoned, and killed is too often what faces Iranian citizens of the Bahá'í faith. The Khamenei regime continues to carry out coordinated efforts to eliminate this religious community.

During this Iran Accountability Week, I rise to call for the release of the seven wrongfully imprisoned Bahá'í leaders who have become known as the Bahá'í Seven. In 2008, the Iranian regime arrested Fariba Kamalabadi, Jamaloddin Khanjani, Mahvash Sabet, Afif Naeimi, Saeid Rezaei, Vahid Tizfahm, and Behrouz Tavakkoli. These leaders faced trumped-up charges for nothing more than their religious beliefs and were sentenced to 20 years in prison.

With the Iranian presidential election next week, I invite the government to join the official opposition in calling on each Iranian presidential candidate to commit to the release of these innocent men and women. After nine long years, their release cannot come soon enough.

* * *

[Translation]

ARMENIAN GENOCIDE

Mr. Fayçal El-Khoury (Laval—Les Îles, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the last survivor of the Armenian genocide in Canada passed away at the age of 108 in Laval—Les Îles. Knar Bohjalian experienced that horrific event.

We no longer have any living reminders of the genocide, but there remain some Canadians, many of Armenian origin, who have their own memories.

Every April 24, we will remember. We must denounce crimes against humanity. We can no longer tolerate such tragedies being committed against a people or a religious or ethnic group.

Lester B. Pearson showed us the role that Canada must play in the furtherance of peace. With our partners, let us help the warring parties achieve reconciliation

In addition, on Monday I met with some of the flood victims in my riding, and I was shocked. I want to thank our government for showing strong leadership with the Quebec authorities in order to help our fellow Canadians.

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[English]

BAY OF FUNDY

Mr. Bill Casey (Cumberland—Colchester, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, 60 years ago, in August of 1957, *National Geographic* made the Bay of Fundy and her tides its cover story. More and more, the Bay of Fundy is being recognized as a marvel of nature to rival any in the world. The Bay of Fundy was recently recognized as one of the seven wonders of North America, along with the Grand Canyon. It is right up there with it.

Around the incredible Bay of Fundy can be found not only the world's highest tides but Canada's oldest indigenous settlement; the largest intact Acadian village; a UNESCO Global Geopark; the largest tidal power experiment in the world; whales, dolphins, and rare birds; isolated islands; hiking; and some of the oldest fossils in the world.

MPs around the Bay of Fundy have established the Bay of Fundy caucus to work with our municipal, provincial, and private sector counterparts to promote the Bay of Fundy as an incredible tourist destination. Our goal is to double tourism in the region in five years, and we are well under way.

* * *

● (1420)

[Translation]

HÔPITAL NOTRE-DAME-DE-FATIMA

Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on May 7, elected officials from all levels of government and more than 5,000 citizens came together in a call to preserve health services at Hôpital Notre-Dame-de-Fatima in my hometown of La Pocatière.

This demonstration could not have happened without its organizers Sylvain Lemieux and Luc Pelletier, as well as all the Town of La Pocatière support staff, firefighters, and stakeholders at the Kamouraska RCM, who kept the demonstration peaceful for the thousands of marchers.

The message is clear: preserving health care is a top priority in the region of Kamouraska-L'Islet. We want to not only preserve our health care services, but improve them as well.

To give my colleagues an idea of how much Hôpital Notre-Dame-de-Fatima means to me, I will say that I was born in room 121 on April 23, 55 years ago. Health care is paramount to me and my region.

*Oral Questions***VOLUNTEERISM**

Mr. Rémi Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today, my thoughts are with the Gagnon family and the family of young Daphnée, who died tragically in the flooding in Sainte-Anne-des-Monts.

My thoughts are also with the thousands of people affected by the severe flooding. This is an extremely difficult ordeal, and our hearts go out to them.

This sort of disaster brings out the best in people. Good people are quick to volunteer their time to help the victims and make sure they are safe. I want to thank them for their precious and selfless help.

I also want to acknowledge the efforts of the Red Cross, which is working shoulder to shoulder with thousands of volunteers. Given that April 23 to 29 was National Volunteer Week, I especially want to recognize the contributions of the many volunteers in my region.

Organizations in our cities and towns often rely on volunteers to get their work done. I thank these volunteers for all that they are and all that they do. They embody all that is good about our region and Canada.

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NATIONAL NURSING WEEK

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Mr. Speaker, National Nursing Week draws attention to the many ways that nurses improve our health care system.

Nurses have been proactive pioneers in many issues in our society such as pay equity, preventive withdrawal from work during pregnancy, and improving working conditions in the event of burnout. They are also tackling health and social inequalities and are doing important work in the public interest. Nurses play a vital role in our health care system.

This week and throughout the year, I invite all Canadians to join me in celebrating the nursing profession and to take the time to thank those who tirelessly dedicate themselves to providing excellent health care.

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[English]

NATIONAL NURSING WEEK

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this week is National Nursing Week, a week that encompasses International Nursing Day on May 12, which also happens to be the birthday of Florence Nightingale, the founder of modern nursing.

It is an honour for me to rise in the House today to recognize the vital contributions that nurses make to the health and well-being of all Canadians. With more than 415,000 regulated nurses across Canada, they are by far our largest group of health care providers, and we should all take this opportunity to thank them for their selfless work.

There are many events taking place across the country, and I encourage all members and all Canadians to attend and show their appreciation.

I would also like to take the time to share the theme for 2017, and I encourage all my colleagues to tweet or share a Facebook post showing their appreciation for Canadian nurses by using the hashtag #YESThisIsNursing.

I thank all of Canada's nurses for their continued leadership in delivering better health care for our nation.

* * *

CANADIANS BORN IN 1967

Mrs. Alaina Lockhart (Fundy Royal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada celebrated its 100th birthday in 1967. In that year 370,894 Canadians were born. These centennial babies were born when Frank Sinatra and The Supremes were fighting for top billing on the charts, in the year the Toronto Maple Leafs won its last Stanley Cup, and when Peter Mansbridge was still serving in the Royal Canadian Navy, his voice yet to be heard.

● (1425)

[Translation]

This year, however, they will be checking their iPads for birthday greetings on Facebook.

[English]

I want to wish all centennial babies celebrating this year, including seven members of this House and the centennials in my riding of Fundy Royal, a very happy 50th birthday. Let us remember that even though they may be greying faster, 1967 is an excellent vintage and is now aged to perfection.

Speaking of aged to perfection, today happens to be the 50th birthday of our friend and colleague, the hon. President of the Treasury Board. Happy birthday, Mr. President.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

INFRASTRUCTURE

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, every passing day brings with it more questions about the Prime Minister's \$35-billion infrastructure bank. Why do we need it? Who is behind it? Why are there so many flagrant conflicts of interest?

The Liberals are refusing to answer these questions. To top it off, they are giving Parliament just one day to examine the bill.

Why is the Prime Minister in such a hurry to go ahead with this?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are keen to see these long-awaited infrastructure investments come through.

Oral Questions

We know that the previous government did not invest enough in our communities, in our future, and in measures that Canadians need to succeed, to get to school, to work, and back home again. That is why, in addition to our \$180-billion infrastructure investment, we are looking at other ways to meet those needs and make things better for Canadians now and in the future.

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[English]

AEROSPACE INDUSTRY

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when the Prime Minister decided to give Bombardier a massive taxpayer-funded gift, we were outraged, but he defended it. When Bombardier gave its executive millions in compensation, everyone was outraged, but the Prime Minister defended it. Now even Bombardier shareholders are outraged at the company's handling of taxpayer dollars.

What will it take for the Prime Minister to admit that he signed a bad deal and give taxpayer dollars back?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we made a loan to Bombardier because we believe in the long-term success and viability of the aerospace industry in this country. We know that it leads to good jobs in communities right across the country, good jobs for middle-class Canadians in an innovative, high-quality workplace that is going to continue to be competitive around the world.

We believe in the extraordinary products, the C Series and the Global 7000, that are finding customers all around the world, because we know Canadian innovation and Canadian ingenuity are going to create good Canadian jobs.

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JUSTICE

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Constable David Wynn was shot and killed in the line of duty by a career criminal out on bail because his criminal record was never presented at the bail hearing. Wynn's law, which is still before the House, would close this loophole and it would save lives.

Liberal backbenchers were essential in making sure that this law passed, but yesterday, shockingly—and this is unbelievable—the Prime Minister ordered that this legislation be gutted against the will of the House.

Why?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we recognize the pain caused to the officer's family, especially to his wife Shelly MacInnis-Wynn and their three sons, to his RCMP colleagues, and to the St. Albert community and beyond.

Our government is committed to modernizing and improving our justice system so that we can protect victims and so that we can protect rights. That is exactly what we are moving forward on doing. We look forward to hearing the committee's recommendation on what to do with this piece of legislation.

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is unbelievable. The Prime Minister actually said to

Constable Wynn's widow that he was very pleased that she was in Ottawa to discuss the bail system. He also claimed at that time that it was important that we keep our communities and our families safe, but by his ordering the bill to be scrapped at committee, we now know that none of this was true and he meant none of it. It is a complete betrayal.

What does the Prime Minister have to say now to Constable Wynn's widow?

• (1430)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we take very seriously the safety of Canadians, the safety of communities, and the safety of the front-line officers who put their lives on the line to protect their fellow Canadians every single day. That is why I am pleased that the committee took very seriously the study of this proposal to improve our justice system.

On this side of the House we believe in two things: we believe in evidence-based policy and we believe in allowing committees to do their jobs.

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): This is unbelievable, Mr. Speaker. The Conservatives, the NDP, the Green Party, the Bloc, and many Liberal backbenchers got up, voted, and did the right thing so the bill would pass, and now at committee, where no one is watching, the Prime Minister has ordered it to be gutted.

This is disgusting. The Prime Minister should be ashamed of himself.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I can understand the member's confusion. In this government we do not interfere with the functioning of committees. We allow committees to make their own determinations, to examine laws, to examine and hear from witnesses, and to make decisions based on evidence.

We are committed to improving our justice system. We are improving it for Canadians' sake. That is exactly what we are going to keep doing while we respect the hard work done by committees.

Hon. Candice Bergen: She has more courage in her little finger than you have in your entire being. Shame on you. She is not confused. She is brave and honest.

The Speaker: Order. Order. The hon. opposition House leader will come to order.

[Translation]

The hon. member for Outremont.

*Oral Questions**[English]***OFFICIAL LANGUAGES**

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the media has just reported that the Prime Minister have chosen a former Liberal cabinet minister to be the new Commissioner of Official Languages. These officers of Parliament, these commissioners, have to be above the fray. They cannot be weighed down by the baggage of partisan loyalty.

Could the Prime Minister tell us if that is exactly what is going on here? He is under a record number of investigations by commissioners. Has he simply decided that the best thing for him is that he decides from now on who gets to investigate him?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member well knows, this party believes deeply in the importance of official languages, and we take very seriously merit-based appointments.

As part of that appointments process, opposition members and leaders are consulted on potential names going forward. We look forward to making an announcement in the coming days or weeks about any new commissioners.

[Translation]

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this Prime Minister has violated the Official Languages Act and must apologize.

The problem is that he has not learned his lesson. First of all, appointing someone from his inner circle to this position is a clear conflict of interest. Second, this undermines the authority and the credibility of the commissioner of official languages as an institution. Lastly, it is an insult to all Canadians who strongly believe in the importance of official languages.

Will the Prime Minister withdraw that appointment, which defies all logic?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, an integral part of the appointment process for the official languages commissioner position includes consulting opposition members. That is what we are currently doing. We believe deeply in the importance of protecting our official languages. When it comes to protecting official languages, it is important to select someone of the highest calibre. We will be announcing this appointment in the coming days or weeks.

* * *

INFRASTRUCTURE

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, speaking of appointments, we see that the government is ready to fill positions on the board of directors of the infrastructure bank. The only problem is that the infrastructure bank has not been created yet. Can the Prime Minister explain how he thinks it is appropriate to try to fill positions for something that does not exist?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know how much Canadians need infrastructure to get to school, work, and back home on time, and to send our goods and services to market. It is important to invest in infrastructure and that is what we are doing. That is why we are taking a very serious

approach to finding highly qualified people to advance this file. We take every appointment that we can make as a government very seriously.

• (1435)

[English]

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, with that lack of an answer, we are going to have to follow up on this with you. The government created this privatization scheme during secret meetings with corporations, never revealed this during the election, and never revealed that Canadians would be forced to pay tolls and user fees so that their buddies in the corporations can get their cut.

Now he is headhunting for this bank that has not even been authorized by Parliament. Does the Prime Minister really not understand the problem here?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I stood on a stage in Calgary in a debate with that member to talk exactly about the infrastructure bank that we were committed to building so we could leverage even more money into building good infrastructure for Canadians.

As for consultations, we have engaged extensively with mayors, with premiers, with a broad number of unions and actors in the public sphere to talk about how we could make sure that the kinds of infrastructure Canadians rely on to get from home to work, to live, to succeed, to thrive, to grow the economy actually get built, and that is what we are doing.

* * *

*[Translation]***ETHICS**

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister spends as much time explaining his rash decisions to the Canadian public and the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner as a disobedient child spends in time out thinking about what he has done. It is high time that the Prime Minister demonstrate some consistency and integrity and give the House some clear answers.

How many times has the Prime Minister met with the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner to discuss his loose ethics?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as you know, I am always pleased to work with the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner to answer any questions she may have.

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a very simple question, but mainly it is a question of trust.

What Canadians are hearing is that there are laws that apply to them but that do not apply to the Prime Minister.

I will repeat my question. How many times has the Prime Minister met with the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner?

Oral Questions

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have always said, I am very pleased to meet with the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner and work with her to answer any questions she may have on this subject or any other.

[*English*]

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a moment ago, the Prime Minister arrogantly insulted our opposition leader and said she was confused. Let me say that I think this is actually full confusion right now with the Prime Minister.

I will repeat the question in English, because the question is not if he is happy or satisfied or feeling good about meeting the Ethics Commissioner. Has the Prime Minister met with the Ethics Commissioner, and if so, how many times? It is very, very simple.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to work with the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner to answer any questions she may have. That is what Canadians expect of the Prime Minister and that is exactly what I am doing.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. The hon. member for Banff—Airdrie and others will come to order.

The hon. opposition House leader has the floor.

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what Canadians expect is that their Prime Minister would give a clear answer to a clear and a simple question. If he has something to hide, then Canadians want to know that as well. I would suggest, if he wants to send Canadians the message that he has nothing to hide, that he answer the question.

How many times has the Prime Minister met with the Ethics Commissioner?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very happy to work with and answer the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner's questions. It is extremely important that we work—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. Most members in all parties can sit through question period without reacting to what they hear, and I think we should have confidence in the ability of Canadians to judge the quality of questions and answers. I am sure members have confidence in Canadians to be able to do that, and they do not need the help of people heckling.

The right hon. Prime Minister has the floor.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, Canadians expect the Prime Minister to work with the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner any time she has questions, and that is exactly what I have been doing.

• (1440)

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister keeps saying he is happy to meet with the Ethics Commissioner and answer any questions she might have, but he is really playing a game of political survivor by outwitting, outplaying,

and outlasting the Ethics Commissioner over his vacation to billionaire island.

It has been asked four times already. I do not even know why I am trying, to be frank, but I will repeat the simple question. How many times has the Prime Minister met with the Ethics Commissioner?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am happy, as should be any member of this House, to work with the Ethics Commissioner and answer any questions that she may have. I think that is important.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): What a charade, Mr. Speaker. The Prime Minister said he would stand up every Wednesday and answer every question that is being asked of every member on this side of the House, and he fails to do it.

He has been asked five times today about the Ethics Commissioner. For the sake of my colleagues, I will ask it again. How many times, how many times, how many times, how many times, how many times, and how many times has he met with the Ethics Commissioner?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians expect clarity and they expect consistency, and when asked the same question, I will give the same answer. That is what Canadians expect.

I will work with and answer the questions that the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner may have.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, if the Prime Minister truly believes in the importance of question period, if he sincerely believes in transparency and accountability, he is going to have to find it somewhere inside himself to answer this very basic question, because it only concerns him and he knows the answer.

He is being investigated by the Ethics Commissioner. How many times has the Prime Minister communicated with the Ethics Commissioner? Answer the question.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, order. The hon. member for Huron—Bruce will come to order. Order. The right hon. Prime Minister.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when asked the same question, I will give the same answer. I am happy to work with the Ethics Commissioner on any questions she may have.

One of the things that I like about prime minister's question period is I get to take questions from any MP across the way who has a question, not just the party leaders. I think it is important for all members in this House to be able to ask direct questions of the Prime Minister.

* * *

[*Translation*]

INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, once, twice, three times, four times. It seems that the Prime Minister cannot count.

Oral Questions

The Liberal government announced the creation of a private infrastructure bank sponsored by BlackRock.

I have three questions. Why are positions on the board of directors already being advertised when the bill has not been passed? Why is there no one from the public sector on the board of directors when we have contributed \$35 billion of our money? Given that the bank is supposed to meet the needs of municipalities, why will private companies be able to access money for their own projects, based on their own needs? I want an answer.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have to point out once more that Canadians expect this government to build infrastructure that will contribute to their day-to-day lives and economic productivity, and improve their quality of life when they return home from work.

We are going to invest \$180 billion in infrastructure in the coming years, but we know that the needs are even greater. Therefore, we have to be able to work with municipalities, provinces, unions, and many investors in order to build the infrastructure we need. That is part of our vision for the future.

* * *

[*English*]

ETHICS

Mr. Alexander Nuttall (Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we know that the Prime Minister has said he will co-operate with the Ethics Commissioner, but what we want right now is co-operation with the House of Commons.

For the eighth time, how many times have you met with the Ethics Commissioner?

• (1445)

The Speaker: I would remind the hon. member for Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte to direct his questions to the Chair.

The right hon. Prime Minister.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to sit and work with the Ethics Commissioner on answering any of the questions she may have. That is the kind of thing that is important to Canadians.

What is also important to Canadians is making investments in the middle class, in growth for the economy, and in putting forward a budget that is going to put more money in the pockets of the middle class and raise taxes on the wealthiest 1%. These are the focuses of our government. The priority of our government is serving the middle class and those working hard to join it.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, all Canadians know that the Prime Minister has problems when it comes to counting. When it was time to make election promises, he talked of small \$10-billion deficits. Now the deficit is up to \$30 billion. Numbers are not the Prime Minister's strong suit.

I would like to ask him a very clear question for the ninth time. How many times did he meet with the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner? I would like a clear answer. Canadians want to know.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very happy to work with the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner to answer any questions she may have.

Our priority on this side of the House is working for the middle class and those working hard to join it. We are making historic investments in infrastructure, in the Canada pension plan, in child care, and in affordable housing. Those are the things we are working for on this side of the House, and it is too bad that the member opposite does not appear to be interested in all the positive measures we are putting in place.

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in my previous life, I was a school principal, and when I listen to the Prime Minister, it feels like listening to a child who would have us believe he is always happy to visit the principal's office but has no idea how many times he has actually been there. This should be an easy answer: one, two, or three times. I am sure it is less than five times.

This is a simple question. Was it one time, or was it zero? I get the feeling the correct answer is zero.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very happy to work with the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner to answer any questions she may have.

[*English*]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister was getting tired of pretending to answer the question, so he has decided he just will not pretend to answer it at all. I will ask it one more time.

We know that he has difficulty counting. How many times did the Prime Minister meet with the Ethics Commissioner with regard to the investigation into his trip to billionaire island?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to answer as many questions as the members opposite have, but if they ask the same question, they will keep getting the same answer. I am pleased to work with the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner to answer any questions that she might have.

* * *

SOFTWOOD LUMBER

Ms. Tracey Ramsey (Essex, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I think the problem is that there has been no answer.

It has been two weeks and the Liberals still have not woken up to the reality of the softwood lumber dispute. Hundreds of thousands of good jobs are at risk, and mills across this country could shut down. With the Liberals asleep at the switch, provinces have taken it upon themselves to appoint their own envoys, and some are coming up with their own retaliatory threats.

Instead of just handing out the 1-800 number for EI, when will the Liberals come up with a proactive plan to ensure that not a single softwood lumber job is lost?

Oral Questions

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for her passion. This is an issue that matters deeply to many Canadians. We are happy this government is working very closely with the premiers, industry, and the American administration to ensure we are standing up for Canadian jobs. We are going to protect the communities that are going to be affected by these punitive and unfair tariffs. It is why we are working so diligently with the Americans to ensure we come to an agreement on softwood lumber, so we can end the pain for our individuals and communities.

* * *

[Translation]

EMPLOYMENT

Ms. Karine Trudel (Jonquière, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is the eleventh hour for the Dolbeau and Kénogami paper mills, which may be shut down.

These plants provide more than 400 direct jobs, not to mention the indirect jobs. These are good jobs. The 18% tax on supercalendered paper is choking this business. The government must act quickly on this file.

Will the government commit to meeting with the workers from Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean and introducing a concrete plan to save these jobs?

• (1450)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have been working very hard on this file ever since we came to power more than a year and a half ago. We brought up this issue with both American administrations. We are working with the regions, mayors, municipalities, provinces, and the industry. We know that this is a priority for Canada. I am always there to stand up for the interests of Canadians and that is what we will continue to do.

* * *

CANADA REVENUE AGENCY

Mr. William Amos (Pontiac, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is severe flooding in many regions of Quebec and Ontario. This has been a major hardship for our families, and considerable efforts are being made to keep those affected safe.

I would like to recognize the valuable assistance of the Canadian Armed Forces. A state of emergency has been declared in many municipalities in the Outaouais region, including Mansfield-et-Pontefract, Pontiac, and Gracefield. The City of Gatineau is also taking emergency measures.

Can the Minister of National Revenue inform the House of the tax measures that are available to help reduce the burden on families affected by the flooding?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his question and for the work that he does in Pontiac.

First of all, I would like to offer my sincere condolences to the family of Mike Gagnon, who was swept away by flood waters in the Gaspé. Our hearts go out them.

Families and their homes are always the top priority in these types of situations. All those who are affected by the flooding and who will not be able to file their tax return or pay their taxes on time are encouraged to submit a request for taxpayer relief to the Canada Revenue Agency, which will be very open to all these requests.

On behalf of our government, I applaud the first responders and volunteers who continue to assist flood victims.

* * *

[English]

JUSTICE

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Liberals voted to defeat Wynn's law at committee thereby refusing to close a loophole that cost Constable Wynn his life.

Can the Prime Minister tell Shelly MacInnis-Wynn, the widow of Constable David Wynn, why he thinks it is okay for prosecutors to withhold the criminal history of bail applicants like the career criminal who murdered Constable David Wynn?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we take very seriously the responsibility of keeping communities safe, keeping Canadians safe, and keeping safe the front-line officers who put their lives on the line every day to keep Canadians and their communities safe. That is why we take so seriously the importance of making decisions based on evidence and proper consultations, and in ways that we can actually improve the justice system that will protect Canadians. That continues to be our focus, and I look forward to seeing what the committee has determined on this particular bill.

* * *

ETHICS

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, not only did the Liberals really miss their deficit targets by a whole lot, their revenue-neutral tax cut was off by \$2 billion. I know there are some issues in terms of calculation, so I will try a different angle. Was it zero times the Prime Minister met with the Ethics Commissioner, was it one to five, or was it six to 10?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to work with the Ethics Commissioner on any questions that she might have.

The fact is, on this side of the House, we are focused on making investments that will make a difference in the lives of Canadians. Whether it is investing in infrastructure to the tune of \$180 billion over the coming years, whether it is investing in child care spaces to help families, whether it is delivering the Canada child benefit that will help nine families out of 10 across this country, or whether it was raising taxes for the wealthiest 1% so we could lower them for the middle class, this government is focused on the priorities of Canadians, and we are delivering.

Oral Questions

Mr. David Sweet (Flamborough—Glanbrook, CPC): Mr. Speaker, “a new day”, “sunny ways”, “a new respect for Parliament”, “answering every question of every member”, “we are going to respect Parliament more”: these are all things the Prime Minister said when he was campaigning. Today, as you said, Mr. Speaker, Canadians will be able to judge the veracity of those words.

Could you please tell the House how many times you have met with the Ethics Commissioner?

The Speaker: I would remind the hon. member for Flamborough—Glanbrook, who is an experienced member, that he is to direct his questions to the Chair, of course.

The right hon. Prime Minister.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to work with the Ethics Commissioner to answer any questions she may have.

We continue to be focused on the things that matter to Canadians, such as restoring the federal government's engagement in housing. For 10 long years, the federal government withdrew its support for national housing and national housing strategies. That is why we are pleased that low-income housing, that affordable housing for Canadians, has once again become a priority for the Canadian government.

We are happy to work with mayors, the provinces, and community groups to deliver on the kinds of housing needs that so many Canadians are facing after 10 years of lower-than-necessary growth under the previous government.

• (1455)

Mr. David Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister broke the law. He accepted gifts worth thousands of dollars on billionaire island. He is under investigation by the Ethics Commissioner. His obligation is to be honest with Canadians. What is he covering up here? How many times has he communicated with the Ethics Commissioner?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to work with the Ethics Commissioner to answer any questions that she might have.

Furthermore, our priorities on this side of the House continue to be making a difference in the lives of Canadians, particularly in terms of our seniors, where not only have we strengthened the CPP for a generation and ensured that future retirees have stable retirements, we have increased the guaranteed income supplement by 10% for our most low-income, vulnerable seniors.

We continue to look at ways to invest more in affordable housing for our seniors, because we know that after 10 years of that government, there were underinvestments in housing. These are the kinds of things we need to do.

* * *

MARIJUANA

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canada is party to three international treaties that outlaw the legalization of marijuana. In order to withdraw from these treaties, Canada must provide one year's notice to the other

signatories. If the government plans to legalize marijuana by July 1, 2018, then we need to withdraw from these treaties by July 1 of this year, or risk not being able to legalize until 2019 at the earliest.

Will the Prime Minister commit to withdrawing from these treaties before the July 1 deadline?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are choosing to legalize marijuana because the current system is failing Canadians. We are not protecting our children adequately, because they have easier access to marijuana than they do to nicotine cigarettes. We are continuing to funnel billions of dollars into the pockets of criminal organizations and street gangs.

Everywhere around the world people are grappling with a failed war on drugs. People are very interested with the leadership that Canada is showing in terms of figuring out how to better protect our kids and pull away the profits from criminals and organized crime.

* * *

CORRECTIONAL SERVICE OF CANADA

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Beloeil—Chambly, NDP): Mr. Speaker, marijuana is not the only issue where the Prime Minister says one thing and does another, because despite a firm commitment to limit the use of solitary confinement in federal prisons, there is still nothing to be seen of the promised reforms.

[*Translation*]

Solitary confinement is a practice of last resort because it has serious consequences on the physical and mental health of inmates.

Can the Prime Minister tell us exactly when we will see these much-needed reforms?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we want to ensure that federal penitentiaries provide a safe and secure environment, one that is conducive to inmate rehabilitation, staff safety, and public protection.

That is why we are trying to reduce the use of administrative segregation in the federal correctional system, especially for women, indigenous peoples, and those suffering from mental illness.

We will continue to work towards implementing the recommendations of the coroner's inquest into the death of Ashley Smith. There are investments in budget 2017 that will increase the capacity to provide mental health services to all inmates in federal penitentiaries.

Oral Questions

[English]

ETHICS

Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I was going to ask about powerful new evidence that Canada's sanctions monitoring, compliance, and enforcement of criminal financial activity is dysfunctional, and the Liberals foot-dragging in accepting the foreign affairs committee's unanimous Magnitsky recommendations to get tough on corruption, but I think more relevant is the Prime Minister's dysfunctional performance in question period.

Just how many times has he met the Ethics Commissioner?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to work with the Ethics Commissioner to answer any questions she might have.

We continue as a government to focus on the priorities of Canadians, whether it is making sure we are lowering taxes for the middle class and raising them on wealthiest 1%, or whether it is delivering a Canada child benefit that gives more money to 9 out of 10 Canadian families by not sending child benefit cheques to millionaires, like was done by the previous Conservative government.

We are focused on the things that matter to Canadians. We will continue to work hard to protect and defend the middle class, and those working hard to join it.

• (1500)

Hon. Michelle Rempel (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a well-known French writer once said, "Man is not what he thinks he is, he is what he hides." Will the Prime Minister stop hiding the truth, show Canadians what he is actually made of, and tell Canadians how many times he has met with the Ethics Commissioner?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to work with the Ethics Commissioner to answer any questions she may have.

We are going to continue to work on the things that matter to Canadians. We are going to continue to invest historic amounts in infrastructure that is going to help families get to and from work in a reasonable amount of time, back in time for their kids' soccer games.

We are going to make the kinds of investments that make a difference, so that small businesses are able to get their goods to market. We are going to continue to engage constructively on the world stage to open up new markets for Canadian products, and better options for Canadian consumers.

These are the priorities of this government. We are going to continue working on those.

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FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, honorary Canadian citizenship should mean something, but Aung San Suu Kyi is refusing to allow UN investigators into Rakhine to study the ongoing ethnic cleansing. Canadians feel betrayed by this refusal.

This question needs an answer. Given the particular Canadian connection, will the Prime Minister commit to personally contacting

Aung San Suu Kyi and pushing her to step up, allow access to Rakhine, and stop the ongoing slaughter of Muslim Rohingya?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this government is extremely concerned with the human rights abuses in the news coming out of Myanmar. We know we have a tremendous amount of work to do around the world to promote values Canadians stand for so strongly. Making use of the connections we have with Canadians around the world is going to be an effective way of continuing to impress upon the world the values Canada stands for. The values of openness, respect, tolerance, and defence of human rights remain a priority for all of us.

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[Translation]

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Ramez Ayoub (Thérèse-De Blainville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on May 5, our government made an important announcement about innovation in international development. We announced the creation of Canada's development finance institute, which will be headquartered in Montreal.

Can the Prime Minister tell the House about this new institute, which will not only enable partnerships with small and medium enterprises from the private sector, but also help people in need around the world?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, before I answer my colleague from Thérèse-De Blainville, I want to thank him for being here despite the flooding in his riding. I know it has been a very tough time for him.

For Canada to continue responding effectively to growing development needs around the world, we have to innovate. That is why our government is allocating \$300 million to the development finance institute. This initiative will fund projects that are relevant to our priorities, promote green development, and improve women's socio-economic status.

* * *

[English]

ETHICS

Mrs. Kelly Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is clear the Liberals are all show and no action. Perhaps another six months with their deliverology guru will allow the Prime Minister to work on his ability to deliver answers.

How many times has the Prime Minister met with the Ethics Commissioner?

Oral Questions

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to work with the Ethics Commissioner and to answer any questions that she may have. We continue to understand how important it is to work with Canadians to deliver on their priorities, such as extra help with the cost of raising kids, which the CCB is, helping nine out of 10 Canadian families and reducing child poverty by 40%. We are putting forward concrete measures to improve the lives of Canadians. We are strengthening the Canada pension plan for generations for the future. These are the kinds of things that make a significant difference in the lives of Canadians. We are going to continue to put Canadians' priorities first.

* * *

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, media reports have revealed that money stolen from Bill Browder by a Russian crime syndicate has ended up in 30 Canadian bank accounts. We are talking about \$2 million associated with a massive tax fraud making its way into Canada, with the government apparently being unaware that this money-laundering scheme is happening. What will the government do to put an end to this flow of illicit money?

• (1505)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this government cares deeply about the protection and promotion of human rights, which are core priorities that I bring up wherever I go and whenever we engage internationally. The question of how to effectively apply sanctions for human rights abuses and foreign corruption was among the issues examined by the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development. We welcome the release of the standing committee's report and are carefully considering its recommendations, as we know that Canadians expect their government to stand up for human rights and against corruption everywhere around the world.

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INFRASTRUCTURE

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Pickering—Uxbridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians know that the infrastructure deficit in this country is significant and that governments need to be innovative in how they address this challenge. The proposed Canada infrastructure bank would be an additional tool to build new infrastructure by attracting private sector and institutional investors to support the transformational infrastructure Canadian communities need.

Can the Prime Minister update the House on the status of the creation of the infrastructure bank?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member for Pickering—Uxbridge is herself a former municipal councillor, so she understands how important it is to make investments in infrastructure that are going to make a real difference in the lives of Canadians. I am pleased that our government recently announced the launch of an open, transparent, and merit-based selection process to identify the bank's senior leadership. This process is designed to attract highly qualified individuals while taking into consideration the desire to achieve gender parity and to reflect Canada's linguistic, cultural, and regional diversity. We

encourage all Canadians to apply and look forward to receiving many qualified applications.

* * *

[*Translation*]**ETHICS**

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the moral of this question period is, "Don't worry, I'm happy." That is the Prime Minister's new motto.

Is that the answer he gave the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner? No, the Prime Minister confirmed 17 times today that he did not speak to the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner.

Why does the Prime Minister refuse to answer Canadians?

How many times did he meet with the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very happy to work with the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner to answer any questions she may have.

It is important to emphasize the various ways we are meeting the needs and addressing the concerns of Canadians, whether by investing in infrastructure, which will change things in the everyday lives of Canadians, or in health care. We have signed agreements for the health care system. For the first time, we are making massive investments in mental health and home care. We know how badly Canadians want a government that is there for them.

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[*English*]**THE ENVIRONMENT**

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, in the Liberal platform, it was promised that there would be action on the changes Stephen Harper made in the omnibus budget bills, particularly the elimination of the Navigable Waters Protection Act. In fact, it said, "We will review these changes, restore lost protections, and incorporate more modern safeguards."

Unfortunately, the transport committee came to egregiously weak conclusions, recommending, essentially, keeping in place the Harper regime. Can the Prime Minister commit to restoring protections to Canada's navigable waters?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as a government, and personally as a paddler, we are committed to promoting Canada's sustainable economic development while maintaining a safe transportation system and the protection of our lakes and rivers, so absolutely we will consider all input from the independent House of Commons committee on transport, from the public, from indigenous peoples, from provinces and territories, and from a broad range of stakeholders, including industry and marine-protection groups. This is something we feel passionately about and are glad to be moving forward on.

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PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: I draw the attention of hon. members to the presence in the gallery of the finalists for the 2016 Shaughnessy Cohen Prize for Political Writing: Kamal Al-Solaylee, Christie Blatchford, Ian McKay and Jamie Swift, James McLeod, and Noah Richler.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1510)

[English]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

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

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COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Hon. Robert Nault (Kenora, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the ninth report of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development, entitled "Order in Council Appointment of the Honourable Stéphane Dion to the Position of Special Adviser to the Minister of Foreign Affairs".

I also have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 10th report of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development in relation to its study of the order in council appointment of the Hon. John McCallum to the position of special adviser to the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

For the record, the committee has examined the qualifications and competence of both appointees and finds them to be competent to perform the duties of their positions.

ACCESS TO INFORMATION, PRIVACY AND ETHICS

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith (Beaches—East York, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the sixth report of the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics, entitled "Main Estimates 2017-18: Vote 1 under

Routine Proceedings

Office of the Commissioner of Lobbying, Vote 1 under Office of the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner, Vote 1 under Office of the Senate Ethics Officer and Votes 1 and 5 under Offices of the Information and Privacy Commissioners of Canada".

• (1515)

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. James Maloney (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the fourth report of the Standing Committee on Natural Resources in relation to the Main Estimates 2017-18.

HUMAN RESOURCES, SKILLS AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND THE STATUS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC) moved that the third report of the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities presented on Wednesday, June 15, 2016, be concurred in.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek for seconding this important motion.

It is important that we have policies in government that are effective. Employment insurance is a very important part our support system within Canada. We need to have policies that work, that are effective, that are transparent, and that are accountable when people find themselves without employment.

It is wonderful that we live in a country where there is support, but things do not always work, and the previous government made sure that there were changes that would make the EI program more effective, more transparent, more accountable, more sustainable, and would truly take care of Canadians who needed that help and support. Those changes were made and were effective.

Unfortunately, the number one focus of the new Liberal government, though not so new or sunny anymore and a government that is not transparent, is to try to destroy everything from the past. Whether it was good or bad, the Liberals want to destroy it and to do so without being accountable.

In question period today we heard questions, but no answers. The Prime Minister stood in the House and refused time and time again to answer simple questions, such as how many times he met with the Ethics Commissioner. Those questions came from all opposition parties. Opposition parties are tasked with making sure the government is held to account, but the government does not want to be held to account and will not answer questions as simple as how many times the Prime Minister met with the Ethics Commissioner about his trip to billionaire island.

It is a question that Canadians want to know the answer to, but we see the same culture across the way, an entitlement culture, a culture of out-of-control spending and growing deficits that are going to be passed on to Canadians, particularly unemployed Canadians. Therefore, EI is very important.

Routine Proceedings

That is the government that wants to tinker and make changes. It does a lot of consulting and discussing, and one of the most recent studies was on EI, not with the goal of making things better but with the goal of removing everything the previous government did that was effective. It is really the wrong motive, a motive of a government that is stubborn and unaccountable.

Then a report was done, and a lot of witnesses appeared at committee on that report. It was hoped that it would be a good report. Unfortunately, the motive and direction that came from the PMO was a dictatorial approach for a predetermined outcome. Maybe the question is how many times the PMO directed members of the committee on that report. I am sure we will not get an answer to that either, but opposition members on the committee, because of the report missing the mark and focusing on undoing accountability, were forced to do the right thing, which was to create a dissenting report.

I neglected to say that I will be sharing my time with the amazing member of Parliament for Perth—Wellington.

A dissenting report was presented, and I would like to share with the House the context of that report.

To summarize, the previous Parliament had created changes that brought in transparency, accountability, and an effective support system for those who need it through employment insurance. I will share some of the highlights of that dissenting report.

● (1520)

The dissenting report says that:

We participated in the study on the EI program with open minds. During the consideration of the report, we supported the recommendations that promoted the evaluation of EI program measures, that protected the most vulnerable, and that encouraged greater transparency and efficiency.

However, we rejected recommendations that did away with measures implemented by the previous government as part of its major EI reform in 2013. In our opinion, these measures should be kept, as they have had a positive impact on employment as well as on how citizens treat EI benefits. The primary objective of this reform was to make it easier for unemployed individuals to return to work by helping them find a job.

Is that not a wonderful idea? It is a concept that Canadians support: jobs, jobs, jobs, protecting the economy, the environment, providing a healthy future for Canadians, jobs, and helping them find jobs.

The report goes on to state:

The reform was designed to increase accountability for unemployed workers receiving benefits and we believe it was a step in the right direction. In fact, the Canadian Taxpayers Federation told the Committee that “We believe that a system that is too generous can create disincentives for people to seek or accept work when they otherwise might do so”, and we support their position.

Furthermore, we believe that the report adopted by the Committee was not objective in terms of the differing views about EI reform. Of the 80 quotes from witnesses included in the report, 42 were very critical of the measures implemented by the previous Conservative government, and only 15 were in favour of these measures. Of the 27 witnesses cited, a mere 7 witnesses made positive comments about the measures implemented by the former government. Some witnesses who expressed opinions that differed from the majority of the witnesses heard were not cited in the report at all, despite the relevance of their arguments. For example, the Canadian Taxpayers Federation appeared before the Committee in person, and yet it was not quoted in the report at all, while six briefs were cited whose authors did not appear before the Committee.

That is a prime example.

I serve on the HUMA committee, and I have seen a major change in this Parliament over previous Parliaments. The Prime Minister's Office gives direction and tinkers with committees, and committees are not able to do their work. Their work is being directed by the Prime Minister's Office. They end up with a report that is predetermined by what the Prime Minister wants that report to say. When the Canadian Taxpayers Federation provided good input, it was removed from this report. Why? It was because it did not create a report that the Prime Minister wanted.

When all of the different standing committees are being directed by the Prime Minister's Office, this is what we will have. In the same way, we see that the Prime Minister will not himself answer simple questions, such as how many times he has met with the Ethics Commissioner. We see the same example happening in committees. It is sad, and it requires dissenting reports to actually get to the truth.

The dissenting report went on to say:

One of the major failings of the report, in our opinion, is that it does not reflect the fact that “witnesses acknowledge that in practice, few individuals lost their EI benefits due to these new definitions.”

The following citations show that this statement is true:

According to Hans Marotte, representative of the Inter-Provincial EI Working Group, “it is true that I didn't handle a great many cases stemming from the Conservative reform.”

There are a number of quotes. The core point I want to make is that if we have a government that will not permit the truth, that tinkers and manipulates so that we do not have the truth, then how can Canadians trust it? I do not think Canadians do trust this government anymore.

● (1525)

Mr. Ken McDonald (Avalon, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member started off by saying our government is removing things that were effective. I would like to comment on a couple of things we removed.

We removed the poor treatment of veterans. We removed the refusal of the government to meet with provincial and territorial leaders. We removed the total animosity of the previous government toward Atlantic Canadians. We removed the retirement age from 67 back to 65. We stopped giving child care benefit cheques to millionaires.

Would the member please comment on how these things are bad for the country and for communities?

Mr. Mark Warawa: Madam Speaker, sunny days are over. We have a member who is quite bitter, it appears to me, and is making comments that really are not based on fact.

The previous government was the government that took our Canadian veterans and our brave men and women from the decade of darkness into a decade of prosperity. It was an age of respect. We have ended up now with a government that has even taken away benefits from our veterans.

I am quite shocked at the comments from the member. I encourage him to look up the facts instead of alternate facts.

Routine Proceedings

[*Translation*]

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is always fascinating to hear the Conservatives and the Liberals talk about employment insurance when we know that, since 1996, they have been taking turns slashing the program.

Let us not forget that since 1990, the federal government has not put a single penny into the employment insurance fund, has made cuts to the program, and used the fund's surplus. It is all well and good to adopt the old Dumas report, but if we are going to talk about EI, then I would say to my colleague that we should be talking about how to improve it so that more than 40% of the workers that pay into the system every week are eligible for benefits, benefits worth more than 55% of their salary. It is not true that people can live on 55% of their salary.

[*English*]

Mr. Mark Warawa: Madam Speaker, I am honoured to work with the member at the HUMA committee. I thank her for her question and also for her commitment to help Canadians.

She well knows what I have said regarding the Liberal government, that it manipulates the truth and comes up with alternate facts. It is shameful. It is sad to see Canadians having to lose trust because it is a government that Canadians cannot trust.

She experiences at committee, as do I, the manipulation by the Prime Minister's Office in the committee and in the structure of the report.

With regard to EI benefits, we are studying poverty reduction. It is important to give Canadians an opportunity to get back to work, because without work, they stay impoverished. We are very proud of the reputation we have and our history of helping Canadians get back to work. We created an environment where we were living within our means. We were balancing our budget. We had a bright future for Canadians. Now out-of-control spending by the Liberal government is destroying the future for Canada. We need to get back to a Conservative government.

• (1530)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Madam Speaker, if I was naive, I might think we were witnessing a miracle. The Conservatives and Liberals are trading barbs on employment insurance when they are the ones who ran the program into the ground.

The concept of insurance is quite simple: I pay premiums so that I can receive benefits when I need them. As we speak, six out of 10 people are not eligible because the required number of insurable hours is too high.

When will we see a single 360-hour eligibility threshold for all workers?

[*English*]

Mr. Mark Warawa: Madam Speaker, I am sure the member is not naive, and he would know it was the Conservative Party that amended the compassionate care program so that Canadians who truly needed help received it. It was a stubborn former Liberal

government that refused to make those changes so that Canadians in need would receive compassionate care. I am very proud of that.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Resuming debate, the hon. member for Perth—Wellington.

Mr. Chris Warkentin (Grande Prairie—Mackenzie, CPC): Madam Speaker, on a point of order, I think you called the member for Perth—Wellington to speak, but I believe that the member for Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock intended to be on that list.

Therefore, I move:

That the member for Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock be now heard.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): In my opinion the yeas have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Call in the members.

• (1610)

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

(*Division No. 269*)

YEAS

Members

Albas	Allison
Ambrose	Anderson
Aubin	Barlow
Barsalou-Duval	Beaulieu
Berthold	Blaney (North Island—Powell River)
Boudrias	Brassard
Cannings	Carrie
Christopherson	Clarke
Cooper	Deltell
Diotte	Dreeschen
Duvall	Eglinski
Falk	Finley
Fortin	Gallant
Garrison	Gladu
Godin	Harder
Hughes	Johns
Jolibois	Kent
Kwan	Lake
Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Marcl
Masse (Windsor West)	McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)
Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound)	Nicholson
Paul-Hus	Pauzé
Plamondon	Poillievre
Ramsey	Ritz
Saganash	Saroya
Schmale	Shields

Routine Proceedings

Shipley
Stanton
Stetski
Sweet
Van Kesteren
Viersen
Warawa
Watts
Wong
Zimmer— 71

Sorenson
Ste-Marie
Stubbs
Tilson
Van Loan
Wagantall
Warkentin
Webber
Yurdiga

McDonald
McKay
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
Mendès
Mihychuk
Soeurs)
Monsef
Murray
Nater
Ng
O'Connell
Oliver
Ouellette
Peschisolido
Petipas Taylor
Picard
Quach
Rankin
Rayes
Rempel
Rioux
Rodriguez
Rudd
Rusnak
Saini
Samson
Sansoucy
Scarpaleggia
Serré
Shanahan
Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)
Sikand
Sohi
Sorbara
Strahl
Tan
Thériault
Trost
Trudel
Vandenbeld
Vecchio
Waugh
Wrzesnewskyj
Zahid— 221

McGuinty
McKenna
McLeod (Northwest Territories)
Mendicino
Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-
Morrissey
Nassif
Nault
Nuttall
Oliphant
O'Regan
Paradis
Peterson
Philpott
Poissant
Qualtrough
Ratansi
Reid
Richards
Robillard
Romanado
Ruimy
Sahota
Sajjan
Sangha
Sarai
Schulte
Sgro
Sheehan
Sidhu (Brampton South)
Simms
Sopuck
Spengemann
Tabbara
Tassi
Tootoo
Trudeau
Vandal
Vaughan
Virani
Whalen
Young

NAYS

Members

Aboultatif
Aldag
Alleslev
Anandasangaree
Arseneault
Ayoub
Bagnell
Baylis
Bennett
Bergen
Bibeau
Blaikie
Block
Bossio
Boulerice
Bratina
Brison
Brown
Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)
Chagger
Chan
Choquette
Cormier
Dabrusin
DeCoursey
Dhillon
Drouin
Dubourg
Duguid
Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)
Dzerowicz
Ehsassi
Ellis
Eyking
Fergus
Finnigan
Fonseca
Fragiskatos
Fraser (Central Nova)
Fuhr
Généreux
Goldsmith-Jones
Gould
Graham
Hajdu
Hehr
Housefather
Iacono
Jones
Jowhari
Kelly
Khera
Kmiec
Lambropoulos
Lamoureux
Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)
LeBlanc
Leitch
Levitt
Lighbound
Lockhart
Longfield
MacAulay (Cardigan)
MacKenzie
Maguire
Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)
May (Cambridge)
May (Saarich—Gulf Islands)
McColeman

Albrecht
Alghabra
Amos
Arnold
Arya
Badawey
Bains
Beech
Benzen
Bezan
Bittle
Blair
Boissonnault
Boucher
Boutin-Sweet
Breton
Brosseau
Caesar-Chavannes
Casey (Charlottetown)
Champagne
Chen
Clement
Cuzner
Damoff
Dhaliwal
Di Iorio
Dubé
Duclos
Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Dusseault
Easter
El-Khoury
Erskine-Smith
Eyolfson
Fillmore
Fisher
Fortier
Fraser (West Nova)
Fry
Garneau
Gerretsen
Goodale
Gourde
Grewal
Hardie
Hoback
Hutchings
Jeneroux
Jordan
Kang
Khalid
Kitchen
Kusie
Lametti
Lapointe
Laverdière
Lefebvre
Leslie
Liepert
Lobb
Long
Ludwig
MacGregor
MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Maloney
McCauley (Edmonton West)
McCrimmon

PAIRED

Members

Foote

Moore— 2

The Speaker: I declare the motion defeated.

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 Nanaimo—Ladysmith, Status of Women; the hon. member for Essex, International Trade; and the hon. member for Calgary Shepard, Multiculturalism.

Mr. John Nater (Perth—Wellington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege and an honour to speak on this important concurrence motion in the House.

Let me begin by thanking my friend and colleague, the member for Langley—Aldergrove for raising this concurrence motion. He is a strong member of the House, and he is our critic for seniors as well. That is one area where we know that the Liberal government is failing Canadians, and that is in its respect for seniors. In fact, the Prime Minister has not even named a minister responsible for seniors. Let that sink in for just a minute. The government and the Prime Minister have failed seniors, the fastest growing segment of our population. They have not seen fit to appoint a minister responsible for seniors.

Routine Proceedings

On this side of the House, I am proud to have colleagues like the member for Langley—Aldergrove and the former minister responsible for seniors, the member for Richmond Centre, who has done so much in promoting seniors, and their contributions to Canadian society.

Before I get into the heart of my comments, I want to thank my friend and colleague, the member for Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, for his eagerness as well to speak to this concurrence motion. I know he has a lot to say on this important report, and I am sure as the debate goes on the House will see fit to provide him with that opportunity to speak on this important issue.

The matter before the House is the concurrence motion on the committee's report. This is the fifth report tabled by the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and Status of Persons with Disabilities titled "Exploring the Impact of Recent Changes to Employment Insurance and Ways to Improve Access to the Program".

Our former Conservative government undertook changes to the employment insurance program in 2013. I was not a member of the House at that time, but I experienced being an assistant in a member of Parliament's office, and in the last year and a half since I was elected, working with the employment insurance program through my office and assisting constituents who, through no fault of their own, ran into challenges with the employment insurance program.

I personally have paid into the employment insurance program for as long as I have had paid employment. I have never collected from the program, and most Canadians would prefer not to ever have to collect from the program. Nonetheless, working Canadians pay into the program. In our current position as parliamentarians we are exempt from the employment insurance program which is one of those interesting quirks of the employment insurance system.

I often come across Canadians through my work as a parliamentarian and my past work as an assistant of people running into challenges with the employment insurance program. It is incumbent upon us as parliamentarians to ensure that we serve and help them in every way we can. That is what we undertook in 2013 with those changes. We tried to make it more responsive, more available for Canadians to find a job and get off employment insurance. The goal of anyone who receives regular benefits is to return to work and find meaningful employment.

I should note as well that regular benefits are not the only form of employment insurance. Maternity and parental benefits, which my wife has made use of, provides flexibility for families in making decisions on the birth of a child. There are compassionate care benefits which is one of the most important and lasting benefits that our former government brought into the program during our time in government. It allows someone caring for a loved one to have the ability to take time off work and receive employment insurance benefits for a period of time.

●(1615)

At the end of the day, we need to make sure that when we are dealing with employment insurance, it is responsive, equitable, and fair, and that it allows Canadians to find employment, perhaps even to find the skills they need to find new employment. In my riding of

Perth—Wellington, I am proud to have a beautiful riding, and a beautiful area with many large, small, and medium-sized employers. One of the challenges we find in our riding is actually a skills mismatch. We have a high availability of jobs. We have a high number of jobs available, but not necessarily the skills to link with those jobs, both in terms of small businesses, but also larger employers as well. Therefore, one of the things we need to be cognizant of as a Parliament is ensuring that we have the skills training available to help Canadians meet the challenges of 21st century jobs.

One area in particular that I find in my riding where that skills mismatch is occurring is welding. We have a large number of welding positions that have gone unfilled because people do not have the training for that particular job. These are relatively high paying jobs, but people simply do not have the training to fill those positions. The way in which we can fill some of these skills shortages is one area that, going forward, we ought to look at as a Parliament. I do not think it is a surprise to anyone in this House that there could be as many as one million unfilled skilled labour jobs going forward in this country. That is a real detriment to our economy, and to the Canadian economy as a whole if we are not able to fill jobs that need to be filled.

On the specific report that has been tabled, and that we are debating concurrence on, there are some concerns. That is why the members of our party, the official opposition, saw fit to table a dissenting report. I know that our colleagues, the New Democrats, tabled a supplementary report as well, because there are opportunities that they felt as well that ought to be explored. Among the many concerns that our official opposition members had with the report were some of the things that were left out, some of the things that just simply were not there.

The most important part we have to remember is why we introduced the 2013 reforms. We introduced them to encourage, and make it easier for unemployed individuals to return to work, to help them, and provide them with the tools to find a job. Anyone who is receiving benefits through employment insurance truly wants to be able to find a suitable job prospect. In fact, it was mentioned in the committee by the Canadian Taxpayers Federation. It said, "We believe that a system that is too generous can create disincentives for people to seek or accept work when they otherwise might do so." We support its position. Certainly, that is something we as Conservatives want to encourage. We want to see a way in which we can encourage people to get back to work and find a job.

One of the other concerns we had with this report was that there were few people who actually lost benefits based on changes in the new definitions in 2013 that were brought in. I would like to read one quote. Hans Marotte, a representative for the Inter-Provincial EI Working Group said, "It is true that I didn't handle a great many cases stemming from the Conservative reform." There was not much of a change. It is important to highlight the fact it was a very small number of people who were affected by this change. In fact, I would dare say more people were helped by these changes in the benefits and the pilot projects that were introduced at that time when this was changed. This is an absolutely important thing that we need to recognize.

Finally, I move:

Routine Proceedings

That the House do now adjourn.

• (1620)

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): 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 Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): In my opinion the nays have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Call in the members.

• (1700)

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

(*Division No. 270*)

YEAS

Members

Aboultatif	Albas
Albrecht	Allison
Anderson	Arnold
Barlow	Bergen
Berthold	Bezan
Block	Boucher
Brassard	Brown
Carrie	Clarke
Clement	Cooper
Deltell	Diotte
Dreeshen	Eglinski
Falk	Finley
Gallant	Généreux
Genuis	Gladu
Godin	Gourde
Harder	Hoback
Jeneroux	Kelly
Kent	Kmiec
Kusie	Lake
Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Leitch
Liepert	Lobb
MacKenzie	Maguire
McCauley (Edmonton West)	McColeman
McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)	Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound)
Motz	Nater
Nicholson	Paul-Hus
Pollievre	Rayes
Reid	Richards
Ritz	Saroya
Schmale	Shields
Shipley	Sopuck
Stanton	Strahl
Stubbs	Sweet
Tilson	Trost
Van Kesteren	Van Loan
Vecchio	Viersen

Wagantall
Warkentin
Webber
Yurdiga

Warawa
Waugh
Wong
Zimmer— 80

NAYS

Members

Aldag	Alghabra
Alleslev	Amos
Anandasangaree	Arseneault
Arya	Aubin
Ayoub	Badawey
Bagnell	Bains
Barsalou-Duval	Baylis
Beaulieu	Beech
Bennett	Benson
Bibeau	Bittle
Blaikie	Blaney (North Island—Powell River)
Boissonnault	Bossio
Boudrias	Boulterice
Boutin-Sweet	Bratina
Breton	Brison
Brosseau	Caesar-Chavannes
Cannings	Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)
Casey (Charlottetown)	Chagger
Champagne	Chan
Chen	Choquette
Christopherson	Cormier
Cuzner	Dabrusin
Damoff	DeCoursey
Dhaliwal	Dhillon
Di Iorio	Drouin
Dubé	Dubourg
Duclos	Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)	Dusseault
Duvall	Dzerowicz
Easter	Ehsassi
El-Khoury	Ellis
Erskine-Smith	Eyking
Eyolfson	Fergus
Fillmore	Finnigan
Fisher	Fonseca
Fortier	Fortin
Fragiskatos	Fraser (West Nova)
Fraser (Central Nova)	Fuhr
Garneau	Garrison
Gerretsen	Gill
Goldsmith-Jones	Goodale
Gould	Graham
Grewal	Hajdu
Hardie	Hehr
Holland	Housefather
Hughes	Hutchings
Iacono	Johns
Jolibois	Jones
Jordan	Jowhari
Kang	Khalid
Khera	Kwan
Lambropoulos	Lametti
Lamoureux	Lapointe
Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)	Laverdière
LeBlanc	Lefebvre
Leslie	Levitt
Lightbound	Lockhart
Long	Longfield
Ludwig	MacAulay (Cardigan)
MacGregor	MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Maloney	Marcil
Masse (Windsor West)	Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)
May (Cambridge)	McCrimmon
McDonald	McGuinity
McKay	McKenna
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)	McLeod (Northwest Territories)
Mendès	Mendicino
Mihychuk	Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Érables)
Soeurs	Morrissey
Monsef	Nassif
Murray	Ng
Nault	Oliphant
O'Connell	O'Regan
Oliver	Paradis
Ouellette	

Pauzé	Peschisolido
Peterson	Petitpas Taylor
Philpott	Picard
Plamondon	Poissant
Quach	Qualtrough
Ramsey	Rankin
Ratansi	Rioux
Robillard	Rodríguez
Romanado	Rudd
Ruimy	Rusnak
Saganash	Sahota
Saini	Sajjan
Samson	Sangha
Sansoucy	Sarai
Schulte	Serré
Sgro	Shanahan
Sheehan	Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)
Sidhu (Brampton South)	Sikand
Simms	Sohi
Sorbara	Spengemann
Ste-Marie	Stetski
Tabbara	Tan
Tassi	Thériault
Tootoo	Trudeau
Trudel	Vandal
Vandenbeld	Vaughan
Virani	Whalen
Wilkinson	Wrzesnewskyj
Young	Zahid— 206

PAIRED

Members

Foote

Moore— 2

The Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

[English]

Hon. Kevin Sorenson: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. My committee business prevented me from getting here on time. It is not a question of privilege, it is just that I was not able to vote because the committee is preparing for the Auditor General's report next week. If I had been here, though, I would have voted to adjourn, because even today, we have noticed we have a Prime Minister—

The Speaker: The hon. member is getting into debate, as he knows.

I have notice of a question of privilege.

* * *

PRIVILEGE

PROPOSED CANADA INFRASTRUCTURE BANK

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am rising today to seek your ruling on what I believe to be a contempt of this House that constitutes a prima facie question of privilege. Should you rule in my favour, I would be prepared to move the usual appropriate motion. This relates to Bill C-44, the government's omnibus budget implementation act, that is currently making its way through the legislative process of this House and which will be followed by the often lengthy legislative process in the other place.

For Canadians watching at home, last night the House passed Bill C-44 at second reading, which is the second stage of a five-stage process that must be completed even before the bill heads to the Senate for study. The bill still needs to be studied at a House committee, reported back to this House, concurred in at report stage, and then, of course, adopted at third reading.

Privilege

The summary of Bill C-44 is very informative. I will not read the whole thing, because even the summary of this massive omnibus bill is multiple pages in length, but the portion of the bill that I would like to focus on today is contained in part 4, "Various Measures". The summary states:

Division 18 of Part 4 enacts the Canada Infrastructure Bank Act, which establishes the Canada Infrastructure Bank as a Crown corporation. The Bank's purpose is to invest in, and seek to attract private sector and institutional investment to, revenue-generating infrastructure projects. The Act also provides for, among other things, the powers and functions of the Bank, its governance framework and its financial management and control, allows for the appointment of a designated Minister, and provides that the Minister of Finance may pay to the Bank up to \$35 billion and approve loan guarantees. Finally, this Division makes consequential amendments to the Access to Information Act, the Financial Administration Act and the Payments in Lieu of Taxes Act.

The idea that Canada's public infrastructure should be used as a tool to financially enrich private investors rather than as a way to enrich the lives of middle-class Canadians and those struggling to join it is bad enough, but the government has now gone beyond making bad policy decisions. It is actually discounting the need of this House to pass legislation before it rolls out appointments for this institution.

I would like to read from a Canadian Press news story dated May 8, 2017, with respect to the new infrastructure agency. After noting that it has been decided to locate this agency in Toronto, it states:

The Liberals are also starting a search to find a chair for the agency's board of directors, the directors themselves and the chief executive officer. Anyone is able to apply for one of the appointments, but there are few people internationally with the expertise and job experience for the positions.

I reviewed the government's appointment website, and it advertises these appointments with a closing date of May 23 of this year. The government expects the agency to be up and running by the end of the year.

The enabling legislation has not been passed in this House—

Mr. Brian Masse: Nor the Senate.

Mr. Murray Ranking:—nor the Senate, and it certainly has not come into force.

Speaker Milliken made a ruling on a similar case raised by the opposition under the Liberal minority government of 2005. I will highlight some of the similarities and differences now as regards his ruling and the present situation.

In 2005, the House defeated a pair of bills that would enshrine the separation of one department into two. The opposition defeated those bills, and yet the Liberals plowed ahead with the change, citing their legal ability to do so under an order in council enacted under the Public Service Rearrangement and Transfer of Duties Act.

In his ruling on this matter, Speaker Milliken stated:

Privilege

In the opinion of the Chair, the authority to begin the process of separating the departments rests on the series of orders in council adopted December 12, 2003 pursuant to existing statutory authorities granted to the government by Parliament. That authority is set out in the law and it is not for me to judge whether it is sufficient in this case.

In today's example, no order in council exists for the infrastructure bank of Canada to be established, at least according to a thorough search conducted of the government's order in council database.

In his ruling, Mr. Speaker Milliken also cited the authoritative text *Organizing to Govern*, Volume 1, by the Hon. Gordon Osbaldeston, former clerk of the Privy Council.

● (1705)

He explains, as follows, on page 24:

For a variety of reasons—ministerial preference, better organization fit, or other reasons...governments may decide to rearrange their organizations. The chief legislative tool for accomplishing this type of organizational change is the Public Service Rearrangement and Transfer of Duties Act. Orders in council pursuant to this act are used principally for two purposes...

On page 25, he goes on to say:

Strictly speaking, these tools are meant only to reorganize existing functions of government for which Parliament has voted funds—any new activities must be authorized by Parliament.

That is what Speaker Milliken cited. These tools are meant only to reorganize existing functions of government for which Parliament has voted funds. All new activities must be authorized by Parliament. Therefore, a reorganization, like the proposed creation of the Canada infrastructure bank, must follow a vote in Parliament to appropriate the funds necessary, and its activities are authorized by Parliament only after Parliament has voted on a bill to authorize these new activities.

It seems clear to me that the bill that creates the bank and its governance structure, which has passed only two of five stages in this House and has not even been studied in the other place, is the authorization by Parliament that is necessary before action can be taken to implement it. The fact that these actions are being taken before the bill receives royal assent is a contempt of the House and the work we do in reviewing, amending, and voting.

Mr. Speaker, you will know very well that *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, on page 84, states:

Contempts may vary greatly in their gravity; matters ranging from minor breaches of decorum to grave attacks against the authority of Parliament may be considered as contempts.

I submit to you, Mr. Speaker, that taking for granted that the House and Senate will merely rubber stamp a 300-page-plus omnibus bill that creates this bank would land on the much more severe end of that spectrum, constituting a “grave attack” against the authority of Parliament. More to the point, it may very well be illegal.

As you are also aware, Mr. Speaker, contempt of this sort remains a question of privilege, and for the benefit of parliamentary procedure keepers at home or in the gallery, I will cite the same procedural tome, at page 82, where it states:

Thus, the House also claims the right to punish, as a contempt, any action which, though not a breach of a specific privilege, tends to obstruct or impede the House in the performance of its functions; obstructs or impedes any Member or officer of the

House in the discharge of their duties; or is an offence against the authority or dignity of the House....

In my view, there is no question that the government's action with regard to the Canada infrastructure bank constitutes exactly that kind of offence against this House's authority.

I am aware of the fact that the Interpretation Act authorizes certain things to be done and regulations made pursuant to an act that is not yet in force. According to the Library of Parliament, in publication PRB0903, of May 15, 2009, normally the relevant provision of the Interpretation Act is limited to authorizing matters effective on an act's commencement. It states:

...these preliminary powers can be exercised only pursuant to an Act, and they cannot be exercised in relation to powers that could be granted by a bill that is still before Parliament.

The appointment of the first and current Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner is an example cited, which I will not take the time with today, but is an illustration of the difference.

I will not take up any more time of the House except to say, in conclusion, that the kind of arrogance and presumption the government is demonstrating with its behaviour here should be a concern to all members of the House, and indeed, all Canadians. Mr. Speaker, I look forward to your review of the matter and ruling on this case.

● (1710)

Mr. John Nater (Perth—Wellington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise on the same question of privilege raised by our colleague from Victoria, the NDP House leader. As one of those parliamentary keepers, I suppose I would like to add a few points on this important question of privilege.

On October 10, 1989, Mr. Speaker Fraser ruled on a similar matter regarding misrepresentation of Parliament's role in government communication respecting the proposed goods and services tax. The government was advertising details of the tax as if Parliament had already adopted it. While the Speaker did not rule the matter to be a *prima facie* question of privilege at the time, he did say:

However, I want the House to understand very clearly that if your Speaker ever has to consider a situation like this again, the Chair will not be as generous.... we are a parliamentary democracy, not a so-called executive democracy, nor a so-called administrative democracy.

In the Ontario legislature, Mr. Speaker Stockwell dealt with a question of privilege concerning a pamphlet issued by the minister of municipal affairs and housing regarding the government's program for reforming municipal government in metropolitan Toronto. On January 22, 1997, Mr. Speaker Stockwell ruled the matter to be a *prima facie* question of privilege, since the pamphlet gave the impression that passage of required legislation was not necessary.

On November 6, 1997, on a similar matter, the Speaker ruled:

...the Chair acknowledges that this is a matter of potential importance since it touches the role of members as legislators, a role which should not be trivialized. It is from this perspective that the actions of the Department...are of some concern....

This dismissive view of the legislative process, repeated often enough, makes a mockery of our parliamentary conventions and practices....

I trust that today's decision at this early stage of the 36th Parliament will not be forgotten by the minister and his officials and that the departments and agencies will be guided by it.

Routine Proceedings

The Prime Minister and the government's dismissive view of this Parliament should not and ought not be tolerated. If he is going to try to change the rules to suit himself, to attempt to circumvent the entire legislative process and give the impression that this Parliament has no role to play in the plans of the government to establish an infrastructure bank, that is wrong.

If he wants to establish his own version of Prime Minister's question period every Wednesday but then does not actually answer the questions, that is wrong.

He promises that he will not use omnibus bills, yet Bill C-44 is brought in and rammed in.

Mr. Speaker, reflecting on the citations I have raised and those raised by my colleague from Victoria, you ought to find that a prima facie question of privilege does exist in this matter.

• (1715)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the temptation is to provide some thoughts at this point. However, I think it is best if I reserve and get back to you with a more articulated position so that members opposite will appreciate the fact that we have a Prime Minister, and a government, that are true parliamentarians and do respect the rules.

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for Victoria for raising this question and the hon. member for Perth—Wellington for his comments, and I will look forward to the comments of the hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader or someone else from the government side. I will take the matter under advisement and return to the House in due course.

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

HUMAN RESOURCES, SKILLS AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND THE STATUS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it has been an interesting afternoon, to say the very least—

The Speaker: Order. The hon. member for Perth—Wellington is rising on a point of order.

Mr. John Nater: Mr. Speaker, I believe I should still have five minutes of questions and comments stemming from my speech prior to the interruption by the bells.

The Speaker: I understand that when a member moves the sort of motion the member did move, that wipes out the rest of that period, so we are going on.

The hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, it has been an interesting afternoon. I know that the government House leader was hoping, on the government's behalf, to have a healthy discussion and debate about Bill C-4. It was a piece of legislation that rectified a number of wrongs—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I am sorry to interrupt the hon. parliamentary secretary.

On a point of order, the hon. member for Calgary Shepard.

Mr. Tom Kmiec: Madam Speaker, as a new member of the House, I would like to understand the ruling of the Speaker and which standing order of the House it applies to. The member for Perth—Wellington was about to have questions and comments. I understand the ruling and I accept it, but I would like to know which standing order of the House is governed by this rule.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): In response to the question from the member for Calgary Shepard, it is a House procedure. The ruling of the Speaker stands.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, as I was saying, there was a desire by the government to talk about something that is in fact really important to Canadians regarding labour relations. It is actually a piece of legislation that had already passed the House and gone to the Senate and had come back to the House. We were hoping to debate that piece of legislation.

For a number of reasons, the Conservatives, in particular, felt that there were other things they wanted to talk about. I am going to have to respect that fact. However, the issue they chose to raise is interesting. It is the issue of employment insurance.

There is no party that has been a stronger advocate for employment insurance and benefits than the Liberal Party of Canada over the last number of decades. In fact, the very creation of this national program originated under a Liberal administration. Over the years, we have seen many good things that have taken place under Liberal administrations, ensuring that those benefits, in different ways, have realized benefits for more and more Canadians.

I can recall the attitude of the former Conservative government on EI. They were negative attitudes toward my brothers and sisters out in Atlantic Canada. It is one of the reasons Atlantic Canada rejects the Conservatives. It is because the Conservatives have predetermined ideas about employment benefits. That is why I was a little surprised that this was the issue the Conservatives chose to talk about.

All we need to look at is the last budget. There were a number of things in that budget. As members know, I am very reluctant to read things into speeches, but I want to share some of the words provided to me with regard to employment insurance in this budget.

Budget 2017 contains several provisions aimed at improving the quality of life for Canadian families. I am thinking in particular of improvements to the employment insurance system, and that is the topic I would like to discuss this afternoon.

First, we must understand one thing. Canadians may, at some point in their lives, need to put their personal responsibilities before their professional ones. At such a juncture, Canada's special employment insurance benefits can be of help to them. Each year these benefits help thousands of eligible Canadians to care for a new baby or to care for a family member who is critically ill.

Private Members' Business

On the caregiver benefits, let us start by looking at the changes to the caregiver program. Budget 2017 proposed to create a new employment insurance benefit that would last up to 15 weeks. This new benefit would allow Canadians to care for an adult family member who was critically ill or severely injured. Benefits would be paid to people caring for an adult family member who was critically ill but was not at the end of life. This is a first for employment insurance.

I must add that this new benefit would supplement the compassionate care benefit for caring for critically ill family members at risk of death. Parents of critically ill children would continue to have access to up to 35 weeks of benefits. They would also now be able to share these benefits with more family members.

Now let us turn to parental benefits. Starting a family can be a challenge, especially for working parents. With budget 2017, we propose to help them meet those challenges. In short, this budget would offer flexibility to working parents. They would be able to choose the option that best meets their needs, depending on their work and family circumstances.

Under the proposed amendments, parents would therefore have two options. The first option would be to receive employment insurance parental benefits over an extended period at a lower benefit rate of 33% of their average weekly earnings. Benefits could be received for up to 18 months, counting both parental and maternity benefits.

The second option would be to receive benefits at the current rate of 55% over a period of up to 12 months.

• (1720)

These amendments are expected to cost \$152 million over five years, starting in 2017-18, and \$27.5 million per year after that. Parents may, of course, continue to share the benefits between them.

Furthermore, we propose to allow a pregnant woman, if she so chooses, to claim employment insurance maternity benefits up to 12 weeks before her due date, which is more flexible than the current standard of eight weeks. This additional flexibility is expected to cost \$43.1 million over five years, starting in 2017-18, and \$9.2 million per year after that.

That is why it is always a pleasure to stand in my place, especially on behalf of my constituents. Many of my colleagues would love to be able to share some of the thoughts that we have and some of the progressive actions we are taking as a government, recognizing what Canadians want the government to do.

Canadians understand the need for compassion. They understand that this is a government that cares about what is happening at the grassroots level. We have a Prime Minister who has challenged all members of the House to represent their constituents here in Ottawa, and my colleagues have taken that challenge to heart.

We constantly hear about the need to improve the employment insurance program. The Minister of Finance and the parliamentary secretary held pre-budget meetings and consultations in every region of this country, and that was a direct result of all the networking and communication, including online. We now have a budget that better

reflects what Canadians want, and we on this side of the House see the many benefits to voting in favour of this budget.

We had a great debate yesterday on Bill C-44, which is a budget implementation bill. When we have a motion for concurrence on a report, as was moved earlier today, I would suggest that if members truly believe in employment insurance and want to see progressive action being taken to support Canadians, this is a budget they should be voting for, because it includes the kinds of initiatives that I have listed over the last few minutes.

I listened to the member across the way express concerns about what took place in committee, and I take exception to some of the comments that he made. Let me make reference to a couple of specific ones.

One comment was in regard to a perception that the Conservatives in particular are trying to get across, which is that this government is not sensitive with respect to what is taking place in our standing committees. Having been in opposition when Stephen Harper was prime minister, I witnessed first-hand a total disregard and lack of respect for our standing committees, with a parliamentary secretary sitting at the head of the table dictating, having that Harper bubble around, and nothing being passed unless it was a government initiative. I would suggest that the proof is in the pudding when we see legislation that goes to committee and opposition members—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

• (1725)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. The heckling by members of the official opposition is very loud right now. The parliamentary secretary has the floor. If the members wish to add to the conversation, then I would suggest they get up when it is time for questions and comments.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The point I was making is that today our standing committees are more enabled if they choose to actually get engaged and do some positive work. We are starting to see that in many of our standing committees as MPs build relationships and look for ways in which they can contribute in a positive manner. We have seen a change in attitude. I have witnessed it first-hand, and I would challenge other members on that particular point.

I see my time is running out. I suspect I might have another opportunity at some point to address this issue.

• (1730)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member will have eight minutes left in his debate.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

CRIMINAL CODE

The House resumed from May 3 consideration of the motion that Bill C-305, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (mischief), be read the third time and passed.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): It being 5:30 p.m., the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at third reading stage of Bill C-305.

Call in the members.

• (1805)

[*Translation*]

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

(*Division No. 271*)

YEAS

Members

Aboultaif	Albas	Hutchings	Iacono
Albrecht	Aldag	Jeneroux	Johns
Alghabra	Alleslev	Jolibois	Jones
Allison	Amos	Jordan	Jowhari
Anandasangaree	Anderson	Kang	Kelly
Arnold	Arseneault	Kent	Khalid
Arya	Aubin	Khera	Kmiec
Ayoub	Badawey	Kusie	Kwan
Bagnell	Bains	Lake	Lambropoulos
Barlow	Barsalou-Duval	Lametti	Lamoureux
Baylis	Beaulieu	Lapointe	Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Beech	Bennett	Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)	Laverdière
Benson	Bergen	LeBlanc	Lefebvre
Berthold	Bezan	Leslie	Levitt
Bibeau	Bittle	Liepert	Lightbound
Blaikie	Blair	Lobb	Lockhart
Blaney (North Island—Powell River)	Block	Long	Longfield
Boissonnault	Bossio	Ludwig	MacAulay (Cardigan)
Boucher	Boudrias	MacGregor	MacKenzie
Boulerice	Boutin-Sweet	MacKinnon (Gatineau)	Maguire
Brassard	Bratina	Malcolmson	Maloney
Breton	Brisson	Marcil	Masse (Windsor West)
Brosseau	Brown	Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)	
Caesar-Chavannes	Cannings	May (Cambridge)	
Carrie	Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)	May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	McCauley (Edmonton West)
Casey (Charlottetown)	Chagger	McColeman	McCrimmon
Chan	Chen	McDonald	McGuinty
Choquette	Christopherson	McKay	McKenna
Clarke	Clement	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)	McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)
Cooper	Cormier	McLeod (Northwest Territories)	Mendès
Cuzner	Dabrusin	Mendicino	Mihychuk
Damoff	Davies	Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound)	Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Sœurs)
DeCoursey	Deltell	Monsef	Morrissey
Dhaliwal	Dhillon	Motz	Murray
Di Iorio	Diotte	Nassif	Nater
Dreeschen	Drouin	Nault	Ng
Dubé	Dubourg	Nicholson	Nuttall
Duclos	Duguid	O'Connell	Oliphant
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)	Oliver	O'Regan
Dusseau	Duvall	Ouellette	Paradis
Dzerowicz	Easter	Paul-Hus	Peschisolido
Eglinski	Ehsassi	Peterson	Petipas Taylor
El-Khoury	Ellis	Philpott	Picard
Erskine-Smith	Eyking	Plamondon	Poilievre
Eyolfson	Falk	Poissant	Quach
Fergus	Fillmore	Qualtrough	Ramsey
Finley	Finnigan	Rankin	Ratansi
Fisher	Fonseca	Raves	Reid
Fortier	Fortin	Rempel	Richards
Fragiskatos	Fraser (West Nova)	Rioux	Ritz
Fraser (Central Nova)	Fry	Robillard	Rodriguez
Fuhr	Gallant	Romanado	Rudd
Garneau	Garrison	Ruimy	Rusnak
Généreux	Genuis	Saganash	Sahota
Gerretsen	Gill	Saini	Sajjan
Gladu	Godin	Samson	Sangha
Goldsmith-Jones	Goodale	Sansoucy	Sarai
Gould	Gourde	Saroya	Scarpaleggia
Graham	Grewal	Schmale	Schulte
Hajdu	Harder	Serré	Sgro
Hardie	Hehr	Shanahan	Sheehan
Hoback	Holland	Shields	Shiple
Housefather	Hughes	Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)	Sidhu (Brampton South)
		Sikand	Simms
		Sohi	Sopuck
		Sorbara	Sorenson
		Spengemann	Stanton
		Ste-Marie	Stetski
		Strahl	Stubbs
		Sweet	Tabbara
		Tan	Tassi
		Thériault	Tilson
		Tootoo	Trudeau
		Trudel	Van Kesteren
		Van Loan	Vandal
		Vandenbeld	Vaughan
		Vecchio	Viersen
		Virani	Wagantall
		Warawa	Warkentin
		Waugh	Webber
		Whalen	Wilkinson
		Wong	Wrzesnewskyj
		Young	Yurdiga

Private Members' Business

Zahid Zimmer— 292

NAYS

Nil

PAIRED

Members

Foote Moore— 2

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.
(Bill read the third time and passed)

The Speaker: It being 6:10 p.m., the House will now proceed to consideration of private members' business as listed on today's Order Paper.

* * *

● (1810)

FOOD AND DRUGS ACT

The House resumed from March 10 consideration of the motion that Bill C-291, an act to amend the Food and Drugs Act (genetically modified food), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau (Berthier—Maskinongé, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to rise today to speak to Bill C-291.

I would like to take a few moments to thank emergency services, the armed forces, the municipalities, and the volunteers who are working together everywhere in Berthier—Maskinongé to help people affected by flooding. I thank everyone who has rolled up their sleeves and got to work helping the victims in my region. I know these are very hard times. My thoughts are with all Quebeckers affected by the flooding. People are ready and willing to help their fellow citizens, but there is still a lot of work to do in the coming weeks.

I am proud to support the bill introduced by my colleague from Sherbrooke because it will ensure that Canadian families and consumers know enough to make informed choices.

Canadians have the right to know what is in their food, and one of the best ways to ensure that is through greater transparency in food labelling. For 10 years now, surveys have shown that most Canadians support mandatory GMO labelling. According to a Health Canada study, consumers have not exactly warmed up to GMOs.

The Strategic Counsel got a contract to do a study in March 2016. The study involved 10 focus groups in five Canadian cities, including Quebec, and showed that 78% of Canadians support mandatory GMO labelling. Most of the survey respondents wondered why the government has not moved forward and want more transparency in the food industry. Given the choice, 62% of them would elect to purchase non-genetically modified foods over genetically modified foods.

That is why I support mandatory food labelling, a practice that already exists in several places around the world, such as the European Union, Australia, New Zealand, and Vermont in the United States.

For years now, the NDP has been arguing for legislation to make the labelling of genetically modified foods mandatory. In fact, my

hon. colleague from Victoria moved a similar motion, Motion No. 480, which also advocated for mandatory labelling of GMOs.

That motion was directed at the former government. Today, Bill C-291 calls on the Liberal government to help ensure that Canadians have as much information as possible about genetically modified foods.

A number of stakeholders who are very involved in this movement in Canada worked very hard to emphasize the importance of passing this kind of legislation. They include the Canada Organic Trade Association, Vigilance OGM, the Consumers' Association of Canada, Organic Alberta, and the Quebec chapter of Friends of the Earth.

Many other organizations support the bill sponsored by my colleague from Sherbrooke, including Kids Right to Know, an organization whose objective is to educate young people on their right to make informed, healthy, environmentally conscious decisions by emphasizing proper labelling of genetically modified foods.

I would like to quote an extraordinary and inspiring woman, Rachel Parent, who advocates on behalf of this organization and has been promoting this bill on the mandatory labelling of GMOs.

● (1815)

[English]

Parliamentarians should not submit to bogus arguments or be swayed by shoddy pro-industry articles. They should be protecting the public's right to know and choose. Don't buy into the notion that ordinary people have been swayed by "scaremongering" anti-GMO activists. It is simply not the case. People have valid concerns that in any functioning democracy should be addressed.

[Translation]

On another note, the NDP recognizes the importance of scientific research in making fact-based decisions. Scientific research allows us to determine whether scientific advances are safe for public health. Genetically modified organisms have been available in Canada for years and they have undergone rigorous processes.

For now, there is no evidence that they pose any danger to public health or that they lead to health problems. However, we believe that Canadians have the right to make a free and informed choice. With this in mind, we believe it is best for GMO labelling to be mandatory. We also believe we have a duty to keep ensuring we have the most effective means of protecting the public.

I would like to note that the NDP is the only party that has adopted a food strategy. A number of years ago, I had the honour of working on such a strategy with my colleagues Malcolm Allen and Alex Atamanenko. We are very proud of the work we did. Our vision is to connect Canadians from the farm to the fork. Our overall objective is to adopt a federal integrated policy that covers agriculture, rural development, health, and income security.

We maintain that the federal government has a role to play in earning the public's trust in our food system. That is clearly indicated in the Calgary Statement – Towards the Next Policy Framework, a joint federal, provincial, and territorial ministerial statement. Under the next policy framework, labelling must be mandatory, precise, and reliable in order to ensure that the public really understands the information provided.

Private Members' Business

Furthermore, as agriculture and agrifood critic, I would like to mention that the NDP clearly understands the issue for farmers. Canadian farmers are key players in our economy and food system. They provide us with fresh, high-quality food, and they feed Canadian families. That is why the federal government must continue to invest in our rural communities, innovation, and organic farming in order to address the growing interest of consumers.

In closing, the bill introduced by my colleague from Sherbrooke, Bill C-291, is a sensible, well-thought-out bill that respects the wishes of the community.

When Canadian families gather together to eat, they have the right to know what is on their plates. We have here a perfect opportunity to make that possible, in the form of a mechanism that promotes transparency. I am talking about food labelling.

I hope that my colleagues in the House will support this bill. Canadians can count on us, the NDP, to stand up for their interests because they have a right to have transparent information about their food.

I would also like to quote what the Prime Minister said in December 2016 in answer to a question asked by my colleague from Sherbrooke about mandatory food labelling. That is not very long ago. The Prime Minister said:

[*English*]

This is about protecting consumers. I am hearing consumers say loud and clear that they want to know more about what they are putting in their bodies. This is a good thing. We are working with them.

[*Translation*]

In closing, I would urge the Prime Minister and all members of the House to think about and support Bill C-291, because it is important that we send it to committee, that we be transparent, and that we give Canadians a choice.

[*English*]

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Toronto—Danforth, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am speaking today in support of Bill C-291, which would introduce mandatory labelling for genetically modified food. I support sending the bill to committee after second reading where expert witness testimony can bring evidence as to how Canada can move forward in regard to providing information to Canadian consumers on genetically modified foods.

I support the labelling of genetically modified food as it provides transparency for Canadians. I have heard from many people in my community who would also like to see this type of labelling information. I would like to take this opportunity to applaud the Big Carrot Natural Food Market, which is in my riding. It goes beyond selling food to providing information and workshops about organic foods, natural health products, and environmental issues. It has been a tremendous advocate on the issue of genetically modified organisms and labelling.

While I support the bill going to committee, I do see some issues with how it is written. I believe that improvements should be made to benefit consumers and producers. There has been a lot of discussion in this place about the pros and cons of genetically modified food. While there can be a very long and worthwhile

debate on this issue, the truth is that the labelling debate does not require members in this place to make any such pronouncement.

Before genetically modified products are sold to Canadians, they undergo a health and safety assessment by Health Canada to determine whether they are safe and nutritious as their conventional counterparts. In order to label genetically modified foods, we do not need to debate this scientific analysis.

As has been pointed out in debate earlier in this place, GMOs are different from one another and need to be examined separately by Health Canada to determine their health safety. What Canadian consumers are requesting is that their food be properly labelled.

People who want the labelling for genetically modified foods may have other concerns beyond health and safety. They may have environmental concerns and they may have concerns about seed ownership. Others may feel entirely fine about genetically modified food, but they want to know what is in their food regardless. Ultimately, labelling is about transparency. I welcome this transparency. Labelling allows us to know the composition of the food we purchase, and we can choose from there whether or not we want it. This is all about giving choice and informing the consumer.

From a legislative perspective, the new regulation-making authorities in Bill C-291 could be unnecessary since the Food and Drugs Act already contains a provision in paragraph 30(1)(b) that provides authority to create regulations that support the Food and Drugs Act's prohibition of false and misleading labelling of food. I say this because that could include genetically modified foods in relation to composition. Regulations can be more detailed. I point out that this is an additional route for us to consider. I would like the committee, should the bill go to committee after the vote at second reading, to consider this as well.

Bill C-291 responds to the concerns that consumers are not being provided proper information about the composition of their food. The Food and Drugs Act already has regulations that provide information to consumers in respect of other foods that have been deemed safe by Health Canada and yet require different labelling.

The example I would like to discuss is irradiated foods. I would like to refer to the regulations applying to irradiated foods because irradiation is a process that is reviewed and approved by Health Canada and yet labelling is required. The labelling regulations set out under the Food and Drugs Act are a good example of well-formed labelling regulations. I would suggest at committee that reference be made to these regulations as a way that we might want to amend or improve this legislation.

Private Members' Business

The labelling regulations for irradiated foods require the identification of wholly irradiated foods on the labels of prepackaged products or on signs accompanying bulk displays of irradiated food. While Health Canada is responsible for the regulations which specify which foods may be irradiated and the treatment levels permitted, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency administers the regulations for labelling irradiated foods. The regulations set out the words that can be used to let people know that the food is irradiated. The regulations set out a mandatory symbol to be used. There are regulations governing legibility and the location of the labelling.

● (1820)

When I look at the example of labelling irradiated foods, I see a model that could apply equally well to genetically modified foods. We have a precedent in Canada for labelling foods that Health Canada has determined to be safe, but for which further information is mandated to be available to Canadians. The irradiation regulations set out further considerations for us for GMO labelling. For example, in the case of irradiation, if an ingredient that is 10% or more of a food that is irradiated, it must be listed as irradiated on the label.

This raises a question for genetically modified foods. If a food contains only a percentage of genetically modified organisms, for example, only one ingredient out of 10, what then? We should consider that. That is an extra detail that will need to be looked at. This question would need to be looked at in more detail by the committee. Then we could consider how the regulations could probably work for labelling.

I have heard of additional situations which also require some thought and consideration. For example, if a cow is fed genetically modified feed, is there a requirement to label the milk or meat as containing genetically modified organisms? How would this be enforced and measured? These are important questions that the committee can investigate and provide recommendations on.

In the end, my hope is that we would have a comprehensive and thought-out labelling system for genetically modified foods. This is where we are lucky, because we have models from around the world to learn from. Labelling genetically modified foods is hardly a new idea. It is not novel. In fact, there are at least 64 countries around the world that require the labelling of genetically modified foods, including the European Union, Japan, Australia, and Brazil. The United States has also recently signed into law the national bioengineered food disclosure standard regarding the disclosure of genetically modified organisms. We can look to each of the models adopted by these many countries to see what is most appropriate and useful for Canadians.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health stated that Canada will be monitoring the U.S. government's labelling plans. To this I would add that we should look to the European Union to examine its approach. Considering this approach would be particularly timely, since we are looking to greater trade with the European Union following the Canada-European Union trade agreement.

The reasoning in support of labelling in the European Union is set out by the commission. It is to ensure clear labelling of GMOs placed on the market in order to enable consumers as well as professionals, such as farmers and food feed chain operators, to

make an informed choice. It also says that traceability enables tracking GMOs and GM food or feed products at all stages of the supply chain. It goes on to say that traceability also makes labelling of all GMOs and GM food and feed products possible. It allows for close monitoring of potential effects on the environment and on health. Where necessary, it can allow the withdrawal of products if an unexpected risk to human health or to the environment is detected.

There is a precedent. There is some information about the European Union that we can build upon. It is important to recognize that GMO foods are allowed to be sold in the European Union; they are just labelled. They are deemed to be safe for consumption. They are tested. Therefore, labelling is not a ban; it is about providing information.

If our food processors and manufacturers intend to be exporting foods to jurisdictions such as the European Union, Japan, or the United States, they will need to take GMO labelling into account, so why not provide Canadians with the same information?

This is a good time for us to be making these changes. I support Bill C-291 and sending it to committee for further consideration.

● (1825)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Madam Speaker, there is a newish meme in town. Two years ago, it was “because it is 2015”, then it became “because it is 2016”. Well, I would like to play a variation on the meme. I hope we will abandon the practice of not identifying genetically modified foods as soon as possible. Why? Because it is 2017. That is why I am so pleased to comment on the bill introduced by my colleague from Sherbrooke, Bill C-291.

In French, they say “dans les petits pots, les meilleurs onguents”. In English, they say “small is beautiful”. In my view, those descriptions fit this bill. It is a very short bill, just one or two clauses long, but it is so delicately balanced that it can satisfy both those who are in favour of GMOs and those who are not.

Indeed, the goal here is not to have a standoff to try to prove whether GMOs are harmful to human health, but rather to make it a point of information, so that all consumers across the country can make their own choices based on their expertise and their wishes.

The bill is very simple. Bills often seem abstract and very complex to the people listening to us. However, in the 10 minutes I have to speak, which is not very long, I will be able to read the bill practically in its entirety. What does the bill say? It amends an existing piece of legislation, the Food and Drugs Act. Regarding genetically modified foods, subsection 5.1 of the amended act reads:

No person shall sell any food that is genetically modified unless its label contains the information prescribed under paragraph 30(1)(b.2).

If this bill passes, genetically modified products can still be sold, but they cannot be sold unless that information is included on the label. This means that all consumers who go to the grocery store to buy consumer goods will be able to make choices based on the labels. If that does not provide enough latitude, paragraph 30(1)(b) that was mentioned at the end of clause 1 of the bill reads as follows:

Subsection 30(1) of the Act is amended by adding the following after paragraph (b):

(b.1) defining the expression “genetically modified”;

This is the second amendment to the existing legislation.

It is left up to the Governor in Council to define what “genetically modified” means, which provides some latitude.

I will continue:

(b.2) respecting the labelling of genetically modified food, to prevent the purchaser or the consumer of the food from being deceived or misled in respect of its composition;

The Governor in Council has the latitude to change the regulations. In the end, all we are asking for is labelling that will provide the information.

I was a geography teacher in my previous career. To present a balanced perspective and to let students develop their critical thinking skills, I would vigorously defend both sides of a debate so my students would not know my position and to allow them to come to their own conclusions.

I came up with all kinds of reasons to condemn the Monsantos of this world. I was just as passionate when arguing that genetically modified foods are safe. We are not asking the House to come down on one side or the other. We are simply asking it to include the information that will allow everyone to make their own choices.

I find this approach to be very respectful. Not only will the bill respect everyone's position, but it will also respect the right of all Canadians to have the information they need to make their own choices.

● (1830)

In the past few months and years, we have seen the appearance of genetically modified salmon in Canada. Publications from the extreme right to the extreme left of the spectrum talk about Frankenfish. On the other hand, we have people saying that there is no health risk whatsoever. The fact is, according to a Health Canada study, close to 80% of Canadians want to know what they are dealing with. That is precisely the point of the bill introduced by the hon. member for Sherbrooke.

Many associations are behind this bill precisely because it strikes the right chord. I will name a few of the associations and you will see that they do not all take the same approach to this issue: Union paysanne, Canadian Biotechnology Action Network, and Vigilance OGM, but I especially want to point out Kids Right to Know. Although I am not very old, I am at an age where I have more years behind me than ahead of me. Regardless of whether science one day manages to state once and for all that genetically modified foods are

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good or bad for health, my own health will not be affected since I will not be around to see the results of these studies.

In order to be credible, studies on GMOs must be conducted over extended periods. They will have to be done over a span of 20, 30, even 50 years. Who will be around to see the results of these studies? Those who are participating in the Kids Right to Know program today. It would be most unfortunate if they were to learn, when they reach my age, that they should not have eaten this food, or that they ate it and that it did not affect them. That is why it is important for them and for all Canadians to make their own choices. Labelling will make this possible.

The objectives of this bill are simple, specific, few in number, and easily understood by everyone. First, the bill would improve transparency in the food industry. I have given enough examples that I need not elaborate further. Second, it would strengthen public confidence. That is a very important aspect of our debate because there are many concerns about genetically modified foods and we cannot scientifically prove beyond a reasonable doubt that they are a danger. Labelling would allow every individual to make their own choices and to feel confident about the product they choose to buy at the grocery store. We will be able to choose whether to purchase certain items with our eyes wide open.

The third objective is just as commendable, because it is 2017. One of these days, and soon, I hope, we will have to harmonize Canadian policy with what much of the rest of the world is doing. Right now, no fewer than 65 countries and jurisdictions have labelling laws for GMOs. That includes several American states, but it is just one country. The right thing to do is to get on board. The right thing for Canada to do is to get with the times on this issue.

All the same, I have some concerns that I cannot ignore. I was relieved to hear my Liberal colleague say she would be voting for the bill. I remember the government's response to the petition presented by my colleague from Drummond. If memory serves me, the response said, “Voluntary labelling is...the primary means of communication between industry and consumers.”

I have serious doubts about voluntary labelling. It is akin to self-regulation for security or for credit card transaction fees. I do have some outstanding concerns, but I am very happy with some of what I have been hearing from the Liberals.

● (1835)

I hope the House will vote unanimously in favour of my colleague from Sherbrooke's bill.

[*English*]

Mr. David Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am glad to have the opportunity to speak to this bill, and look forward to my colleague from Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa speaking to it, too. He is probably one of the most knowledgeable members in the House on these issues.

Private Members' Business

I first want to point out that GMO-free labelling is allowed in this country. From the conversation we are having here today, Canadians listening might not understand that. Any company, wholesaler or retailer, can put GMO-free labelling on their products, if they choose to do that. If they think that is somehow going to impact the market in a positive way, they have the opportunity to do that, and there are people doing that across Canada.

I am from a farm, and I am very proud of my heritage. I am proud of the crops that my neighbours produce. Some constituents in my neighbourhood are watching tonight. It is good to have them here, because they understand the challenges that farmers and producers across Canada face as they feed the rest of the world.

When in government, the Conservatives always guided the agriculture and food safety policy on the principle that decisions must be based on sound science. This actually results in Canada having one of the best food safety systems in the world. The Liberal government, apparently, seems determined to leave that behind. A number of issues have gone to the agriculture committee that do not seem to be science-based at all, but more politically based. If we are going to make decisions about these kinds of products, chemicals, pesticides, and those kinds of things based on political activity, we are going to find ourselves in a very deep hole.

The agriculture committee has dealt with things like the neonicotinoid issue and animal transport regulations issues, and the government's proposals do not deal directly with science. Much of it seems to be politically motivated. If we do that, we walk into a very deep swamp, particularly if we do that with genetically engineered products.

With respect to food safety, particularly on GMO products, the role of the government has been, and should continue to be, to regulate for the health and safety of Canadians. That is our challenge. That is the challenge governments have typically taken up, and said that their involvement, or interference, if we want to call it that, in the market needs to stop. That is why we have the food safety system that we do.

Conservatives stand for the integrity of the food system. We have a great food system, and we stand for protecting the health and safety of Canadians and farmers so that they can continue to be competitive around the world, but the reality is that GMOs have been demonstrated time and time again to be no threat to human health or safety. This bill fails to acknowledge the safeguards already in place, as well as the labelling options, one of which I mentioned a few minutes ago, that are already available to manufacturers and producers.

There were some questions this afternoon about some of the science, but I want to point out that over 2,000 studies have been done that document that there is no threat to human health or food safety from GMOs. One of my Liberal colleagues, a little earlier, asked about studying whether animals eating GMO products should be considered to be GMO in some fashion. In the United States, animal agriculture each year produces over nine billion food-producing animals, and 95% of them consume feed containing GMO ingredients.

Since the introduction of genetically engineered products, trillions of meals have been fed to animals with GMO products, and if there were an issue, it would have become obvious long ago. One study, over 29 years ago, which studied 100 billion animals, livestock productivity, and health, showed there was no noticeable impact of genetically engineered products, other than in cases where there had been an improvement. There was no impact on meat, milk, or eggs. Clearly, the benefits of GMO crops greatly outweigh the health impacts.

For example, the use of GMOs on farms in my area has reduced the price of food. GMOs have lowered the requirements for energy input, and have raised the output of crops. We have the example of something called golden rice, which could directly impact the deaths of one million children per year who suffer from a vitamin A deficiency. A number of governments have said they are not going to grow it, because it is genetically modified, no matter how much it could positively impact their people.

● (1840)

Some people oppose this and still try to make the genetically engineered part of that the issue. That is what this bill does as well, but there is no issue.

We have mentioned the European Union here a couple of times today. It is important to note that the EU itself has funded over 130 research projects. We would expect, given the kind of requirements the Europeans have, that they would have been interested if there were any negative impacts of these products. The research projects were carried out by 500 independent teams, and not one of them found there was any special risk from GMO crops. That is from *Scientific American*. The objections that we find to this whole industry are not scientific, but are definitely political.

I am a little concerned about the NDP coming forward with this bill again. It has come forward a number of times. If anything, the New Democrats are persistent, if not accurate. There is no health issue. We should not be leaving the impression with people that there is. We also should not be leaving the impression that the United States at this time requires labelling for GM products, because that is not true. The requirement that they have down there is that if there is actually a compositional difference that results in some sort of a material change to the product, then that has to be labelled for that change. That is a far cry from what we are being asked to support here. An example of that would be if canola oil had an increased lauric acid content compared to conventional oil, it would have to be labelled as a lauric canola oil. That is not what we are talking about here. To say that the United States has GMO labelling is not accurate. I do not think the mover of the bill or others here should be leaving that impression.

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The member's bill contains no definition of GM food. In the bill, it actually leaves that to the Governor in Council. I do not think it would be responsible for us to be supporting this bill. The member just puts it forward with no definition of these terms. Once again, we need to understand what he is talking about. Why would he not just say that the New Democrats do not believe in anything specific enough here to even define it, that they are just going to throw it over to the government and let them somehow decide what the definition of this is? The member has a GM labelling bill, but he refuses to even consider defining what GM means in his mind. We do not have any clear understanding of what that might be.

As I mentioned earlier, the Canadian system has regulated by health and by safety, but not by composition. I do not think we need to change that, because this has worked well in the past.

In the member's bill, he decided to leave all regulations to the Governor in Council as well. Basically, the member is just saying that the New Democrats want a bill but they are going to leave it to the government to define what it is about and to set the regulations. It is kind of a strange presentation here. I think this is just a first step to try to get this bill in as quickly as possible.

I want to come back to something that is important, because we have heard this a couple of times today. The reality is that the United States does not make the distinction between novel foods and GMO foods. Novel foods are typically new products that have been developed. The Americans' view is that foods developed using new techniques do not differ from other foods in any meaningful way or present different or greater safety concerns than foods developed by traditional plant breeding. That is a pretty direct repudiation of what the member is saying, that there is GMO labelling required in the United States.

I want to give a bit of time for my colleague from Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa to be able to speak at length here, so I am going to wrap it up right now and let him have the extra time, hopefully later, that I was given.

● (1845)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Claude Poissant (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to further the discussion on the important question raised by the member Sherbrooke. This is about mandatory labelling of all genetically modified foods.

Bill C-291, an act to amend the Food and Drugs Act (genetically modified food), proposes to amend the Food and Drugs Act so that once regulations are made, no person can sell any food that is genetically modified unless it has a label indicating that it has been genetically modified.

In his presentation, the member described his bill as a means to provide Canadians with information. We all know that many consumers want to know more about the foods they purchase. I believe we can all agree that this is very important. However, far from better informing the public, adopting mandatory labelling of genetically modified foods could, in fact, result in misinformation. Mandatory labelling of genetically modified foods could have the

unintended effect of reinforcing the notion that foods bearing a GM label are not as safe and nutritious as their non-GM counterparts.

Right now, people are choosing to buy food labelled GM-free precisely because they think GM-free is somehow safer and more nutritious. On Canadian supermarket shelves you can find certain brands labelled GM-free. That does not make those foods safer or more nutritious to eat. Others are participating in the Non-GMO Project. The aim is GMO avoidance.

To require a mandatory label on a GM food could send the wrong message that there is something wrong with it. I am aware that this bill is not positioned as anti-GMO. I am only pointing out the unintended consequences of requiring mandatory labelling of GM food in Canada.

To clarify, a GM food is simply food derived from an organism that has had some of its inherited traits changed. GM foods that have been approved by Health Canada are as safe and nutritious to consume as their non-GM counterparts. I think the concern may be with genetically engineered food, or GM food from biotechnology, rather than GM food from selective breeding.

From what I can see, this bill does not make an immediate differentiation. For example, we have Canada's Arctic apple. A method called gene silencing was used to produce a non-browning apple. I would like to note here that the Arctic apple has been assessed by Health Canada and undergone nearly 10 years of documented test orchard experience. Following this assessment, it was determined that the changes made to the apple did not pose a greater risk to human health than apples currently available on the Canadian market.

Let us return to Bill C-291. If it became law, with regulations in place, the bill would require Arctic apples to be labelled as a genetically modified food. This is an easy example to understand.

Now consider Canada's famous McIntosh apple, developed by traditional techniques of selective breeding, which is also a form of genetic modification. The McIntosh was then crossbred with other breeds to produce such well-known apple varieties as Empire, Cortland, Lobo, and Spartan.

Technically, although I do not believe it is the intention, the bill could require McIntosh, Empire, Cortland, Lobo, and Spartan apples to be labelled as genetically modified foods. This example is not as clear-cut.

● (1850)

One could say that they were not referring to the McIntosh apple and that they only meant the genetically modified food developed by biotechnology.

Private Members' Business

Why is that? There is nothing wrong with the genetically modified food developed by biotechnology, especially when the food has been thoroughly vetted by Health Canada. When it comes to genetically modified foods in Canada, there are five basic principles that guide our government's approach.

First, our government is committed to safeguarding our food, our feed, and our environment. Under the current regulatory framework approval, no single government body is solely responsible for making a final decision on these products. Health Canada, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, and Environment and Climate Change Canada all have a role to play in the overall approval process that allows for a genetically modified food to enter the Canadian marketplace.

Second, our government's decisions on regulating genetically modified foods are based on sound science. All products derived from genetically modified organisms are subject to comprehensive scientific evaluation to maintain the ongoing protection of consumer health and safety.

Third, before genetically modified foods can be sold in Canada, they undergo a rigorous, science-based assessment by Health Canada. In the case of genetically modified feed, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency is also involved. The CFIA also conducts the environmental safety assessments of plants.

Fourth, the government supports innovative and sustainable food production, which is essential to increasing productivity and sustainability in Canada. In order for Canada to become the trusted global leader in safe, nutritious and sustainable food for the 21st century, we must keep Canadian agriculture on the cutting edge.

Fifth, the government will continue its work to keep Canada's regulatory system in pace with emerging technologies, including those involving genetically modified foods. Our regulatory system needs to reflect the sound science that we use for decision-making in Canada. Science tells us that genetically modified foods are as safe and nutritious as their conventional counterparts.

Considering all of this, it is our position that mandatory labelling of GM foods as Bill C-291 proposes is not the right path.

• (1855)

[English]

Mr. Robert Sopuck (Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, CPC): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to speak in the House this evening. I stand in opposition to Bill C-291 on the following grounds: it is anti-science, anti-development, inhumane, and anti-environmental. These kinds of bills are merely Trojan Horses for an anti-GMO approach.

Let us go back to the development of agriculture, and why it was so important for humanity.

Agriculture developed about 10,000 years ago and changed humanity forever. The greatest attribute was the production of surplus food, which resulted in the specialization of occupations that people could do, and that resulted in the evolution of arts and culture, science, cities, and civilization itself. It is not too far a stretch to say no agriculture, no Silicon Valley.

Human lifespans increase because of agriculture as did populations. There is obviously a need for more and more food in the form of agricultural productivity. Farmers vary innovative and selected varieties to increase yield, and the result is abundant and very inexpensive food.

In Canada right now we spend about 9% of our disposable income on food, and that is among the lowest in the entire world. That means that people on low incomes in this country can afford to eat well. There has never been a better social program in Canada than that which has been given to Canadian citizens by agriculture, so poor people can eat well.

The acceleration of crop development really occurred out of the great Norman Borlaug, a Nobel Peace Prize winner, who accelerated crop development using conventional breeding technology. I am going to quote from an article in *The Atlantic* about Borlaug:

Perhaps more than anyone else, Borlaug is responsible for the fact that throughout the postwar era, except in sub-Saharan Africa, global food production has expanded faster than the human population, averting the mass starvations that were widely predicted...The form of agriculture that Borlaug preaches may have prevented a billion deaths.

Interestingly, even back then Borlaug was opposed for his modern approach to agriculture. I am quoting from the same article:

The environmental community in the 1980s went crazy pressuring the donor countries and the big foundations not to support ideas like inorganic fertilizers for Africa.

Borlaug, of course, fought back very strongly. He said at the time:

Some of the environmental lobbyists of the Western nations are the salt of the earth, but many of them are elitists. They've never experienced the physical sensation of hunger. They do their lobbying from comfortable office suites in Washington or Brussels. If they lived just one month amid the misery of the developing world, as I have for fifty years, they'd be crying out for tractors and fertilizer and irrigation canals and be outraged that fashionable elitists back home were trying to deny them these things.

The next iteration of crop development was genetic engineering, and that was done by introducing desirable traits into crops from other species, and there were some terrific results: higher yields, canola, wheat, potatoes, better nutrition, golden rice, yellow flesh sweet potatoes, and reduced pesticide use.

Another application of genetic engineering technology has allowed farmers to cease spraying altogether by incorporating pesticide toxins into the tissues of the crop plant itself. Examples include insect resistant corn and cotton now planted across the globe. I have in my hand a table that lists some of the crop plants that have been developed. This is a paper by the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research.

Let me talk for a minute about golden rice. This is a rice that has Vitamin A bred into it due to genetic engineering. Vitamin A is critical in the prevention of blindness in children. By opposing golden rice in Asia, for example, the activists stated, and I am going to quote from an article in *Environment and Development Economics* with respect to the opposition to golden rice:

This is an indicator of the economic power of the opposition towards Golden Rice resulting in about 1.4 million life years lost over the past decade in India.

Private Members' Business

The opposition to food technology, and the development of better food and crops is not just a simple thing. It has real world, inhumane consequences.

• (1900)

Interestingly enough, one of the things that people never talk about in terms of the environmental benefits of genetic engineering is that by having high yields produced on smaller pieces of land, we can then have room for wildlife and wildlife habitat. For example, there is a reason why the Ottawa Valley is not 100% cultivated. It is because we can produce enough food on the land that is currently under cultivation, and the rest can be left for environmental purposes. This is one of the major benefits of high yield agriculture, and it will only get better with genetic engineering.

Why is GMO labelling a bad idea? It stokes the fear of genetically engineered crops. It is kind of like a warning label. It provides no information. If the label is supposed to provide information, it should also say, "This crop was produced with less inputs, less fertilizer, and less pesticide", like is common among many GMO crops. Most importantly, it gives anti-GMO activists a platform, and a foothold to continue this campaign against modern agriculture.

A couple of the previous speakers talked about the peer reviewed studies. In my research, we came up with 1,736 peer reviewed studies that found GMO crops to be as safe or safer than conventional or organic agriculture. I am glad the parliamentary secretary brought up the apple. It is called the Arctic apple. It was developed in the Okanagan. It is a genetically superior apple. It is sold in the United States, but is still held up in Canada.

In terms of Europe's phobia about GMOs, we have a perfect experiment in place right now. GMO crops are consumed in North America in great amounts, much less so in Europe. If there were any health or disease impacts, that would show up. We have a perfect policy experiment here, and there is no difference in the health and longevity of Europeans.

I will quote Stewart Brand, a prominent environmentalist, whom I admired back in the 1970s. He wrote a book called *Whole Earth Catalog*. Brand underwent an evolution in his thinking on the environment, and in 2010 wrote a book called *Whole Earth Discipline*. In it, he castigates the environmental movement very strongly for being against modern agriculture. He wrote:

I daresay the environmental movement has done more harm with its opposition to genetic engineering than with any other thing we've been wrong about. We've starved people, hindered science, hurt the natural environment, and denied our own practitioners a crucial tool.

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for Sherbrooke can use his right of reply.

• (1905)

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank all the speakers who took the time to come to the House to express their points of view. Although I do not agree with everything that was said, I would nevertheless like to thank them for taking the time to speak.

First of all, I would like to respond to my colleagues who imputed motives to me that I do not have. They seemed to insinuate that I

want to ban GMOs or to find fault with the GMO industry, when that is not at all my intention. My only intention is to respond to consumers who have repeatedly expressed their desire to know more about what they eat.

The Prime Minister himself, in a television appearance in 2016, approved of this desire to know more about what we eat. That is all I want to do. I am very surprised to hear some of my colleagues imputing other motives to me and saying that this is an anti-GMO campaign. That is patently false.

What surprised me the most in today's debate is what the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food said. I do not want to quote him incorrectly, but he basically said that giving consumers more information would result in misinformation. That is ridiculous. That suggests that he thinks Canadians are too stupid to figure things out and will be misled by labels with too much information. Come on. It does not make any sense to say that Canadians will have too much information and that it will not be useful to them. He is not giving Canadians very much credit for their intelligence. I wanted to respond to that comment by the parliamentary secretary.

On another note, I want to thank all those who have helped to advance this cause over the past few decades and those who have continued that work in recent weeks. It has been a pleasure to work with them to advance this cause and to try get Canadians the information they deserve.

If the House of Commons really is the House of the common people or, in other words, if it truly represents the people of Canada, and it does not vote in favour of Bill C-291, at least at second reading, there is going to be a major problem, because 80% of the population has asked for this information many times.

If this House truly represents Canadians, it must be consistent and it must take action to give Canadians what they have been calling for in recent years. If parliamentarians do not acknowledge these statistics and at least send this bill to committee for further study, then our democracy has failed.

That being said, I am open to amendments and further study in committee. Today we talked about the definition of genetically modified foods. That will remain in the hands of the government, who will consult industry stakeholders through a regulatory process. That will not happen overnight. This process will run its course like the others. Then we will have the opportunity to discuss the definition and try to align our standards with those of our economic and trading partners.

If 64 other nations label GMOs, there is no reason for Canada not to as well. If this is being done by our main economic partners, including Europe, with whom we have signed an agreement, then we should be doing this too, and then adjusting and harmonizing our regulations. This is critical to our trade agreements.

Adjournment Proceedings

I encourage all my colleagues to support this bill, if only to refer it to committee in order to study it more thoroughly.

•(1910)

[English]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): 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 Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes) All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes) All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes) In my opinion the yeas have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes) Pursuant to Standing Order 93, the recorded division stands deferred until Wednesday, May 17, immediately before the time provided for private members' business.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[English]

STATUS OF WOMEN

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Madam Speaker, rates of violence against women have remained largely unchanged for the past two decades. There are some sad facts that back this up.

One million women report having experienced sexual or domestic violence in the past five years. Indigenous women are more than three times more likely to experience sexual assault than non-indigenous women. Women living with disabilities experience violence two to three times more often than women living without disabilities. Domestic violence costs our economy more than \$12 billion a year. More than 500 women and children are turned away from shelters on any given day.

There is not enough room at the inn, and funding is not adequate for the work that is done by the front-line organizations. Provincial and federal governments have conceded it is going to be front-line organizations that deliver safety and shelter to women experiencing violence in their home, but they do not have the funding they need to carry out the work. We have heard this again and again at the status of women committee. The lack of access to long-term, predictable operational funding is one of the biggest problems for these brave

organizations that are doing this key work in our communities. We heard also at committee again and again that inadequate funding to provide enough shelter space can actually prevent women from leaving their abuser.

A witness at status of women committee, Mélanie Sarroino, said:

The woman had been waiting for months and it took all her courage just to pick up the phone and call.... I know very well that when she calls the centre, she'll get a message on the answering machine saying that they will call her back, but presently they have a six-month waiting list. You can guarantee that woman will never call back.... That's the first impact.

Since the Liberals were elected, despite good, strong words about their commitment that no women and children will be turned away from a shelter, that they are going to work to end violence against women, nothing has changed on the ground. The budget that was announced in March provided \$100 million over the next five years on spending within government and for the RCMP, rather than a plan to fund direct services to women.

I am concerned about the government's spending priorities. Budget 2017 promised \$80 million over the next five years for space exploration. There were no new dollars for operators of violence against women shelters. We need to see that spending get to the organizations that will deliver the services directly. We need to recognize that as opposed to \$20 million a year which is what the federal government has offered for a strategy to end violence against women, the non-governmental organization movement thought that \$500 million a year for a national strategy to end violence against women is what would be needed every year from now into the future until the strategy is established.

This brings me to my question for the government. If gender equality really matters, why were women shortchanged again in the budget?

•(1915)

Mr. Terry Duguid (Parliamentary Secretary for Status of Women, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to thank the member for Nanaimo—Ladysmith for joining us in the fight against gender-based violence and for her commitment to this issue.

I welcome the opportunity to participate in this adjournment debate and to discuss the federal government's approach to addressing gender-based violence. I want to join with the hon. member, and all Canadians, in underscoring our very deep concern about gender-based violence in this country.

Despite the modern society we have created, we can barely read through the day's news without finding in it an abhorrent example of violence directed at women, young women, or girls. Action is needed if we are to create a safe, inclusive society for all Canadians. We also need to speak out against misogyny and sexism wherever they appear in our communities, our politics, or on social media. We all need to be part of the solution.

I am proud of the fact that the Government of Canada is fully committed to addressing gender-based violence and is taking a multi-faceted approach to this critical issue.

Adjournment Proceedings

The federal government has established a national inquiry into missing and murdered indigenous women and girls. It will examine and report on the systemic causes behind the violence that indigenous women and girls experience and their greater vulnerability to that violence. It will look at patterns and underlying factors and examine why higher levels of violence occur in this community.

We are also making substantial investments to make a real difference on this issue. Through Status of Women Canada, we are investing over \$1 million for a project by the Canadian Network of Women's Shelters and Transition Houses to examine the multiple roles played by the shelter sector in supporting women who are victims of violence. Through this project, a comprehensive national profile of shelters will be developed that will include reliable, up-to-date information on shelter capacity, scope of services, funding, infrastructure, and human resources. Project activities will inform the development of a five-year strategic vision to inform policy changes in the shelter sector.

To ensure that women fleeing violence in their families have someone to turn in their hour of need, access to shelter and transition housing remains a key priority for this government. Budget 2016 committed about \$90 million over two years to enhance Canada's network of shelters and transition houses through the construction or renovation of over 3,000 shelter spaces off reserve. An additional \$10.4 million over three years was also allocated to support the renovation and construction of new shelters for victims of family violence in first nations communities. A further \$33.6 million over five years will support shelter operations on reserve.

These concrete actions highlight the Government of Canada's commitment to addressing all forms of gender-based violence.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: Madam Speaker, the problem is that the good words of the government are not being matched with action. The federal government spends 1.6% of the actual cost to women, which is \$12 billion in economic impact every year, to actually end violence against women. It is just \$189 million.

We have heard again and again that funding five additional shelters on reserve over the next five years, which is one new shelter every year for the next five years, is completely inadequate for indigenous communities. Pauktuutit, which is an Inuit women's group in Canada, estimates that there are only 15 shelters across 53 communities. The gap is tremendous.

When will the government act to actually make women safe?

● (1920)

Mr. Terry Duguid: Madam Speaker, I will respectfully disagree with the hon. member and just say again that in addition to the federal government's significant investments in shelters, budget 2017 includes a number of very important actions to address and prevent gender-based violence. This includes over \$100 million in investment over five years, starting in 2017-18.

As a first step in this effort, we will soon announce a strategy to deliver concrete actions in three main areas: preventing gender-based violence, providing support for survivors, and promoting responsive legal and justice systems.

The budget also announced support for the creation of a centre of excellence within Status of Women Canada to better align existing

resources for addressing gender-based violence. These important actions will make women and girls safer in our country, and that benefits all Canadians.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Ms. Tracey Ramsey (Essex, NDP): Madam Speaker, several months ago I asked the government what will be on the table in NAFTA renegotiations with the United States. I spoke about how hundreds of thousands of Canadian jobs depend on trade with the United States, but the Liberals' silence on their priorities for NAFTA renegotiations has been, and continues to be, deafening. There is an incredibly high level of uncertainty that currently exists in the Canada-U.S. trade relationship.

President Trump's repeated rhetorical attacks on key Canadian sectors such as auto and dairy are deeply worrisome for the hundreds of thousands of Canadians whose jobs depend on the strong, integrated Canada-U.S. relationship. Aside from these attacks, the U.S. has, of course, gone ahead with countervailing duties on Canadian softwood lumber exports, and we know that next month anti-dumping duties are expected that will be layered on top of the already devastating duties. These duties will devastate communities, mills, and workers across Canada.

The federal government's response has been extremely weak. Requests for assistance and support have been met with silence. The Liberals talk a lot about progressive trade that benefits Canadians; now it is time to walk the walk. Canadians want fair trade that benefits all Canadians, not just the few at the top. They want a government that has a plan for protecting Canadian jobs in trade-dependent industries like softwood lumber, auto, steel, agriculture, and dairy. They want a government that is not afraid to say yes, we can and must do better than the status quo of the 25-year-old NAFTA.

The United States has communicated a number of priorities for NAFTA renegotiations. We know what they are looking for, so what is Canada looking for? Maintaining Canada's tariff-free market access to the U.S. is priority one—do no harm—but we can take this a step further. There are many opportunities to modernize and strengthen NAFTA to better serve Canada's interests, and now is the time to be having those conversations.

NAFTA's labour and environment side agreements must be brought into the main text of the agreement and given some actual teeth, or Canada will continue to bleed jobs to Mexico, where labour and environmental rights are nowhere near the standard they need to be. Human rights must be central to Canada's trade agreements.

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NAFTA's energy proportionality clause needs to be revisited. As for chapter 11 on investment state dispute settlement, the Liberals need to prioritize getting rid of this terrible chapter. Canada is the most-sued country in the world under this chapter, and the only reason this was brought in was to protect us from a corrupt Mexican court system. Canada has become the target, and environmental claims have been brought against us.

I am not suggesting that the Liberals lay their hand on the table and reveal their negotiating plan to the U.S. What I am suggesting is that Canadians are looking to their government to show some leadership and be up front about where NAFTA could be heading.

Therefore, I would like to ask the parliamentary secretary to provide us some additional information this evening. We have not had an opportunity to hear from him or the Minister of Foreign Affairs at committee since Trump's election, so my questions this evening are these: what does the government want to get out of NAFTA negotiations, what opportunities does it see to modernize and strengthen the agreement, and how does the government intend to ensure negotiations are inclusive of Canadians' views, as well as respectful to the nation-to-nation relationship with indigenous peoples in Canada?

Mr. Matt DeCoursey (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Madam Speaker, as someone active on the trade file in the House, the member knows well that Canada, the U.S., and Mexico all benefit from NAFTA, thanks to the open and predictable rules-based trading environment that the agreement created 23 years ago.

In 2016, trilateral trade reached nearly \$1 trillion U.S., more than a threefold increase since 1993. The combined GDP of the three countries has more than doubled, and Canada is the largest single-country export market for the U.S. and one of the three largest-country merchandise export markets for 48 U.S. states.

In 2016, the U.S. exported nearly \$266 billion U.S. of merchandise to Canada, and nine million jobs in the U.S. depend on trade and investment with Canada. Overall, our trade is fair and balanced.

The elimination of tariffs and the creation of the rules set out in NAFTA have helped produce significant efficiencies in our supply chains in a number of industries, such as autos. It is this trade interdependence that supports millions of jobs across North America and strengthens trade and investment.

NAFTA has established a strong foundation that contributes to future economic growth and has set a valuable example of the benefits of trade liberalization. With nearly all tariffs on originating trade between the three member countries eliminated, the ultimate goal of NAFTA—to lower costs for producers and lower costs for consumers—is being achieved.

This government acknowledges how vital the softwood lumber industry is to Canadians right across this country as well. We have been working tirelessly toward a new agreement and will continue to do so. The Government of Canada wants a good deal, not just any deal, and we will vigorously defend Canadian softwood lumber interests through litigation if necessary.

Similarly, for the steel industry the government is making sure that the market operates in a fair environment with a strong trade remedy system and strong enforcement of measures at the border, as well as by working with all major steel-producing countries to tackle the problem of excess capacity and production found in some of these countries.

I thank the member for her question. She will know that if and when NAFTA negotiations begin, we will be ready and we will defend Canadian interests.

• (1925)

Ms. Tracey Ramsey: Madam Speaker, I thank the member for providing me with information that stakeholders need to hear. I have been travelling across the U.S. saying those exact same things with the statistics. However, in the House we do not need to be convinced of the importance of trade with the U.S., and certainly I do not need to be convinced of that in my riding of Essex. I understand the importance of it.

My question for the parliamentary secretary was, what is our plan? Where do we see opportunity? Where can we improve NAFTA in a way that is being called for across the board? When the Liberals continue to say that we need to improve this agreement, they need to start showing us how. In what ways do they see us improving it? In what ways do they see we can strengthen that relationship?

Currently, although there are a lot of conversations in NAFTA taking place in the House and at committees, we have no direction from the government of what it is the government is looking at. Again, my question is this: what does the government want to get out of NAFTA negotiations? What opportunities does it see to modernize and strengthen the agreement? How does the government intend to ensure negotiation—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Mr. Matt DeCoursey: Madam Speaker, again, our integrated economies will continue to provide a basis for advancing prosperity for all Canadians as well as Americans.

Canada is the single largest country export market for most U.S. states. Canada has many trade agreements with partners across the world. We are always willing to examine potential improvements.

This government is actively engaging with the U.S. administration across a range of files. However, the U.S. has not started the clock on NAFTA negotiations. When it does, the priority for this government will be jobs for Canadians, and you can rest assured, Madam Speaker, that we will vigorously pursue and defend Canadian interests.

MULTICULTURALISM

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Madam Speaker, I appreciate this opportunity to rise in the House and raise a matter that I had first raised with the parliamentary secretary at the time, on February 3 about the Paul Yuzyk Award for Multiculturalism. In fact, it was a multiculturalism award for which the government failed to make a call for nominations. The Liberals gave their excuse for not actually giving out the award as they did not get any nominations and so they did not give the award.

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It is the government's responsibility to call for nominations, receive them, review them, and then actually give out the award. The government cannot talk a good game about inclusiveness and multiculturalism and accepting other groups into our country and making them a part of the Canadian family without actually doing something about it.

The words that come to mind, of course are from a Yiddish proverb, "On his words no building could be built." I received a non-answer at the time from the parliamentary secretary. There was talk of the values of tolerance, inclusion, and diversity. Actually the answer had very little to do with my original query as to why the Government of Canada was failing to champion the Paul Yuzyk Award for Multiculturalism.

It is an important award. It is something that many members in different ethnic communities who have become Canadian citizens were very proud of because it was an opportunity for them to promote what they were doing to integrate into the Canadian family. Another saying that is very common in the faith community I belong to is, "Faith without works is dead."

It is part of a pattern of depriving and eliminating the legacy of the previous Conservative government. It is wiping out a legacy and promoting something new, the new sunny ways that we have heard so much about. The Paul Yuzyk Award for Multiculturalism was not just one piece that was missing. The Canada 150 medals were cancelled as well. The John Diefenbaker Defender of Human Rights and Freedom Award was also eliminated. These are all initiatives started by a previous government that did good works, promoted good values, and was a good steward of values that we care about as Canadians.

Has the government actually called for nominations for the multiculturalism award related to Paul Yuzyk? If it has, will it be announcing sometime shortly who has actually been awarded this award?

• (1930)

Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage (Multiculturalism), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank my friend opposite for his commitment to this issue. I will start with some prefatory comments about what our government is committed to and then I will answer the member's question directly.

Our government is committed to diversity. It is a great source of pride.

[*Translation*]

Thanks to several significant measures, we have already made progress on diversity and inclusion.

For example, we appointed Canada's very first gender-balanced cabinet. We allocated additional funds to Status of Women Canada to support gender-based analysis and the creation of a research and evaluation unit. We welcomed over 26,000 Syrian refugees, over 40,000 Syrian refugees, actually, in 2016. We made diversity and inclusion one of the themes for Canada 150. We restored the court challenges program.

[*English*]

With respect to this award, it was established in 2009. It commemorates the legacy of the late Senator Paul Yuzyk, a member of the Senate of Canada from February 1963 to July 1986. He played a key role in the development of Canada's multiculturalism policy. We remember that legacy. We also recognize Paul Yuzyk as a strong member of Canada's Ukrainian community, a community that has played a strong role in shaping our country and contributing to our rich cultural diversity. In fact, that immigration route has stood for 126 years at this point.

[*Translation*]

The award recognizes individuals and groups who have made an exceptional contribution to multiculturalism, diversity, and the integration of newcomers.

[*English*]

Since the award's launch in 2009 by the previous government, however, there has been a steady decline in the number of nominations received, from 88 nominations received in 2010 to 41 nominations received, again by the previous government, in 2015.

[*Translation*]

Because of declining public interest in the award, it was decided not to call for nominations in 2016. Departmental officials are looking for the best way to recognize Canadians' dedication to multiculturalism.

[*English*]

In direct response to the question from my friend opposite, it is not a question of erasing the legacy of the previous government in terms of this award, because this award is a useful award, when we award and promote people who promote diversity. However, when it comes to aspects of the previous government's legacy that did not promote our diversity, such as the barbaric cultural practices hotline, such as targeting religious minorities specifically for refugee resettlement to the detriment of other people from majority religions such as Sunni Muslims coming out of Syria, the member is absolutely correct that we will erase that legacy, because that is not what Canadians want. That is not what Canadians voted for in 2015. That is not what this government stood for in its platform, and it is not what we are going to implement.

What we will do is promote our diversity at every possible point in time. We will recognize people who are leaders in multiculturalism. We will do it in a way that is efficacious and rewards proper success and progressive ideas, and we will do it in a way that is commensurate with the ideas that Canadians elected us on.

Mr. Tom Kmiec: Madam Speaker, let me begin with this. The parliamentary secretary did not have to come here all dressed up for a special occasion. I am honoured by the fact that he has chosen to. Perhaps he is missing Politics and the Pen.

I have a great love for writing prizes, as I have mentioned before, both the Nebula prize and past debates on the budget. I know that today we will be giving out the Shaughnessy Cohen Prize for Political Writing.

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However, the answer I received is still imperfect. I basically got a recount of what the award is about, which I can find on the government website. It has been updated a bit. What I did not hear is how many actual nominations the government has received.

Second, what is the government doing to promote the award? This is an award given out by the Government of Canada, and therefore, it should be giving time to the award.

Before I end, I have just one more Yiddish proverb: "You can't ride in all directions at one time." I just want to know these two simple facts: how many nominations have been received, and what is the government doing to promote the award?

• (1935)

Mr. Arif Virani: Madam Speaker, my friend opposite perhaps is not aware of the different aspects or the different initiatives being undertaken by the Department of Canadian Heritage with respect to multiculturalism. Therefore, let me tell him about some of the applications we have received.

We have received applications for inter-action funding, which will fight racism, prejudice, and discrimination. That is a program that existed under the previous government but it did not have a large outreach component. Under our watch, on this side of the House, we have increased by fivefold the number of applications for grants through inter-action funding that will go to addressing what multiculturalism is meant to address, which is to combat racism, prejudice, and discrimination. There were 250 applications received by our department for such funding. We have committed \$5.5 million to that fight.

We believe in the value of diversity and in stressing diversity as a point of strength, not as a point of weakness, and in recognizing Canadians across this country who are promoting those very values.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 7:37 p.m.)

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