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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Thursday, May 18, 2017

—

Speaker: The Honourable Geoff Regan

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, May 18, 2017

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

•(1005)
[English]

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

The Speaker: I have the honour to inform the House that a message has been received from the Senate informing this House that the Senate has concurred in the amendment made by the House of Commons to amendment No. 1(b) to Bill C-37, An Act to amend the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act and to make related amendments to other Acts, without amendment.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

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

* * *

[Translation]

WAYS AND MEANS

NOTICE OF MOTION

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of International Development and La Francophonie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 83(1), I wish to table a notice of a ways and means motion to amend the Income Tax Act.

Pursuant to Standing Order 83(2), I ask that an order of the day be designated for consideration of the motion.

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[English]

INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

Mr. Robert Oliphant (Don Valley West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1), I have the honour to present to the

House, in both official languages, the report of the Canada-Africa Parliamentary Association respecting its participation in the bilateral mission to the Republic of Tunisia and the Arab Republic of Egypt, in Tunis, Tunisia, and Cairo, Egypt, from January 16 to 25, 2017.

* * *

[Translation]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Mr. Blake Richards (Banff—Airdrie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 31st report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs in relation to its study of the main estimates 2017-18.

* * *

[English]

NAVIGATION PROTECTION ACT

Ms. Irene Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-355, An Act to amend the Navigation Protection Act (North Thames River, Middle Thames River and Thames River)

She said: Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to reintroduce this bill to amend the Navigation Protection Act in order to ensure the integrity of the Thames River.

In 2000, the Thames River was designated a heritage river. It stretches 273 kilometres, extending from southwestern Ontario to Lake St. Clair. It flows past communities large and small, including the cities of London and Chatham.

The Thames River is lined by rich Carolinian forests, tulip trees, pawpaw trees, Kentucky coffee trees, and sassafras. It is home to many species of wildlife and fish that are rarely found elsewhere in Canada, including the eastern spiny softshell turtle, the queen snake, the black redbreast, and Virginia opossum.

In addition to a diverse species population, the Thames River has a rich cultural history. It has provided a home for people for over 11,000 years, wars have been fought along its shores, and its fertile land helped bring commercial farming to Canada.

For the past 200 years, the Thames River has remained largely unchanged, with many early buildings still standing. This environmental and cultural diversity must be preserved for future generations.

Routine Proceedings

In 2000, the Canadian Heritage Rivers System named the Thames River a designated heritage river. Its existence is a crucial part of our heritage, and it must be protected.

This amendment was first introduced in 2013 but was ignored by the government of the day. During the 2015 election, the Liberals promised the Canadian people that it would prioritize the amendment to the Navigation Protection Act. Today, I am calling upon the Liberals to keep their word and protect the Thames River.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

* * *

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

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

That, at the conclusion of today's debate on the opposition motion in the name of the Member for Edmonton—Wetaskiwin, all questions necessary to dispose of the motion be deemed put and a recorded division deemed requested and deferred until Tuesday, May 30, 2017, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

PETITIONS

TAXATION

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition signed by campers who stayed at the Chippawa Cottage Resort in Barry's Bay, Ontario, a great family place for camping in the wonderful riding of Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke.

The petitioners call on government to ensure that campgrounds with fewer than five full-time, year-round employees be treated and taxed as small businesses.

FIREARMS

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskasing, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise to table petitions from individuals in my riding from Webbwood, Massey, Espanola, Iron Bridge, Thessalon, Spanish, Manitoulin, Elliot Lake, many others from communities within the city of Greater Sudbury, and others across northern Ontario.

The petitioners raise concerns regarding the United Nations protocol against the illicit manufacturing of and trafficking in firearms, their parts, components, and ammunition. They indicate that the RCMP firearms tracing unit successfully traces firearms through the use of the firearms' make, model, and serial number. There are a couple of other paragraphs, including that the implementation of the firearms-marking regulations will impose

costly, onerous, and unnecessary requirements on manufacturers and importers of firearms.

The petitioners are asking the Government of Canada to revise the firearms-marking regulations to recognize that a simple requirement for a serial number on all new firearms imported into Canada will satisfy the United Nations request and adequately address the tracing requirements of police services.

• (1010)

MYANMAR

Mrs. Salma Zahid (Scarborough Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present petition e-761, which has been signed by more than 2,000 Canadians across Canada. Many of them are my constituents from the riding of Scarborough Centre.

These citizens and the residents of Canada call upon the Government of Canada to do all that is in its power to help the Rohingya Muslim community, including to put pressure on the government of Myanmar to fulfill its moral and legal obligation to ensure the safety of its Rohingya Muslim minority; to pressure the government of Myanmar to allow humanitarian assistance and international NGOs to reach Rakhine State and those Rohingyas in camps for internally displaced persons; to arrange for a visit to Rakhine from the Canadian ambassador to Myanmar to view the situation first-hand and report back to the government; to provide increased assistance and support for those countries that are housing Rohingya refugees as well as for Rohingyas in camps for internally displaced persons; and to support the commission led by the former UN secretary-general Kofi Annan studying the situation in the Rakhine state.

SPECIES AT RISK

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise again to present a petition from citizens of British Columbia regarding the woodland caribou. The woodland caribou is designated as endangered in Canada, and one of the core areas of its population is in the Wells Gray Provincial Park and Clearwater Valley area of British Columbia. The Clearwater Valley area has been designated as critical habitat for the species, yet the British Columbia government has allowed continued logging within this critical habitat.

The petitioners ask that the government bring in a protection order to stop industrial logging in these critical habitats for woodland caribou in the Wells Gray Provincial Park and Clearwater Valley area of British Columbia.

[*Translation*]

WATER QUALITY

Hon. Denis Paradis (Brome—Missisquoi, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, here is another petition about water quality in Lake Champlain. Ten percent of Lake Champlain is located within Canada and 90% within the United States, and it is full of blue-green algae. When it gets hot in the summer, the water is like pea soup. That is unacceptable.

I congratulate the mayors of Clarenceville, Saint-Armand, Bedford, and Venise-en-Québec for getting involved in their communities, and I thank them for forwarding their citizens' wishes regarding Lake Champlain's water quality to us.

This petition is addressed to the minister responsible for Global Affairs Canada.

[English]

TRANS-PACIFIC PARTNERSHIP

Ms. Tracey Ramsey (Essex, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a petition with more than 500 signatures from Canadians calling on the government to stop the trans-Pacific partnership and to not ratify this dangerous trade agreement.

The petitioners cite that it could cost tens of thousands of good Canadian jobs, leading to growing income inequality; raise the cost of medications; pose a barrier to a national pharmacare program; and ease the path for foreign takeovers. There are many other issues that they cite as being dangerous in the trans-Pacific partnership.

Currently, we do not know where the government is going with the trans-Pacific partnership.

These petitioners would like the government to not ratify it.

MINING

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present three petitions.

The first petition is a very specific one relating to the Kipawa lakes area, which is a unique ecological, cultural, and historical area. The petitioners see it as an area that is being threatened by Matamec Explorations Inc., which proposes to mine rare earths. Rare earths are known to have a number of contaminants associated with their mining, which would be inappropriate for the Kipawa lakes area.

• (1015)

FALUN GONG

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is from hundreds of Canadians calling for the government to speak clearly to the People's Republic of China to express our disapproval and, indeed, outrage at the treatment of practitioners of Falun Dafa and Falun Gong, including forced organ harvesting from these practitioners.

GENETICALLY MODIFIED FOODS

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): The third petition, Mr. Speaker, relates to an issue we debated just recently in this place, but it does not go away.

The petitioners are calling for action to label genetically modified organisms as they appear and are contained in consumer products, particularly in food. Labelling is a matter of consumer choice, and products should be labelled with information consumers want to have.

NATIONAL HOLIDAY

Mr. Robert-Falcon Ouellette (Winnipeg Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Jeff Ward from Victoria, British Columbia, asked me to table petition e-607, national holidays.

The petitioners call upon the House of Commons to designate June 21st of each year as a legal holiday to be kept and observed throughout Canada. They feel that this day should serve to create and strengthen opportunities for reconciliation and cultural exchange among Canadians. This day should facilitate connections between

Routine Proceedings

indigenous and non-indigenous Canadians in positive and meaningful ways and should solidify the original intent of National Aboriginal Day as a day for Canadians to recognize and celebrate the unique heritage, diverse cultures, and outstanding contributions of first nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples.

Tapwe akwa khitwam.

COMMEMORATIVE MEDALS

Hon. Peter Van Loan (York—Simcoe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, commemorative medals have been issued on significant milestones of Canadian history to recognize the contributions of ordinary citizens who have done remarkable things for their local communities, which might otherwise go unacknowledged. A medal was issued in our Confederation year, 1867; in the diamond jubilee year, 1927; in the centennial year, 1967; and in 1992, which was the 125th anniversary of Confederation.

As part of the Liberal war on history, the government has cancelled plans to have a medal to honour contributions of ordinary Canadians in this year, the 150th anniversary of Confederation. Tradition is being ignored and community-leading Canadians are being forgotten.

I have several petitions to present today on this subject. The petitioners come from Gatineau, Quebec; Forestville, Quebec; the very famous Baie-Comeau, Quebec; Southey, Saskatchewan; Melville, Saskatchewan; Regina, Saskatchewan; Manotick, Ontario; Osgoode, Ontario; Nepean, Ontario; and Ottawa, Ontario.

The petitioners call upon the Government of Canada to respect tradition in history, recognize deserving Canadians, and reverse the very unfortunate decision to cancel the commemorative medal that was planned to honour Canadians on the 150th anniversary of Confederation.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the following questions will be answered today: Nos. 949 and 954.

[Text]

Question No. 949—**Mr. Mark Strahl:**

With regard to a federal carbon tax or a price on carbon: (a) what analysis was conducted between 2015-2017 by the Department of Natural Resources with regard to the economic impact on the oil, gas and mining sectors, broken down by province and territory, on (i) future employment, (ii) investment, (iii) provincial royalties collected, (iv) tax collected provincially and federally, (v) the effects on Canada's gross domestic product; (b) of the economic impacts identified in (a) what were the various carbon price levels analyzed by the Department of Natural Resources; and (c) of the various price levels identified in (b), what were the estimated reductions in greenhouse gas emissions?

Hon. Jim Carr (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Natural Resources Canada is not the federal lead on carbon pricing, but works in close collaboration with federal partners and provincial colleagues to assess the impacts of carbon pricing and to explore measures to minimize the potential impacts on Canada's trade-exposed sectors.

Speaker's Ruling

Natural Resources Canada, with its federal and provincial partners on the working group on carbon pricing mechanisms, reviewed the potential impacts of various carbon pricing scenarios. These impacts will be dependent on the design of each provincial system and how that province chooses to reinvest any revenue that it generates. Carbon pricing is widely accepted as the most efficient measure to achieve emission reductions. Further analysis on the economic impacts of carbon pricing will become available as each province and territory clarifies the precise design of its carbon pricing systems.

Question No. 954— **Mr. Dave MacKenzie:**

With regard to page 11 of the Guide for Parliamentary Secretaries published by the Privy Council Office in December 2015, where it states that Parliamentary Secretaries are “prohibited from accepting sponsored travel”: (a) does the government consider the trips taken by Parliamentary Secretary Khera and Parliamentary Secretary Virani, which are listed in the 2016 sponsored travel report by the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner, to be a violation of the guide; (b) if the answer to (a) is affirmative, what corrective measures were taken to reconcile the violation; and (c) if the answer to (a) is negative, why does the government not consider these trips to be a violation?

Mr. Peter Schiefke (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister (Youth), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with regard to trips taken by Ms. Khera and Mr. Virani, their sponsored travel was pre-approved by the Office of the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner.

Furthermore, Ms. Khera and Mr. Virani made the proper and appropriate public declarations to the Office of the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner upon their return, in accordance with the rules that govern the practice of sponsored travel.

Sponsored travel is not unusual for ministers and parliamentary secretaries.

For example, Ms. Kerry-Lynne Findlay, the former Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice, travelled to Taiwan on a trip that was sponsored by the Chinese International Economic Cooperation Association.

Moreover, Hon. John Baird, while he was Minister of Foreign Affairs, travelled to Washington, D.C., a trip that was sponsored by the American Israel Public Affairs Committee.

* * *

[English]

QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if Question No. 950 could be made an order for return, this return would be tabled immediately.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the aforementioned question be made an order for return and that it be tabled immediately?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Text]

Question No. 950— **Mr. Mark Strahl:**

With regard to the decision by the government to designate all Canadian waters in the Arctic as indefinitely off-limits to future oil and gas licensing, a ban that will

be reviewed every five years: (a) what scientific analyses were undertaken by the Department of Natural Resources on the impacts of arctic offshore drilling; (b) have the scientific analyses completed in (a) been subjected to scientific peer review and, if so, by whom; (c) was an economic analysis completed to determine the impact this decision will have on the economies of (i) the Northwest Territories, (ii) Yukon, (iii) Nunavut; (d) if the answer to (c) is in the affirmative, what were the results of this analysis, broken down by territory; (e) if the answer to (c) is negative, what was the rationale for proceeding with the decision; (f) what were the estimated reductions in greenhouse gas emissions as a result of the decision; (g) broken down by territory, what consultations took place in the areas affected by the decision with (i) indigenous communities, (ii) territorial governments, (iii) local governments, (iv) other organizations; and (h) of the consultations completed in (g) what are the (i) dates, (ii) locations?

(Return tabled)

[English]

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

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

[Translation]

PRIVILEGE

COMMENTS OF MINISTER OF NATIONAL DEFENCE—SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: I am now prepared to rule on the question of privilege raised on April 4, 2017, by the honourable member for Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman concerning allegedly misleading statements made by the Minister of National Defence.

I would like to thank the member for Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman for having raised this matter, as well as the Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons for his contribution.

[English]

In presenting his case, the member for Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman explained that the answer to written Question No. 600, tabled in the House on January 30, 2017, and signed by the Minister of National Defence, stated that all members of the Canadian Armed Forces deployed in Operation Impact in Kuwait and Iraq were granted tax relief benefits by the previous government. In later submissions, on May 3 and 16, 2017, the member added that a press release issued by the minister on April 19, 2017, a briefing note prepared for the minister obtained through an access to information request, and a ministerial order issued by the President of the Treasury Board on April 17, 2017, further supported this assertion.

Points of Order

The member argued that the minister misled the House when, in answers to oral questions on March 8 and 21, 2017, he stated that members of the Canadian Armed Forces were sent by the previous government to Iraq and Kuwait without the tax-free allowance at the time of their deployment.

• (1020)

[Translation]

The member for Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman alleged that these two seemingly contradictory versions of events were misleading the House and therefore constituted a *prima facie* question of privilege since, as he stated, “Only one of these statements can be true.” In one of his submissions, the member presented evidence to support his contention that, and I quote:

...the Minister of National Defence has misled, fabricated, and embellished other issues on numerous occasions in addition to my original question of privilege.

For his part, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons explained that, as the tax relief in question was applied retroactively, the minister had in fact provided the very same information when responding to Order Paper Question No. 600 and to oral questions asked in the House. Thus, he characterized the matter as a dispute as to facts and not a question of privilege

[English]

Members have a right to request and obtain trustworthy information in order to carry out their parliamentary duties. This reliance on access to accurate information is the cornerstone of their ability to hold the government to account. As a result, the Chair has often been called upon to rule on the quality, completeness, and internal coherence of information provided in responses to questions, whether oral or written.

As members will know, the exchange of information in this place is constantly subject to varying and, yes, contradictory views and perceptions. This, of course, heightens the risk that, inadvertently, a member making a statement may be mistaken, or, in turn, that a member listening may misunderstand what another has stated.

This, in large part, is why strong, even indisputable evidence is needed for the Chair to reach the very serious conclusion that the House has been deliberately misled and that therefore a *prima facie* question of privilege exists.

[Translation]

To aid in this arduous task, the Chair is guided by three clear and well-established conditions, which my predecessor outlined in his ruling of April 29, 2015, when he stated at page 13197 of *Debates*:

...first, the statement needs to be misleading. Second, the member making the statement has to know that the statement was incorrect when it was made. Finally, it needs to be proven that the member intended to mislead the House by making the statement.

[English]

These criteria are meant to protect members as they freely express views that can be at odds with the views of other members.

Without evidence meeting these conditions, when faced with this type of allegation, the Chair has consistently concluded that the House has not, in fact, been deliberately misled, but rather that the

matter can only be viewed as a disagreement on the interpretation of facts.

Thus, while the member for Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman may be in disagreement with the statements made by the Minister of National Defence, there was no evidence presented that would suggest that the three necessary conditions existed in this case or that the Chair has cause, exceptionally, to overlook the long-standing practice of taking members at their word when the accuracy of their statements is called into question.

[Translation]

As stated at page 145 of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, second edition:

If the question of privilege involves a disagreement between two (or more) Members as to facts, the Speaker typically rules that such a dispute does not prevent Members from fulfilling their parliamentary functions nor does such a disagreement breach the collective privileges of the House.

[English]

As such, the Chair concludes that no *prima facie* case of privilege exists in this case.

I thank hon. members for their attention.

* * *

• (1025)

POINTS OF ORDER

COMMISSIONER OF OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am rising to address the point of order raised by the House leaders of the Conservative Party and the New Democratic Party respecting the appointment process for the position of Commissioner of Official Languages. Both these members alleged that one of the two conditions set out in section 49 of the Official Languages Act has not been met. Section 49 provides:

The Governor in Council shall, by commission under the Great Seal, appoint a Commissioner of Official Languages for Canada after consultation with the leader of every recognized party in the Senate and House of Commons and approval of the appointment by resolution of the Senate and House of Commons.

On May 8, 2017, the Prime Minister wrote to the leaders of the Conservative Party and the New Democratic Party pursuant to the requirements in the statute to consult on the proposed appointments of the Commissioner of Official Languages for Canada. The Prime Minister requested the views of the two leaders on the proposed appointments.

On May 10, the leader of the Conservative Party responded to the Prime Minister on the proposed appointment, and on May 12, the leader of the New Democratic Party also provided his views. The requirement is to consult, not to abide by the recommendations of the leaders of the two recognized parties. This statutory condition has in fact been met.

Business of Supply

I would draw to the attention of the members the situation in the previous Parliament respecting the appointment of the Auditor General. The previous prime minister consulted the then leader of the Liberal Party, Bob Rae, and the leader of the NDP on the proposed appointment of Mr. Ferguson to the position of Auditor General. While I cannot comment on the response of the NDP leader, Mr. Rae raised concerns about the proficiency of Mr. Ferguson to speak French and therefore asked Mr. Harper to restart the selection process to find a bilingual candidate.

Additionally, the NDP House leader raised an argument that there are legal precedents respecting what constitutes consultation. There are clear precedents that the Speaker is not authorized to adjudicate on legal matters.

On November 28, 2002, the Speaker ruled:

This principle is clearly outlined as well as in the fourth edition of Bourinot at page 180, which states:

The Speaker...will not give a decision upon a constitutional question, nor decide a question of law, though the same be arranged on a point of order or privilege.

It is not up to the Speaker to rule on the constitutionality or the legality of measures before the House.

While the opposition parties may not agree with the nominee for the position of Commissioner of Official Languages, that opposition does not constitute a veto over the proposed appointment. We will let the House decide upon the matter.

The Speaker: I thank the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons for his intervention on the question of the point of order raised yesterday by the hon. member for Victoria, and on which also I have heard from the hon. opposition House leader. I will come back to the House in due course with a ruling.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

●(1030)

[English]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER

Hon. Mike Lake (Edmonton—Wetaskiwin, CPC) moved:

That, given that: (a) Autism Spectrum Disorder (“autism”) is widely considered the fastest growing neurological disorder in Canada, impacting an estimated 1 in 68 children; (b) it is a lifelong diagnosis that manifests itself in a wide-range of symptoms, including difficulty communicating, social impairments, and restricted and repetitive behaviour; (c) individuals with autism and their families face unique challenges over their lifespan, often leading to families in crisis situations; and (d) Autism Spectrum Disorder is not just a health issue — it has overarching implications for Canadian society as a whole; accordingly, the House call on the government to grant the \$19 million over 5 years requested by the Canadian Autism Partnership working group, Self-Advocates advisory group, and the Canadian Autism Spectrum Disorders Alliance, in order to establish a Canadian Autism Partnership that would support families and address key issues such as information sharing and research, early detection, diagnosis and treatment.

He said: Mr. Speaker, today is a very important day. I believe today is the first time the House has spent a full day talking about the challenges faced by Canadians living with autism and their families.

I am going to start by thanking a few people. Obviously, I am going to start by thanking my son, Jaden, who, to me, is an absolute

superhero. This is a 21-year-old who is non-verbal, yet the way he communicates with people on a one-to-one basis is unlike anyone I have ever seen. He has a way to connect with people, without speaking, that we have trouble with in our regular lives.

I want to thank my amazing daughter, Jenae, who turns 18 this week. She is graduating from high school this month as well. It is hard to believe.

I speak for a living and do interviews for a living, but Jenae probably gave the best answer I have ever heard to an interview question when she was 13 years old. She was asked by Steve Paikin, in an interview about her brother, if she ever wished her brother was “normal”, like every other kid. Jenae's response was that since Jaden was diagnosed with autism before she was born, she didn't exactly know what a normal brother was like, so Jaden, having autism, kind of was her normal. Steve asked her if she liked him just the way he was. She said that if Jaden did not have autism, or was cured or something, he would not be the same as Jaden was then. Jenae was very wise at 13 years old talking about how Jaden has impacted her life.

I also want to thank Jaden's mother, Debi. We have been apart for several years now, but Debi is an absolute champion for Jaden and has been a champion for Jaden throughout his life. When it came to advocating for him at a young age for early intervention, when it came to working through the school system and in the battle to try to get an aide for him, she was a pit bull for him in terms of that advocacy. We were able to get the help he needed every step of the way because of her advocacy and her championing of his interests.

I have a few more people to thank. I want to thank my staff, who put in tireless hours month after month. We work on a lot of big things: the global autism partnership; the Canadian autism partnership; global maternal health and the rights of women and girls around the world; managing the largest constituency in the country, out of 338 constituencies; and working with constituents. I thank them.

I am going to go back a little in time and thank Stephen Harper, the prime minister in 2015, who initiated the Canadian autism partnership working group, along with former finance minister Joe Oliver and our health minister at the time, who is now our current Leader of the Opposition. In budget 2015, there was \$2 million put in place to establish the Canadian autism partnership working group.

There were some staff members at that time who were critical in helping me understand the road to getting there. I will thank Rachel Curran, Sean Speer, and David van Hemmen, in particular, for their help in getting there.

In my global work, I get to work with some key individuals and global organizations that have come to support the Canadian autism partnership. Huge thanks go to Save the Children, Plan International Canada, World Vision Canada, and UNICEF Canada, which have really stepped up on social media to support this initiative.

Global Citizen is an organization that works to alleviate poverty and fight inequality around the world on behalf of the world's most vulnerable. Global Citizen in Canada has chosen, as its first domestic initiative, to champion the Canadian autism partnership, recognizing the challenges faced by Canadian families living with autism. A huge thanks goes to the folks at Global Citizen for the great work they have done.

We have also had some support from friends in the hockey world. I formerly worked for the Edmonton Oilers for 10 years before I was elected. We have had support on social media from Hayley Wickenheiser, Elliotte Friedman, Steve Warne, right here in Ottawa, and Kodette LaBarbera. Again, they have huge platforms and are very busy at this time, and they have taken the time to make their point on social media in support of the Canadian autism partnership. I thank them.

Most important, probably, beyond my family, is to thank the stakeholders, the working groups, and the incredible group of self-advocates, adults living with autism who can articulate, in a unique way, what it is like to have autism.

I had a really great conversation with one of them, Patricia, this weekend. We talked about the importance of the Canadian autism partnership. Every single time I talked to a self-advocate, I learn something new. In Patricia's case, it was the word "autistic" versus "having autism".

• (1035)

I have always talked about Jaden having autism, because I have always thought it was something he has, not something he is, but Patricia reinforced for me that for some in the autism community, they like to be defined as autistic. It is who they are, not something they have. It is an important differentiation, and I got an understanding I did not have before we had that conversation this past weekend.

Of course, I want to thank people who come up to me in random places who appreciate the work we are doing and who work to understand. I remember one time a few years back, Jaden and I were in New York at the Radio City Music Hall. Jaden, Jenae, and I were watching a Kelly Clarkson concert. Jaden dropped a pin on the floor and was obsessed with this pin the entire concert, so the entire concert, for me and Jaden, was spent with Jaden rummaging around for the pin, bumping the chair in front of him. We never did find the pin, but during the entire concert, that was the case, with me trying to grab him and play with him and get his attention away from it. The person in front of us, whose seat he had been bumping the whole time, turned around afterward. I thought she was going to be upset, and she said, "You are the best dad in the world." This complete stranger had noticed what was going on, and rather than being upset about it, rather than ignoring it and just walking away, she took time to let me know that she noticed and to let me know that she understood that it was difficult. I had tears in my eyes, as one can imagine, leaving that concert. She was someone I will never meet again. I never got the person's name. She never got my name, but in that moment, it was that level of understanding that, as parents of kids with autism or family members of people with autism, we need. We need that understanding more and more in our society when different things are happening.

Business of Supply

When Jaden was three, as we were walking out of a restaurant, he grabbed a drink of someone's beer off a table, because he was thirsty, there was a glass there, and he did not understand that he was not supposed to have it. There was the time we were at an Oilers hockey game, when Jaden was nine, and he suddenly, out of nowhere, reached over the shoulder of the five-year-old girl in front of him and grabbed the ice cream off the top of her cone, as if he had a snowball, and started eating it out of his hand, with ice cream dripping down his fingers. I said to the dad, "I'm so sorry, Jaden has autism", and he understood. Of course, the five-year-old girl did not understand at all. We explained it, we got her a new ice cream at the intermission, and everything was good. That is life with Jaden, and it can be challenging sometimes.

When I talk about the Canadian autism partnership and the work we do on autism here in this House, a lot of people make the mistake of thinking that I am championing my son's interests. Jaden has lived in one of the best places in the world to live, Alberta, if one has a child with autism. What I am really championing is for every person living with autism in Canada to have the same opportunities Jaden has had.

When Jaden was two, we realized he had autism. It took a bit to get a diagnosis. It took a couple of months to get in and then maybe a couple of months to get treatment, but Jaden started his early intervention at about two and a half. At that time, he did not even recognize me. Folks in this House have seen Jaden interact now, and he has interacted with many of them. However, back then, his main interaction with me was that he would come into a room where I was, grab me, and drag me through the house to the pantry. He would grab my arm and push it up to the pantry door, push my arm into the pantry to the shelf where he wanted to grab the crackers he could not reach, and then pull me out and pull my arm down, like his own personal robot. He would grab the crackers he wanted, put them back in my hand, push my arm back up, back into the pantry, and then push me away. He did this as a two-and-a-half-year-old or three-year-old. I had served his purpose as his personal robot. He had his crackers. He would go back to playing with his pots and pans, lining them up, stacking them up, obsessed with them for hours, sometimes. He would take breaks to watch *Barney* videos or *The Sound of Music*, which he watched about 300 times. I liked *The Sound of Music* the first 100 times. I still like it now. Anyway, that was life with Jaden.

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The early intervention completely changed his mind. It started with putting a spoon on the table and getting him to give us the spoon. It was to have him recognize what a thing was and, hand over hand, have him hand us the spoon. We would then celebrate it by clapping and giving him a Smartie as a reward. Over and over again, we would do this one thing, and then eventually, it was a spoon and a fork or something else. This continued and got better. We started to help him build social interactions and recognize other things over the course of that time. Some of Jenae's earliest memories, as someone three and a half years younger, were, when she was two, learning English by watching Jaden do his early intervention and sometimes doing it with him.

● (1040)

There is video of Jenae with a car and a big stuffed Zoe, and Jenae loves Zoe. She would say, "Jaden, give me Zoe", and Jaden would give her Zoe. That is the way she learned language, by interacting with Jaden over the course of time. That is really important.

As Jaden got older, he went to school, and we had to deal with trying to get him a full-time aid. Jaden has a photographic memory. Jaden knows where the swimming pool is, and he loves swimming, but he does not understand traffic at all. Even at 21, he does not understand traffic. We have to work with him to navigate that. He could leave the school and know where the swimming pool was, but it would be very dangerous for him, so we had to have someone with him at all times. That took a bit of education with the school system.

Jaden now, at 21, is in a program at the Centre for Autism Services of Alberta. It is called Quest for Independence. He went to school until last year, but now he is sort of transitioning. The goal, of course, is to get him into a vocation of some sort, but that is a challenge. It is a challenge across the country getting people who have gone through the school system into a vocation of some sort and into the training they need. There is also the mitigation of some of the challenges they might have, depending on where they are on the spectrum, navigating a job interview and that kind of process, which is very abstract for people with autism.

Of course, the question we then have is what happens as Jaden gets older. Right now we have an agreement that Jaden will live with one or the other of us, and we are good with that. However, there is going to come a time, and this is the hardest question for every parent of a child with autism, or any developmental disability in this country, when we are not there anymore. My hope is that we have built a society in this country that is so supportive of people who are different, people who need some level of support, that we need not fear that and we have built an environment that goes beyond family.

Jaden has only one sibling. Jenae cannot be expected to take care of Jaden for the rest of his life. Certainly she knows that she is his only sibling and is prepared for whatever responsibility she has as his sister, and she loves him very much, but we need to build a support system around that for families.

That brings us to the Canadian autism partnership. There has been a history to get here, working with the Canadian Autism Spectrum Disorders Alliance, CASDA, and stakeholders from across the country. There had been a call for a national autism strategy for many years. We got to a point where we started asking the stakeholders what they actually want. What is it they are looking for?

Many of the things the autism community is looking for are provincial in nature. They are provincially delivered, such as education, health care, and social services, and the provinces are responsible for them.

In 2014, we saw that there was a role to play in vocations, so in budget 2014, Jim Flaherty, at the time, put in place funding for a CommunityWorks program and a program called Ready, Willing & Able, two programs to help people with autism in the vocational world. In budget 2015, we worked with CASDA and other stakeholders to ask for the Canadian autism partnership, and as mentioned earlier, \$2 million over two years was given to a working group to establish that partnership, with a clear indication, at the time, that the partnership would be funded once this expert working group had done its work, along with the other stakeholders and self-advocates.

They did incredible work. They worked for years on that. They submitted their business plan and then asked the government of the day, this past fall, for \$19 million over five years, or \$3.8 million a year. As I mentioned in this House yesterday, \$3.8 million a year is one dime per Canadian. It is a dime per Canadian for a Canadian autism partnership.

I have to say that there was an expectation that this was a no-brainer and that it would be funded for sure. How could one not support an evidence-based business plan, put together by stakeholders from across the country, that would help hundreds of thousands of Canadians as vulnerable as those living with autism? Inexplicably, it was not in budget 2017. It was rejected.

Now we have moved forward, and we are asking that it be funded anyway, that the government find a way to find that dime per Canadian to help Canadians living with autism. We have come to this point where we have an opposition day, a full day in this House, dedicated to a single question. It is not like a budget, where there are a whole bunch of other things thrown into the mix. We are just going to debate this one idea of a Canadian autism partnership. In the end, probably a couple of weeks from now, we will vote on it. Every single member in this House will vote on this. It is an important opportunity.

● (1045)

John Wooden, a famous NCAA basketball coach, has one of my favourite quotes. He said, "You can't live a perfect day without doing something for someone who will never be able to repay you." That is a fantastic quote and is applicable in some way today.

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For the members, and Canadians who might be watching this, if we do something for people with autism, they will be able to repay us. That is the point. People with autism and other developmental disabilities are capable of way more than we give them credit for, but we have to invest in them, just like we invest in everyone else in our society. We have to believe in them. Sometimes it means we have to work a little harder to understand some of the challenges, like the difficulty dealing with the abstract. Why is 85% on the spectrum not employed? Let us work hard to understand that and to figure out how we get the opportunity to benefit from those skills and abilities.

If people have just met Jaden and he gives them a high five, it is really easy to underestimate him. However, if they see him working in the library, putting books away, it is astonishing how much he is capable of. He will be putting books away. He will have them all in order and will be running around the library putting the books where they belong, never making a mistake. However, as Jaden is running around the library, if he sees a book that has been put in the wrong spot, he will grab it without skipping a beat and put it in the right spot. He sees the world differently, but he will not be able to use those skills if we do not pay attention to them, if we do not hard wire our society to look for that. The Canadian autism partnership is all about that.

The Canadian autism partnership recognizes jurisdiction and brings experts together from across the country to deal with families with autism. Then it advises governments in the jurisdictions. It might take a look at something like early intervention or diagnosis. Right now in Quebec, families are facing a two-year wait for diagnosis and then a two-year wait for treatment. Their kids are two years old. They know they have autism, yet they cannot get them diagnosed until they are four and they cannot get the evidence-based treatment they need until they are six. Families are mortgaging their houses to get this evidence-based treatment.

The Canadian autism partnership would work with the Government of Quebec and show it what evidence shows will work. It would be a trusted adviser with the Government of Quebec, or any other government. Multiple governments across the country are having difficulty in various areas. Education, housing, transition to employment, all of those things are challenging. The Canadian autism partnership would bring the best information from across the country and around the world and ensure it would be distributed in a way that policy could be executed right now so we would not have to wait for this.

As I wrap up, I will use one more quote. JFK said, “Things don’t happen, they are made to happen.” That is where we are right now.

For folks in the autism community who might be watching this right now, or anyone else who has heard what I have said and understands its importance, we need to act. I believed, and I think stakeholders believed this as well, that budget 2017 would contain the funding for the Canadian autism partnership. It seemed like a no-brainer at the time. However, it did not.

Quite honestly, when I stood and asked my question in the House of Commons yesterday, I believed that maybe at this point, knowing the motion was coming, the minister might stand and say that the government had thought about it, that it had made a mistake, and that had decided it would do it. That did not happen.

I firmly believe that if Canadians speak up and make their voices heard, through the Global Citizen action, directly to their members of Parliament, when the vote comes on this in a couple of weeks, members of the House will vote the right way. People from all parties get elected because they want to make a difference in the lives of people. This is a clear motion, a clear opportunity to make a difference in the lives of hundreds of thousands of Canadians.

I want to thank members of Parliament for hearing me out on this. I look forward to the debate today. If people watching have any questions, or want to take part, my Facebook and Twitter handle are “MikeLakeMP”. Pinned to the top is the Global Citizen action. I ask them to take action and help our elected officials make the right decision.

• (1050)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to compliment the member across the way. It takes courage to be a strong advocate, and I have witnessed that not only today but on other occasions when the member has talked about his wonderful son Jaden. I think all members of the House would join me in expressing our best wishes to Jaden, and to compliment his father for the outstanding work he has done, not just in the last year or so but virtually since the birth of Jaden. No doubt Jaden is an outstanding individual who contributes to our society in many different ways.

Autism disorder affects so many Canadians in every region of the country. I also have first-hand experience with autism. I have had to deal with it in my family. I understand and appreciate how important this issue is.

The member made reference to the Minister of Health. I can assure the member, and all members of the House, that she views this in a very serious way. We know that. That is all part of the negotiations that take place with the different partners and stakeholders across Canada.

I used to be the health critic for the province of Manitoba, and it goes beyond just one department. Would the member agree that the best thing a national government can do is demonstrate leadership in working with the many different provincial and territorial jurisdictions to try to build a consensus on how to best deal with this?

Hon. Mike Lake: Madam Speaker, the member should know that the Canadian autism partnership working group travelled from coast to coast and worked with every government. In fact, CAP is endorsed by governments across the country. This is the very mechanism the member spoke of when he asked his question. CAP is designed to work with governments, in their jurisdictions, on issues facing families with autism. I can assure him that it will make a very real difference for those families.

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Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I have frequently met my colleague from Edmonton—Wetaskiwin's handsome son over the eight years I have been here, and I pay tribute to the member and his former wife for the good job they have done in raising their children.

Two members of the House have had experience with autism in their families. However, I think it would be fair to say that probably every member in this place, if not having experienced it with his or her family, has experienced it with friends, extended family or in his or her community.

My understanding is that the purpose of this organization is to ensure that everyone in Canada has access to the kinds of services and supports the member's son has had. I wonder if the member could speak a bit more to what this partnership is supposed to enable so all children can access those services.

Hon. Mike Lake: Madam Speaker, one in 68 people live with autism. If we think about an average family of four, that means one in 17 Canadians lives in a family with someone with autism.

It took a long time to get there, and a lot of conversations with incredible public servants in health and of course in our government at the time to ensure we had something that respected jurisdiction and had a meaningful impact. The Canadian autism partnership will do that. It is not just another autism organization. It is a partnership with the Canadian autism community, speaking with one authoritative voice as best it can, not always unanimously, finding that 80% we can agree upon, and to give evidence-based advice to government so elected people from all political parties in all parts of the country can make the best decisions possible.

•(1055)

[Translation]

Mr. Alupa Clarke (Beauport—Limoilou, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech and the work that he does on this issue.

I missed the better part of his speech, so he may have already gone over this, but beyond the monetary investment that the Liberal government should be making in this area, what else can it do to proactively help those suffering from autism spectrum disorder? I imagine that there is something more tangible than monetary investments that the government should be providing. I wonder if the hon. member could elaborate on that.

[English]

Hon. Mike Lake: Madam Speaker, while it is a Canadian autism partnership, one thing that everyone has had on their minds, as we discuss this with stakeholders, is that the impact needs to be beyond just the world of autism.

For example, it was brought up a couple of times that the government was undertaking accessibility legislation. The Canadian autism partnership would work to help inform accessibility legislation on behalf of Canadians living with autism. It would work with other organizations, for example, the Canadian Association for Community Living. It might work with that organization on housing and sharing ideas on not only how to help Canadians living with autism, but other Canadians living with other development disabilities, which the CACL serves. There is huge potential.

When we talk about the CAP informing and advising governments in their jurisdictions, that includes the federal government. A big focus, for example, for the working group and others working on this is aboriginal communities and how the Canadian autism partnership might work with them to better serve their families living with autism.

[Translation]

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon (Parliamentary Secretary for Sport and Persons with Disabilities, Lib.): Madam Speaker, first of all I want to congratulate my colleague opposite for his speech, his commitment, and also his support for Jaden. I have met his son on the Hill, and I support the member's efforts on this file.

As the Parliamentary Secretary for Sport and Persons with Disabilities, I have learned about this issue from all the members of organizations that we have met across Canada, from coast to coast. I can say that I have been really moved by this issue. Furthermore, my wife has devoted her life to autism. She is a special education teacher who works with very young children in schools. I hear about it every day. I have learned a lot about it. We are working hard to pass legislation on this issue.

I would like to ask my colleague opposite a question: could this bill that we have been working on across Canada include the ideas presented today?

[English]

Hon. Mike Lake: Madam Speaker, I am not 100% clear what the question was, even with translation.

I appreciate the sentiment and best wishes. I do not question that members on all sides of the House like the work I am doing and like my son Jaden. However, we will not get anywhere if we never get beyond best wishes.

Families across the country need action now. Today families learn their children have autism because there is more and more information, or some informal relationship, a friend or someone like that, has helped them understand their children have autism. However, they wait a year or two for a diagnosis that will help them get the treatment they need. Then they wait a year or two for that treatment. They desperately need that now. To lose that window is devastating for those families. In many cases, if they can afford it, they mortgage their houses to do it, because they know their children need the help today.

This debate seems to continue to drag on without any commitment to move forward. We need to move beyond the conversation in the House of Commons and pass this motion now. It is just a motion; it is not binding, in and of itself. The government then needs to act when it is passed. Families need this now.

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• (1100)

[Translation]

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to begin by thanking the member for Edmonton—Wetaskiwin for his eloquent and much appreciated speech.

[English]

I am pleased to be in the House today to speak to an important issue that affects people from all walks of life: autism spectrum disorder. This disorder has a significant and life-long impact on those diagnosed with it, as well as on their families.

In 2007 that the Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology released its report entitled, “Pay Now or Pay Later: Autism Families in Crisis”. This important study brought the challenges facing families clearly into view. It stimulated dialogue, and continues to be an important source of motivation and inspiration for those working to better support children, youth, and adults with autism.

[Translation]

We all know that autism spectrum disorder, or ASD, is a complex disorder that manifests differently from person to person. Unfortunately, we do not fully understand what causes it.

Canada has a world-class ASD research community, as well as dedicated health care and social service providers, who are working with ASD organizations and families to make a difference in the lives of those with this condition.

[English]

Whether working to improve diagnosis and treatment, support in schools, or transition into employment, Canada's ASD stakeholders are passionate and committed to creating inclusive communities for people with ASD. I thank them for their ongoing efforts.

We must recognize that we must support not only the people with ASD, but also their families. The complex challenges facing those living with ASD have seen these families call on the government for help. Raising a child is not easy, and we know that raising a child with autism poses even more challenges.

While these are areas of provincial and territorial jurisdiction, the work we are doing federally complements and supports provincial and territorial efforts. Today, I would like to talk about the Government of Canada's response in helping individuals with ASD and their families.

We know that ASD often means health, social, and financial challenges. It is estimated that the lifetime cost for an ASD-diagnosed individual ranges from \$1.12 million to \$4.7 million. Data on ASD in Canada is limited, but estimates indicate that approximately one in 94 children under the age of 14 has been diagnosed with ASD. It is also estimated that boys are five times more likely to be diagnosed with ASD than girls.

[Translation]

It is critical to bring knowledge, awareness, analysis, and action to this issue so that we can provide the right level of support to those in need.

[English]

Last November, the Canadian Autism Spectrum Disorder Alliance, CASDA, presented the minister with its Canadian autism partnership business plan. This plan outlined key areas that need to be developed and addressed. These include research, early detection and treatment, and family support. The government is investing in these key areas, as outlined in the Canadian autism partnership business plan.

The federal government's investments in research, data and vocational training are supporting those affected by this disorder. For example, through the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, the Government of Canada has invested more than \$39 million over the last five years to support autism research.

[Translation]

Canadian scientists are at the forefront of this research, and these funds are helping our researchers develop new tools and treatments for those living with ASD.

[English]

For example, in the area of genomics, Canadian researchers are building our knowledge and deepening our understanding of ASD, which could eventually lead to earlier diagnosis. We know that early diagnosis for ASD is very important. It helps ensure children and families get the help they need as soon as possible.

[Translation]

These researchers are also studying the connection between mental health and ASD, evaluating novel treatment strategies, and looking for ways to improve access to health care for those with ASD.

[English]

Furthermore, the Canadian Institutes of Health Research is providing funding for a research chair in autism spectrum disorders, currently held by Dr. Jonathan Weiss at York University, which focuses on the prevention and treatment of mental health problems in people with ASD.

Since the launch of this initiative in January 2013, Dr. Weiss and his team have published a number of articles to disseminate information to physicians and parents to help address mental health problems in youth suffering from ASD. We believe that this valuable work will lead to improved treatment, care, and policies for children and youth with ASD.

The Canadian Institutes of Health Research, in collaboration with the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, also committed an investment of \$39 million over 10 years from 2009 to 2019. This funding will support the Kids Brain Health trans-Canadian network.

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•(1105)

[Translation]

The network focuses on improving diagnosis, treatment, and support for families raising children with brain-based disabilities, such as autism.

[English]

Beyond the research, it is imperative that we gather accurate data about ASD in Canada. To achieve this objective, the Public Health Agency of Canada is working with the provinces and territories to establish the national ASD surveillance system.

[Translation]

Once established, this system will enable us to gather reliable information on the number of Canadians living with ASD and the number of new cases every year. This information will help organizations, health care professionals, and families to address the health and social impacts of ASD.

[English]

Beyond the numbers, the national ASD surveillance system will provide us with qualitative data on the ASD population in Canada. It will enable us to compare trends within Canada and internationally so that we can work in identifying potential risk factors. Public reporting on ASD prevalence in Canada from the surveillance system is planned to begin in 2018.

[Translation]

The Government of Canada is also supporting a number of initiatives to improve the quality of life of individuals living with autism.

[English]

For example, we have made improvements to the child disability benefit and the Canada child benefit to support the families of children with disabilities, including ASD.

Under the leadership of the Minister of Sport and Persons with Disabilities, we are developing federal accessibility legislation. This legislation would aim to eliminate systemic barriers in our society. It would provide equal opportunities to all Canadians. We want our nation to be supportive, fair, and inclusive. The government is proud to demonstrate real leadership in supporting a fair and inclusive nation accessible to all Canadians.

Employment and Social Development Canada held public consultations to seek the public's input on various aspects of the legislation, including the overall goal and approach and whom it should cover. These consultations ended in February of this year. All input received will be considered during the development of this legislation.

In partnership with the Canadian Association for Community Living and the Canadian ASD Alliance, the government is also supporting the ready, willing, and able initiative which the member mentioned in his speech earlier. Through this program, we would see greater numbers of people with ASD joining the workforce. Our workforce would become more diverse and inclusive and we would see job vacancies filled across the country. Once fully implemented,

this initiative would support up to 1,200 new jobs for persons with developmental disabilities, including ASD.

[Translation]

In addition, we are supporting the Sinneave Family Foundation and Autism Speaks Canada. Both of these organizations are helping to create employment opportunities for individuals with ASD by expanding vocational training programs across Canada.

[English]

The Public Health Agency of Canada will also be connecting with the ASD community to further explore ways we can work together on key issues.

As members can see, the Government of Canada is committed to helping to expand our evidence base on ASD, supporting Canadian researchers in studying the many facets of this disorder, and most important, working to improve the quality of life of those living with ASD and their families.

Hon. Mike Lake (Edmonton—Wetaskiwin, CPC): Madam Speaker, interestingly, the research chair, the surveillance program “ready, willing, and able”, and Community Works were all initiatives that we put in place when we were in government. I really would commend the late Jim Flaherty for having a heart for Canadians with disabilities in ensuring there was something for Canadians with developmental disabilities in every single budget during his time as finance minister.

I am going to ask a very straightforward question about the Canadian autism partnership. Dr. Jonathan Weiss was one of the people in the working group. The Sinneave Family Foundation, Autism Speaks, and CASDA were all represented on the working group that put the report forward. I will ask the hon. member straight out. Will the government be supporting this motion?

[Translation]

Mr. Joël Lightbound: Madam Speaker, I thank the member for his question.

He mentioned the late hon. Jim Flaherty, and yes, many initiatives were instituted under the previous government. One of them was the ready, willing and able program, which we continue to support. We have also maintained funding for autism spectrum research. As I said in my speech, the Canada Institutes of Health Research invested \$39 million over five years in autism research.

Some of these initiatives were set up by the previous government, and I commend it for that. We have to maintain these initiatives and pursue research in those areas that are under federal jurisdiction. We have to support the provinces, which are responsible for delivering health care services, and one way to do that is through research and data that enable them to provide better care to Canadians.

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I also want to remind the House that our latest budget includes a new amount for disabled children, which can be up to \$2,800 per child, in addition to the Canada child benefit. We are also going ahead with a legislative initiative from the Minister of Sport and Persons with Disabilities that will remove barriers to entry for people with autism spectrum disorder and make our country and our society among the most open and inclusive in the world.

• (1110)

[English]

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Speaker, I did not hear an answer from the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health to the question asked by the member for Edmonton—Wetaskiwin. I do think this is critical.

As members know, I was in the provincial legislature, and I was the critic for Community Living British Columbia. I have had the pleasure of coming across a lot of people with different abilities in our province. There are many families who are struggling, particularly in Vancouver East, who do not have the access to the necessary resources to get early diagnosis, the treatment and the support they need for these children to thrive and to have the opportunities that they deserve.

With respect to the motion, the key point here is to bring forward an initiative that would provide that kind of support to families, to do the necessary research, and hopefully to have a national standard going forward to support families with children with different abilities and, in this particular instance, those who have been diagnosed with autism.

It is a worthy motion to support. It is a drop in the bucket when we are talking about \$19 million within the context of everything. Again, will the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health's government support this motion? I hope that it will because—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Joël Lightbound: Madam Speaker, I think all of us on both sides of the House agree that autism spectrum disorder is a real disorder that affects thousands of families across the country, and that we need to do as much as we can to help in terms of research and in terms of care.

That said, we are assessing the proposition by CASDA and we are looking at ways in which to support partners and researchers across the country to make sure that autism spectrum disorder gets the funding needed for research and for accessibility legislation, as we have mentioned, and help for the families who are affected by this.

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from Edmonton—Wetaskiwin for bringing forward this motion. I have had the honour and pleasure of knowing the member and his son Jaden for many years, since before he joined the House, and Debi as well. I am very impressed and grateful for the work the member has done on this issue.

I have the pleasure of sitting on the government operations and estimates committee. We spend a great amount of time looking at the estimates. In the supplementary estimates (C) which came out in February, the government wrote off an \$18-million loan to the

despotic Castro regime. The Castros are worth about \$1.2 billion and yet the government gave them \$18 million of taxpayers' money. Will the government commit to providing that same funding as is requested in the motion today?

Mr. Joël Lightbound: Madam Speaker, we are committed to supporting people and their families. We are doing it already through research.

• (1115)

[Translation]

Through the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, the Government of Canada has invested \$39.1 million over the past few years to support scientific research into autism spectrum disorder in order to have better data and better analyses, and to make advancements in treatment.

We are also investing \$15 million to give persons with developmental disabilities better access to all the services available to them and better access to the job market. This is possible partly through our support for the Sinneave Family Foundation.

We continue to support the ready, willing and able initiative mentioned earlier. We continue to invest in the Canadian Institutes of Health Research to find solutions, improve the quality of life of children living with ASD, and help their families have better access to the job market and the services they need.

As I said, we are in the process of determining, as we have already been doing with several interest groups, how we can improve the quality of life of Canadians affected by ASD.

[English]

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, it is my first opportunity to join today's debate on a supply day motion in the name of the hon. member for Edmonton—Wetaskiwin. I would like to confirm that I will be voting for his motion, as I would hope the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health would do.

I have enjoyed working with the parliamentary secretary since he has taken his position. He is enormously accessible and helpful on a number of issues. However, I am baffled. I simply do not understand why a national autism strategy was not in this year's budget. I know that is not in his wheelhouse; that is the Minister of Finance's. However, as someone who approaches this issue and wants to see the new Liberal government do as well as possible, I have to say that this is something that is widely supported by Canadians from coast to coast to coast. Families dealing with family members with autism spectrum disorder need the help. Although the hon. parliamentary secretary is right that there is money in there for home care and there is a bit more money for disabled children, it does not respond to the specific needs of the autism community.

This is more of a comment than a question, but I have to say that I am baffled. Perhaps the hon. parliamentary secretary could cast some light on when the government will provide a national autism strategy.

[Translation]

Mr. Joël Lightbound: Madam Speaker, I want to thank the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands for her intervention.

Business of Supply

I enjoy working with her, too, and I think we are ready to work with all members of the House on this issue to see how we can better serve Canadians living with autism spectrum disorder.

That is exactly what we are doing when we support projects like the Sinneave Family Foundation or Autism Speaks Canada, for example. That is also what we are doing through investments in the Canadian Institutes of Health Research to support research.

Money and resources have been allocated, and investments are being made to support families, to invest in research, and to try to find a cure. Right now we need to look at every available opportunity to work effectively within our respective jurisdictions with various stakeholders on autism spectrum disorder.

[English]

Hon. Mike Lake: Madam Speaker, I have no doubt that the research funding that the member is talking about is critically important, but that is not what we are discussing today.

He has been asked the question multiple times, and I will ask it again. It is a dime per Canadian per year. Will the government be supporting this motion?

Mr. Joël Lightbound: Madam Speaker, as I said, we are assessing how to best work with the different stakeholders and health research professionals.

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Abitibi—Témiscamingue.

Before I start, I would like to give a shout-out to all of those in Canada of Ukrainian-Canadian descent. Today they are celebrating the wearing of the vyshyvanka. One of my dear friends has lent me theirs, and I am looking forward to celebrating with my colleagues in the House. I know that the member for Edmonton—Wetaskiwin probably has many Ukrainian Canadians in his riding and will not mind me mentioning that.

I am rising in full support of the motion brought by the member. As I mentioned previously, I have had the pleasure many times in my eight years here of meeting his son Jaden, who is a delight, as are many of the children in my community who suffer from autism. In fact, I have a dear friend who lives half a block from me. I get to chat with her son daily on my street as he walks his three-legged dog. He is an absolute delight. Even though he has autism, he is graduating from high school this year.

The motion tabled by the member for Edmonton—Wetaskiwin simply asks that autism spectrum disorder, or autism, be recognized. It is widely considered the fastest-growing neurological disorder in Canada, impacting one in 68 children. It has increased over 100% in the last decade, so we are talking about a significant situation in this country that deserves intensified support. It is a life-long condition that includes difficulty communicating, as the member shared about his son, some social impairments, and restricted and repetitive behaviour. Individuals with autism and their families, as the member discussed, face unique challenges when they take their children or family members into the community. There can be awkward moments. It is very important that we not only support these families through funding but that we also be patient and supportive of the struggles they face.

The member also pointed out in his motion that it is not just a health issue, although the plea is to the health minister to free up some monies. It has overarching implications for Canadian society as a whole, and the member is calling on the government to grant the \$19 million over five years to establish the Canadian autism partnership that would support families and address key issues, such as information sharing, research, and early detection, diagnosis, and treatment for every family in this country.

I am very pleased to rise to support this motion. There is not a single member in this place who does not know someone who is affected by this disorder. Just on the basis of the number of organizations in the city of Edmonton, it is clear that support is greatly needed for those diagnosed with ASD so that they can live a quality life and their families can provide them with care and support and they receive the support they need. They could learn from the experience of others across this country through this proposed partnership.

I will list only a few of the entities in my city. They include the Centre for Autism Services Alberta, the Children's Autism Services of Edmonton, the Maier Centre, and Autism Edmonton. I could go on and on about the number of associations that have formed to try to serve the needs of these families.

Our nation's current approach to autism spectrum disorder is failing to support thousands of Canadians with autism and their families. In my research it has become clear, as is always the case, that particularly those in isolated or northern communities struggle to get access to any kind of health supports, let alone the specialized supports needed to address autism. I and my NDP colleagues share their disappointment and stand in support of the call for action to support the Canadian autism partnership.

The number of Canadians being diagnosed with autism continues to rise, yet across our country vital services, supports, and resources cannot meet the need. The partnership would not create just another bureaucracy, and that is something to keep in mind. The partnership was created as a solution to the current challenges being faced across the country. The chair of the Canadian Autism Disorders Alliance, who is also the executive director of Autism Nova Scotia, stated:

...the [CAP] business plan not only outlines the complex lifespan issues related to autism, it prioritizes five key complex issues, identifies the best starting points for action and details a collective impact model to address them...

● (1120)

Her article continued:

For far too long, our community has been disjointed, a result of the isolation, fear, anger and hopelessness that often fills the void left in the absence of necessary life-changing supports and resources...

and concluded with:

Jessica Pigeau, an autistic member of our Self-Advocate Advisory Committee, framed the need for this partnership more passionately and eloquently than I could ever attempt: "It is taking all of our hopes, all of our wishes, all of our pain ... all of our efforts and all of our skills—and we are putting it toward a single purpose, we are moving as one."

Business of Supply

The partnership is a reasonable request for the government to sit down with the provinces and territories to negotiate an accord that is backed by real funding to address three critical needs.

The first is the lack of applied behaviour analysis/intensive behavioural intervention in Canada's school systems.

The second is the lack of public health care coverage for behavioural treatments. Those treatments, I am told, can cost from \$50,000 to \$100,000 a year.

The third is the lack of appropriate housing accommodation for adults in the autism spectrum, as the member for Edmonton—Wetaskiwin pointed out.

An investment by the previous government in July of 2015 supported the launch of the partnership, which included the development of a national autism spectrum disorder working group, a self-advocates advisory group, a comprehensive stakeholder engagement strategy, and the development of a business plan for the implementation of this partnership.

An intensive stakeholder engagement process was delivered. It engaged with over 100 government representatives in all the provinces and territories and with relevant stakeholder groups, and included over 4,000 responses to an online survey.

A special focus has been placed on the needs of indigenous people and northern communities to identify their particular priorities and identify appropriate methods to examine meaningful responses to their service needs, both on and off reserve.

In November 2016, the partnership, CAPP, presented its final report to the current health minister, including the proposed business plan for the partnership and a request for \$19 million over five years. It included a framework for agencies in provincial, territorial, and indigenous communities to work together.

However, the minister refused the request. The refusal seems indefensible, given the need and the goal.

The partnership is not intended as a substitute for the funding needed for essential services or supports to those on the autism spectrum or even for ongoing research. It could play a critical role in coordinating across the country—across jurisdictions, across agencies, and across communities.

We hope the Liberals' refusal to invest in this worthwhile initiative is not premised on the fact that it was initiated under the previous Conservative government. Certainly it would have been helpful if the Conservatives, while in power, had backstopped this work with the funding or political commitment necessary to improve service delivery and supports, but the request and the need have not gone away.

It could support opportunities for many autistic individuals, their families, and their caregivers in receiving more timely and effective support, thus reducing the frustration and isolation that can accompany their search for appropriate and effective intervention and care. It could also provide a national platform for multisectoral collaboration, an authoritative access point for reliable data and information, and improved collaboration in research. Also, as previously mentioned, it could provide a unique indigenous

engagement strategy and an increased capacity for northern and remote communities to access services. It could help promote partnerships to enable the pooling of resources and ensure greater equity across the provinces and territories.

In closing, I would remind this place of the cuts the government has imposed across the board on health care. That has caused shortages in the delivery of these specialized, very important programs.

I support the motion. The need is clear. The proposal is sound. It deserves federal funding.

• (1125)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, again I want to emphasize how much we appreciate the efforts of the many different stakeholders in dealing with such a sensitive issue and trying to advance it in a positive way.

I disagree with the member on a couple of points. The member made the statement that there were health care cuts. We know that is just not the case. Being factual in this debate would be very much appreciated.

I want to make it very clear that through the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, the Government of Canada has invested more than \$39 million in autism research over the past five years. This investment contributes to providing the research evidence needed for the development of new tools and treatments for those suffering from autism. We invested \$8 million in 2015-16 in ASD research and invested \$5.3 million in 2016-17 for research at the Hospital for Sick Children.

It is important that we try not to give the impression that nothing is happening. There are significant actions taking place from the government in dealing with this issue. Would the member not acknowledge that?

Ms. Linda Duncan: Madam Speaker, I will acknowledge that we seem to be suffering alternative facts. The government has in fact chosen to reduce the health transfers. It did put additional money in, if the individual promise is signed off. We are still awaiting a national health accord.

No, I do not agree with what the member puts forth. This partnership is suggesting something far beyond research, and in fact it is actually encouraging that there be some kind of a forum where the families who have autistic members can access this research and those who serve them.

I think we need to recognize that this is a grassroots-up work together, for Canadians to work collaboratively. That is exactly the kind of initiative we should support, particularly being mindful of the fact that it will also support northern and indigenous communities.

Business of Supply

•(1130)

Hon. Mike Lake (Edmonton—Wetaskiwin, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member. We do not agree on everything, certainly, but I appreciate that we agree on this. I appreciate that the hon. member has done her homework on this. I especially appreciate the shout-out to Jessica Pigeau. She is an amazing self-advocate, one of seven self-advocates in the advisory group who really helped. When we heard them speak at the CASDA summit a little bit more than a month ago, it was the most impactful part of the entire Canadian ASD summit here in Ottawa, when the self-advocates took the stage and made the case for the Canadian autism partnership project.

I also appreciate her response to the parliamentary secretary's continued pointing out of research dollars. What we are talking about here is a treatment gap of hundreds of millions of dollars across the country, most of which is delivered at the provincial level. In the CAPP, \$3.8 million investment will help provincial governments to make the best decisions they can, and help the federal government in its jurisdiction to make the best decisions it can for people living with autism.

Research is important, critically important, but that is not what this day is about today.

Ms. Linda Duncan: Madam Speaker, I fully comprehend that. Yes, I would encourage every member in this place, before they decide to vote for this motion, to understand exactly what it is that is being proposed.

It is absolutely imperative that everybody understand that this ask is not coming from just the member. It is coming from communities across this country. They are begging for assistance so that they can equitably access the kind of supports that they so deserve.

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for her remarks, and underscore the importance of research and access for families.

Just very briefly, my brother was diagnosed with autism at the age of 57, and so for all of those years, he struggled, we struggled, and we did not know. We simply did not know. There was nothing available. Now at age 59 he has his own apartment, and he has bloomed. He has blossomed into the most remarkable person.

In this light, how important is family access to research?

Ms. Linda Duncan: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for sharing her story. I want to emphasize, instead of the research, the third part of this ask, which is support for housing for adults with autism.

I know this from the case of my own sister, who suffered from MS and had to live her last years in a seniors home. We need to be providing more housing services to those who have special needs.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Madam Speaker, I consider myself lucky to be able to speak to the motion moved by my colleague from Edmonton—Wetaskiwin. He and I have often been able to chat because our offices were on the same floor during the 41st Parliament. I also met his son on several occasions. We have also shared some good laughs, like the time when his son wanted to give me hugs because he thought I looked

like Barney. These are funny situations that can come up when we are with autistic people, who live in a world that we do not always understand. It can be unsettling, but we have to learn to react calmly. That is why I am particularly pleased to be talking about this issue.

I have friends and family with autistic children. It is the fastest growing neurological disorder in Canada, and affects one in 68 children. This increase may be artificially high because the disorder was under-diagnosed in the past. Nonetheless, the incidence of this neurological disorder has grown rather significantly, and this issue raises a lot of questions.

We still do not know why autism affects one child and not another. However, I would like to take a few seconds to clearly state that vaccines do not cause autism. I wanted to remind members of that because, unfortunately, the idea that vaccines cause autism is shared over the Internet fairly regularly. We need to counter such misinformation.

The partnership that was proposed and that began under the Conservative government does not seek to provide health care. It is very complex, but to summarize, the purpose of the partnership is to bring people together so that they can talk to each other, help each other, and feel less isolated. Parents who have a child with autism do not have it easy, because there is no one solution that will definitely help their child. As a result, they are often alone in trying to find solutions that work for their child.

A colleague that I worked with at the hospital once told me that he had to use pictograms with his autistic daughter who was unable to communicate. The young girl had a binder full of pictograms and communicated by pointing to the ones that best expressed her emotions and what she wanted to do and say. In order to come up with this strategy, my former colleague did his own research and found information online. He found a pictogram game, but the information he needed was not always available in French. The whole process was rather complex and it shows how parents are often on their own in trying to find ways to deal with their child's autism.

That is particularly true for parents who live in remote areas like mine and who do not necessarily have as many resources as people living in bigger cities. In my riding, there are no special schools. ASD affects one in 68 children, so it would be impractical to have a special school in a small community of 500 or 1,000 people because only one or two children out of 100 would go to that school.

•(1135)

Of course we do not have that. That takes resources. A partnership like the one that was proposed would have opened up a dialogue among, parents, people with autism, and the various stakeholders.

Business of Supply

We must not forget that children with autism grow up to be adults with autism. It is a chronic disorder. Parents age, eventually they are unable to care for their children, and ultimately, they are gone. For thousands of parents, it is a race against time. They know they will pass away one day, and they are afraid because they do not know exactly what will happen to their children once they are no longer around to take care of them. It is extremely stressful.

They do their best to provide the most normal life possible for their children, but they know that their children are not normal, at least not according to society's standards. It is certainly not easy. The majority of people with autism will never get jobs. What it takes is extremely tolerant employers and extremely tolerant communities. What it takes is a community willing to get to know these people.

Take the example of a grocery store in the town closest to me, La Sarre. A young autistic man works there. There was an article about him in the town's newspaper, which not only explained what he does, but also told other employers what a dedicated worker he is. Making changes was not easy, but the owners did not regret their decision. The community also had to adapt. In the beginning, it was not always easy to understand what was happening and why the young man acted like he did.

Eventually the community came to understand him, and the young man is still working there. I see him regularly when I do my grocery shopping. That is a good example of acceptance.

However, many people with autism will never get a job or enter the job market. They will remain dependants, especially in small communities that do not necessarily have the resources to help these people thrive.

I can understand how stressful it is for parents to think that one day they will no longer be there and they do not know what will happen to their child. Parents want to do what is best for their children, but they sometimes get to the point where they are not sure what to do.

It is important to understand what parents go through and to know that one solution may work at a certain time, but not later.

When a child who is two, three, four, or five years old has a tantrum, it may be possible to calm him down. However, when a child becomes a big, strong adult, it is not always easy to deal with a tantrum because it is no longer possible to avoid the physical aggression, for example.

I am thinking of the son of my colleague from Edmonton—Wetaskiwin, Jaden, who has become quite strong and is now a young man. When he has a tantrum now, the situation is quite different from what it was when he was four or five years old.

This has a huge impact, and that is why parents need more support. We need to ensure that information can be shared. We are talking about a relatively low-cost program of about \$19 million over five years. That is a small investment for a government to make. It would enable everyone to work together and share information. It will not solve all our problems, but it might help us tackle them more effectively.

It is incredibly petty on the part of the government to refuse to pay for a program like this, if you think about all the financial

repercussions of autism on government operations and services in general.

● (1140)

I look forward to questions.

[*English*]

Hon. Mike Lake (Edmonton—Wetaskiwin, CPC): Madam Speaker, as the member mentioned, Jaden is a friend of hers. Our offices were on the same floor in the Valour Building for a little while. Jaden always loved to find her. I do not know if it is because she looked like Barney, as she said, but he really did have an affection for her, because she was nice to him, and loved to get his high five and a hug. He really looked forward to running down the hall when he knew that she was there.

The member talks about Jaden being an adult. Jaden is a smaller adult. He is about five feet six inches tall and weighs about 115 pounds. I think about a friend, Amanda Telford, whose son Philippe is, as she describes, about the size of an NHL defenceman. Things got so overwhelming for her family here in Ottawa that a few years back, she had to drop Philippe off at a social services office. The family could not handle him anymore in the home. They had nowhere else to go.

It is easy to get caught up in talking about children's issues, early intervention, and those kinds of things, and forget adults with autism and the challenges faced by families. I just want to thank the hon. member for taking the time to recognize those challenges.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Moore: Madam Speaker, indeed, it is not always easy, and things can get out of hand quickly. For instance, a colleague and I had a young autistic patient. He assaulted my colleague, throwing her to the ground. We never understood why she was assaulted as opposed to anyone else, and we probably never will.

It is also a reality that parents have to live with. In some instances, they can no longer ensure their own personal safety. It is definitely not easy. As parents, we really want to be there for our children, so it must be really hard to decide between placing one's child in care, taking some time off or resorting to social services. Sometimes, however, that is the best solution. That is why partnerships where people can establish relationships with one another would enable stakeholders to better support people having to live with these kinds of situations.

● (1145)

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon (Parliamentary Secretary for Sport and Persons with Disabilities, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague across the way, the hon. member for Abitibi—Témiscamingue, for her speech. We can see that she really cares about those affected by autism spectrum disorder and all persons with disabilities.

I gather from her speech that she is quite aware that parents and families are mortgaging their future to take care of these children. It can be a trying situation.

We held consultations across Canada to develop a bill that will help persons with disabilities, including those with autism.

Business of Supply

My question is simple. Does the hon. member think that we should be looking at this in a broader sense and ensuring support for all families of persons with disabilities, including those with autism?

Ms. Christine Moore: Madam Speaker, I think it is especially important that those affected be involved in the strategy development process. Strategies usually work when we create partnerships because we get input from people who actually have the affliction. Having the parents and resource people on hand provides an opportunity for real discussion.

Sometimes the communication and discussions in a partnership are more productive than legislation. That is why if it works, we should support it. The little things can become so complicated. I know a parent who wanted a service dog for his son, but there was no program or anything else available. He took matters into his own hands and launched a crowdfunding campaign online.

If he had been able to get support from people around him, that would have been helpful and taken a load off his shoulders.

[English]

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Brantford—Brant.

I will start off by thanking the member for Edmonton—Wetaskiwin for his work and advocacy with respect to autism. I believe this is the first time the Parliament of Canada has dedicated a full day to a discussion regarding autism in this country. This truly is a historic day.

Autism affects more than 500,000 Canadians. I want to spend my time today talking about the principles of the Canadian autism project, about helping families who are dealing with autism not just in Ontario but right across the country.

It is important that we look at the principles of the Canadian autism project. There are five listed in the report, which states that all Canadians living with autism have the right to inclusion, understanding, and acceptance; respect and dignity; full citizenship; equitable opportunities and access; and personal autonomy and decision-making.

We are very lucky to be here in Canada where acceptance of differences in Canadians is a trait that we celebrate and practise every day. It is important that government do its part to foster this acceptance. The Canadian autism project, or CAP for short, has brought major stakeholders together to share ideas and practices that will benefit the education and life-learning skills that take longer to learn for those children who have autistic spectrum disorder, simply known as ASD.

The origins of CAP go back to budget 2015 under Prime Minister Harper, which brought the CAP working group together to deliver a report to take action on ASD. The initial budget offered \$2 million. Following the delivery of this report last fall, there was an ask to fund the project further. In the 2017 Liberal budget, the Minister of Finance and the government ignored that request. CAP was asking for \$19 million.

Let us look at the five principles to try to make some sense of it all for the government, and to persuade some members on the Liberal

backbenches to support the motion and help Canadian families who live with ASD in their homes.

The first principle refers to Inclusion, understanding, and acceptance. As I said, half a million Canadians are living with ASD. Each one of those Canadians is an individual who has his or her own personality, interests, talents, and most important, tremendous potential. I cannot overstate the importance that each Canadian with ASD is given every opportunity for that potential. Sadly, this is not the case across the country because, depending on the province one lives in, the diagnosis, treatment, and potential for each child differs.

In Ontario, intensive behavioural intervention therapy, IBI therapy, for children over five was eliminated, leaving thousands of families struggling to get the treatment they need. There needs to be an understanding at every level of government about the needs of the children and families when it comes to the diagnosis and treatment of ASD.

The second principle of CAP is one of respect and dignity. Living with ASD is not easy on the family, and especially on the child who has been diagnosed. Life is different for those who have ASD. Between 50% and 70% of those with ASD will have a mental health condition. To have ASD also means that the child may not understand what is happening to him or her or know how to compensate or handle it. Making sure there is proper treatment across Canada would help ensure that those children would have the sense of dignity that most Canadians feel.

The third principle is full citizenship. For Canadians, full citizenship means that every person should have access to all of the services available for a correct diagnosis, for treatment, and for the best possible life. The cost of caregiving for a child with ASD is up to \$5.5 million. All levels of governments need to work together to provide education, health care, and potential, three things that every parent expects his or her child to have access to.

The fourth principle as noted in the CAP report is equitable opportunities and access. The principle is demonstrated with the Canadian autism partnership vision statement, which states:

All Canadians living with Autism have the opportunity to lead fulfilling and rewarding lives, and are able to access the necessary supports and services in a welcoming and understanding society.

Autism is the fastest growing diagnosed neurological disorder in Canada. There has been a 100% increase in positive diagnoses in 10 years. One in 68 children is now living with ASD, up from one in 190. Boys are now five times more likely than girls to be diagnosed. In Ontario, in 2016, there was a wait-list of 2,192 people for intensive behavioural intervention, and almost 14,000 for applied behavioural analysis.

Business of Supply

• (1150)

What CAP is going to do is create a national platform for multi-sectoral collaboration and innovation to drive systemic change. The CAP approach creates opportunities for many autistic individuals along with their families and caregivers to benefit from the efforts of decision-makers to have better coordinated and timely support. Children with ASD could have reduced isolation and less frustration in their search for the best intervention and care.

The last principle is personal autonomy and decision-making. All children are different in their approach to how they will learn, react, and be the children that their parents knew they could be. Parents do not lose faith in their ASD child; sadly, it is governments that act like they do.

Decisions made by governments have created an excessive wait-list for individuals seeking a housing placement. Parents are forced to drop their children off at social services offices given their lack of alternative options.

Decisions by the government created the lack of support of dual diagnosis centres across Ontario. These centres provide needed support to families of children with ASD dealing with multiple diagnoses, for example, ASD with epilepsy, ASD with Tourette's syndrome, et cetera. Funding decisions in Ontario have increased the need for vocational support training to create more inclusive workforces.

Let me wrap up in the few minutes that I have left to emphasize just why the motion should pass and why the government should grant \$19 million over five years as requested by the Canadian autism partnership.

As the motion states, passing the motion “would support families and address key issues such as information sharing and research, early detection, diagnosis and treatment.”

I know that \$19 million is not going to resolve the crisis that is autism and treatment for our children, but this money would allow the Canadian autism partnership to go forward over a five-year time frame. The funding and five-year period would go to the start-up, operation, and costs to address the complex initiatives.

As I stated earlier, some provinces assist families with autism better than others. It is time that nationally we had a framework and a group of amazing organizations, community groups, and centres of higher education working together. If we can do this, then we can, in an exceptional manner, affect Canadian families facing ASD. With a comprehensive and united national effort, governments can ensure early identification, early intervention, employment, interventions, and service for the best quality of life at all ages, specialized medical care, access to dental and mental health care, education leading to a transition to work, post-secondary school, and most important, a successful independent lifestyle.

The House and its members can make the mission of CAP a step closer to reality. That would be to accelerate systemic change at the national level by mobilizing multiple sectors to address complex issues related to autism using a shared leadership approach to achieve a collective impact.

I ask that all members of the House undo the wrong of the 2017 budget and support the work of the working group and grant the Canadian autism partnership the \$19 million it needs.

On behalf of Barrie—Innisfil families, and I have met with many of them who are dealing with the issue of autism, the five of us in my family would be more than happy to put our 10¢ each in, 50¢ from our family. As the member for Edmonton—Wetaskiwin said, it is only 10¢ per person. That is what this funding represents. I have 50¢ on my desk here, and I would be more than glad to put it toward this project.

• (1155)

Mr. Majid Jowhari (Richmond Hill, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Barrie—Innisfil as well as my colleague from Edmonton—Wetaskiwin for the great work that you are doing in support of autism.

Aside from donating 10¢, what can we as members of Parliament do to reach within our communities and through ongoing consultations within the autism groups in our ridings to help the federal government develop a road map that would help us allocate the appropriate funds and collect the right information to ensure that the right funding gets to the right resources on the ground so we can address this issue?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I just want to remind the member that he is to address the questions to the Chair.

The hon. member for Barrie—Innisfil.

Mr. John Brassard: Madam Speaker, I think the answer is right in front of him. This opposition day motion speaks to the fact that this partnership was developed; the framework and the principles were established. What it needs is this funding. That is precisely what this motion calls for.

I think the hon. member answered his own question by asking what he did; that is, to pass this motion and to make sure the resources are available, broadly, across this country to help families cope and deal with the issue of autism.

Hon. Mike Lake (Edmonton—Wetaskiwin, CPC): Madam Speaker, just so everybody hears it, it is Wetaskiwin. It is not Wisconsin, but that is interesting. I have been smiling all day as I have heard people trying to say it. The folks of Wetaskiwin will appreciate my getting up and correcting that.

Business of Supply

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons has got up a couple of times and I think we sense a theme on the Liberal side talking about research. It is interesting. The Liberals talk about five years of research. Most of the research they are talking about is research that we funded when we were in government. That research is critically important. The Canadian autism partnership working group had four of the top researchers in the world as four of its 12 members. They recognize that, for their research to be effective, it actually has to be put into practice. The Canadian autism partnership does that. It takes that research and it works with governments, takes the information that the top experts in the country have and brings it together in one place, and it allows the community to speak with one voice on all the things that are important to it through these experts, to provide evidence-based advice to governments to make decisions that matter in the daily lives of families.

I would ask the hon. member to speak to what he sees is the importance of good-quality research to impacting the lives of Canadians.

•(1200)

Mr. John Brassard: Madam Speaker, I am not sure how much more I can add to what the hon. member knows about this subject. I will say that I deal with this on a weekly basis, in my office, and my staff does as well, with families coming in, quite frankly frustrated by the lack of government resources toward dealing with autism.

I want to refer to the member as the member for the Edmonton Oilers as I think that would be easier than saying your riding name. Please do not admonish me for that, Madam Speaker.

However, I think it speaks to priorities. I hope this is not political. I hope the Liberals are not going to not support this because it was a Conservative idea. It does not matter whether it is a Conservative idea; it does not matter whether it is a Liberal idea, or an NDP idea. If it is a good idea and it is a good thing that affects Canadians in a positive way, then we need to take the politics out of this. This was a former Conservative government initiative. I would hope that the Liberals are not playing politics with the lives of the 500,000 people who are affected by this. I think this is the right thing to do. When we look at the priorities of the government and some of the spending that has gone on overseas—\$100 million here, \$4.3 billion here—this is \$19 million. This is 10¢ for every Canadian to invest in something that is going to make a marked difference in people's lives. I have my 50¢ here, which represents 10¢ for every one of the five Brassards who live in my House. I am glad to support this initiative.

Mr. Phil McColeman (Brantford—Brant, CPC): Madam Speaker, frankly, as I stand today and speak to this issue and have listened to the debate in the House, I cannot think of a more important subject matter that we could be addressing. Anecdotally, some school children who were watching from the gallery today commented about how meaningful it was in the few moments they were here listening to the debate on this issue.

I want to pick this subject matter up from a couple of points of view. Obviously, the actual statistics of the number of Canadians who are impacted by autism are about one in every 68, or if we add in other developmental disabilities, it would be a much larger number. It would be very unusual for a member in the House not to

have been affected somewhere along the line with family or close friends dealing with the issue of an autistic individual within their family tree.

I am no exception to that rule. I have 30-year-old son who has developmental disabilities, and I wish to speak about his situation. I also have a granddaughter, eight years old. Jordan is my son's name and Maggie is my granddaughter's name. She is diagnosed on the spectrum. I want to say what life means for people and how meaningful this debate is for Canadians, including those who have connections in the House. How important it is, and how I implore the government to reconsider deleting this from the budget, not going forward with it in the budget.

There could be nothing more important than supporting families in some of the most difficult situations dealing with individuals with developmental disabilities in their homes and in their lives. It is not only difficult, but often most rewarding as well, as the member for Edmonton—Wetaskiwin can attest. We have both some of the best times that we could ever experience as a family member, and also some of the most difficult. Navigating our life through this labyrinth of what we built as supports in society is a very difficult task.

When we talk about this working group, it is essential that we have the experts guiding families who are not only dealing with it now in youth and adult phases of their children's lives and their family members' and friends' lives, but through the whole course for the long term. This initiative is one that could be picked up by the government, moved down field, and taken to the next level until we come to a day when the integration of these individuals into society is achieved.

Why the government would not prioritize this as being one of the most important issues is puzzling to me. As my colleague said, this would be a shame if this is somehow political, because this is nonpartisan. If there ever is a topic that we should be addressing in the House, it should be topics like this that could be truly nonpartisan.

Let me tell the House about Jordan, a 30-year-old guy who is developmentally disabled and recently, because of an initiative that people in our community took, is working in a social enterprise, a shredding business. What does any parent want for their child? I have four children, and what any of us wants for our children is for them to maximize their abilities and be the best person they can be in this world. Often that involves excelling at their vocation, doing their life's work, taking that forward, and excelling at it.

What does that mean to a young guy who could probably never have the vision to be able to work? It means taking paper and putting it into a shredder as being one of the most meaningful things to give him a sense of goodwill, contributing something, and having a healthy self-image.

•(1205)

Is that not what we want for all our children? Is that not what we want for all the children in this country, whether they are on the spectrum, off the spectrum, or out there in the world?

Business of Supply

Today, we are talking about extending a very small amount of money. That is what this motion is calling for, a very tiny amount of money. Others have tried to put it in perspective, what this means in terms of supporting this group that is in true need. We all have examples.

My granddaughter, Maggie, who is eight years old, in Sarnia, has actually had the experience of living in Calgary with her family and experiencing what that province had to offer in her early years, and this will be of interest to members from other ridings. Her family had the opportunity to move to the United States, to Ann Arbor, Michigan, and experienced the supports that were available there. Currently, she is residing in Sarnia, Ontario. This is all due to the occupation and vocation of my son-in-law who works for Imperial Oil.

What my daughter and her family have seen in that transition between those places is a varying degree of support across those three locations. I was so happy when my colleague brought up the fact that his son, Jaden, had experienced wonderful supports in Alberta. That is exactly what my daughter and my Maggie experienced in Alberta.

Then moving to the United States, she also found great support in the state of Michigan. Then coming to Ontario, it was a different ball game there. In fact, recently, a few weeks ago, my daughter called me as I was driving one day. She asked where she should go for Maggie as she gets older. She wanted some ideas, some advice as to how to get a school going, something that is relevant to help her become the best person she can be.

I tell these stories because I think it is important for all members today to feel free to get up and tell stories of individual Canadians they know who are dealing with the issue of autism within their families. It is great, rewarding, and good, but it is also very difficult.

We can do something about it in this House. Today, we have not received an indication from the government that it will be supporting this motion. I hope many of the Liberal members will take our words to heart, and will say that in relative terms this is another way to move the yardsticks. They are taking cover in the fact that they have funded all of these other programs and organizations that deal with developmental disabilities. We take our hats off to that.

I worked with Jim Flaherty on the ready, willing, and able to work campaign, helping to put together an effort to bring meaning into the lives of adults who have disabilities. Some 800,000 Canadians who have a disability of some sort are ready, willing, and able to work in this country, right now. Some are more severe than others, but there are 800,000 of them. Of that, 350,000 of them have university degrees. However, we have a society that makes them feel they are a square peg trying to fit into a round hole. This is because organizations such as this one, the Canadian autistic community, have not been able to get their feet on the ground to be able to help people navigate the situation.

Many employers came to me, when we were putting that program together as a government, when we went out and talked about what we were doing, and said they were more than ready to consider hiring a person with disabilities in their business. They wanted to

know how to do it. It was not so much a lack of willingness as Canadians, but they needed to know how to navigate.

● (1210)

Again, this is one of the more important issues. I implore the government to put the funding back for this group.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):

Mr. Speaker, I indicated earlier that I also was very passionate about this issue as it affected my family directly.

The member said at the beginning of his speech that this was the most important issue. From a Manitoba perspective, as a former health critic for the province, I understand and appreciate the sensitivity of this issue and the importance of it. However, to say that it is the most important issue is not fair to Manitoba. For example, fetal alcohol spectrum disorder is destroying the lives of many children in Manitoba.

If we want to deal with so many of these issues that face our children, we need to recognize that the provincial and territorial governments need to be engaged in a very real and tangible way. Does the member not agree that if we do not have the coordination as a national government, working with those provincial and territorial entities, we will be unable to do justice to this issue to the degree it needs to be, and it will involve a great deal of money? Would he not agree that the provinces and territories must be involved?

● (1215)

Mr. Phil McColeman: Mr. Speaker, I will try to be respectful of the member for what he just said. I will look at the transcript, but I believe I used the words “one of the most important issues”, although I might have used the words “most important” I will check the record on what I said.

However, the member reacted so strongly on this issue and tried to give a spin on this, that it had something to do with the responsibilities of the provinces and territories. We are talking about a motion on the floor today that we as legislators can do something about. We do not have to be third partying it off to someone else.

Frankly, the tone and the way the member shaped his words around that question do not do service to the fact that we should treat this as one of the most important issues facing Canadians today.

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I was a little taken aback by the question from the member for Winnipeg North. It sounded as though he was suggesting somehow we needed to be picking and choosing who was more deserving of help in a national strategy. I hope he was not saying that, especially in the context where the Liberal government has deliberately chosen to give away tax breaks and not shut down tax havens for big and wealthy corporations.

We can afford this \$19 million to effect a change in the lives of families that are dealing the challenge of special needs children, in this instance, autism. We can afford to do this. Members have said that this is a 10¢ investment from Canadians across the country. We need collective action from all Canadians to do that. Only by the government passing the motion will that happen.

Business of Supply

Would the member not agree that Canadians can indeed afford to do this? In fact, we cannot afford to not do this. Is that correct?

Mr. Phil McColeman: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member both for her passion and for the emphasis she has put on this being so unbelievably simple to do and so small in relative terms to what the government prioritizes as spending.

This is a whole-of-life issue for individuals. Someone on the government side said this earlier, that the biggest situation that people had to deal with was what would happen when they were not here any longer. Who would take care of these individuals? This group would help define that, would help give direction to that, and would help families that were dealing with that very question. If we do not fund this group, it is incredibly shameful.

Mr. Majid Jowhari (Richmond Hill, Lib.): I will be splitting my time with the hon. member for Toronto—Danforth, Mr. Speaker.

I appreciate the opportunity to speak today about autism spectrum disorders.

The Government of Canada recognizes that autism spectrum disorder, or ASD, has serious health, social and financial consequences for individuals and families. Indeed, we must all be prepared for the challenges presented by the increasing number of children being diagnosed with ASD if we are to help them live healthier and more productive lives.

I acknowledge the effort across the country to support those who living with ASD. Often, much of the support comes from the health care, education and social services sectors. While these domains are under the responsibility of the provincial and territorial governments, federal investments in data collection, in research and innovations, and in skills training contribute to the improved services and programs.

An essential aspect in supporting these front-line efforts is obtaining a clear understanding of the magnitude and characteristic of ASD, both across regions and over time.

Many of us know there are public concerns about increases in the number of Canadian children and youth with ASD. While research supports the conclusion that ASD diagnosis are rising, we do not currently have comprehensive data for Canada. Thus, we lack the building blocks nationally that will allow us to accurately report on how many people are living with autism and how many new cases are emerging.

This is a gap that the governments are working together to address, and the work is well under way. Complete valid, timely, and representative prevalence estimates on the number of Canadians with ASD are needed to take an informed and calculated action. This is why we are building the national autism spectrum disorder surveillance system, or NASS. The NASS is led and coordinated by the Public Health Agency of Canada in partnership with provinces and territories.

This system collects anonymized annual information on children aged five to 18 who have ASD. The information is from a range of sources, including administrative records from health, education, or social services sectors. The complexity of this undertaking means

that we must work in co-operation with different levels of the government and across sectors.

At its core, the NASS is a collaboration of federal, provincial and territorial governments, working together with other stakeholders, to build a comprehensive pictures of ASD in Canada.

For example, in my riding of Richmond Hill, we will soon be opening a centre in support of autism. It will be opened by Reena, a non-profit organization that promotes dignity, individuality, independence and personal growth, and community inclusion for people with development disabilities, including autism.

The key objectives for NASS surveillance system are: to estimate how many Canadians have ASD and how many new cases are emerging over time; to describe the population of Canadians with ASD and compare a pattern within Canada and internationally; to better understanding the impact on Canadians with ASD; to increased public awareness and understanding; and to informed policy and program decision-making.

As noted earlier, the development of NASS is a substantial undertaking that continues to depend on the engagement and collaboration within a wide range of partners. Consultation with provinces and territories and with ASD stakeholder communities, as well as extensive study of the provincial and territorial data sources, have been essential to progress in developing and implementing ASD surveillance.

The Public Health Agency of Canada put in place an external advisory committee to guide the work on NASS, made up from experts from across Canada. Members include provincial representatives, clinicians, policy experts, and the stakeholder groups representing the interest of those living with ASD and their families.

● (1220)

Based on guidance from this advisory committee, the initial focus is on tracking ASD among children and youth. The work is critical and complete and timely information on autism trends remains key to informing program delivery to support families.

In developing the NASS, we are also cognizant of the unique needs and circumstances of individual provinces and territories. As part of the program design, the Public Health Agency used a collaborative and phased approach to support provinces and territories in joining the NASS. This ensured that the national ASD surveillance objectives would be met and the information needed for jurisdictions would be addressed.

The process also accommodates varying states of jurisdiction readiness. The reality is that there is significant diversity in capabilities to participate.

Because of this, the Public Health Agency of Canada has engaged provinces and territories based on their current data system. In many cases, this has involved supporting them with a preliminary feasibility and validation project.

Business of Supply

In terms of data collection, participating provincial and territorial partners will collect and share this information with the Public Health Agency at periodic intervals for inclusion in the NASS. While ownership of collected data resides with the provinces and territories, the federal Public Health Agency plays an important stewardship role. Experts review data quality, generate analyses, and provide interpretation in order to support public reporting on the state of ASD in Canada. In doing so, the NASS will provide the evidence to inform critical planning of programs, services, and research. That will make a difference for Canadians living with ASD, their families, and their caregivers.

The national ASD surveillance system illustrates the solid partnership among federal, provincial, and territorial governments to improve data and to use data to drive decisions and actions. Presently, seven provinces and territories are on board and work is under way to recruit additional jurisdictions. Complex surveillance systems like this one take time and resources. Their impact, however, is substantial.

A major milestone will be reached in 2018. The first public report for ASD prevalence in Canada is planned for release. Shortly thereafter, we look forward to a comprehensive implementation of NASS as we get closer to the full provincial and territorial participation, surveillance capacity and infrastructure development, and expansion of surveillance to adult population.

We must constantly remember that all collaborative efforts are targeted to ultimately help children and families affected by ASD. This clear federal leadership role is filling a gap that is foundational for all ASD stakeholders.

• (1225)

Hon. Mike Lake (Edmonton—Wetaskiwin, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member shows a good working knowledge of the autism surveillance system. Our government put it in place, and it is critically important. However, we are not discussing that today.

The autism surveillance program is important, but what is the point of surveillance? What is the point of identifying who has autism if we are not going to use the information? Once we know people have autism, is it okay that their families are mortgaging their houses to get evidence-based treatment? Is it okay that 85% of people with autism are not employed?

I am going to ask a very clear question. Is the hon. member going to support this motion, yes or no?

Mr. Majid Jowhari: Mr. Speaker, let me say what it is the government is trying to do. In the previous government, we had a program that was the foundation to start the journey and be successful. The current government is providing funding. Through the Canadian Institutes for Health Research, the Government of Canada has invested more than \$39 million in autism research over five years. I commend the previous government, and I acknowledge that the current government is continuing to do that. The investment contributes to providing the research and evidence needed for the development of new tools.

We also invested \$8 million in 2015-16 in ASD research and invested another \$5.3 million in 2016 for research at the Hospital for Sick Children.

We now are entering the second phase, which is providing new funding. The third piece of the puzzle is collecting information so we can ensure that going forward, the funds are properly allocated, and the programs evolve working with the provinces and territories.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Salaberry—Suroît, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my colleague was saying that the government is entering its second phase of investment in autism spectrum disorder.

The motion before us today calls on the government to invest \$19 million over five years based on the reports that have been tabled and the studies that have been carried out by the grassroots organizations that make up the Canadian autism partnership. This will make it possible to continue to address the shortcomings in applied behavioural analysis, intensive behavioural intervention in Canada's school systems, and public coverage of health care services.

I am a teacher by training, so I know how hard it is for teachers to work with children with problems such as ASD without proper training. However, it is crucial that we address these problems as early as possible in order to give these kids the tools they need and as much help as possible. However, that requires research and well-resourced schools. It is therefore important for the government to believe in this cause, to make investments and to respond to this partnership's requests.

One in 68 children have ASD, an increase of 100% over the past 10 years. Nevertheless, resources have not kept pace with needs, which is why I am having such a hard time understanding what the member opposite and the government are getting at in their answers. I get the impression that they are not going to support this critical motion that affects many young people. These children are going to become adults and will not have the resources to look after themselves. We need the federal government to step in. I hope that, in the end, the member will say that he is going to support this motion.

• (1230)

[*English*]

Mr. Majid Jowhari: Mr. Speaker, I agree with the fact that we need to look at this from many dimensions. Let me draw a parallel between the way we are dealing with autism in our government and the way we dealt with mental health. As the hon. member knows, we did a lot of studies and analysis, and as a result, \$5 billion over 10 years has been allocated to deal with mental health, which one out of every five Canadians is dealing with.

Collecting the data and making sure that we have the right data to analyze where services are needed, and forming a partnership across Canada with all the provinces and territories, is really our focus.

Business of Supply

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Toronto—Danforth, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I rise to speak about autism spectrum disorder, and in particular, about its impact on individuals and families in our communities.

I would like to begin by commending the great work of the member for Edmonton—Wetaskiwin when it comes to raising awareness about the needs of individuals affected by autism spectrum disorder.

While today is specific to autism spectrum disorder, I want to raise the fact that many people in our communities face challenges in seeking treatment and proper support for caregivers of loved ones with serious disabilities. I hear from many people at the door, in my office, and in various situations about their challenges.

My daughter has had the opportunity to volunteer as part of a reverse integration project at the Beverley School in Toronto. Some of the students at Beverley School have been diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder. Beverley School teaches students from JK to grade 8, and the philosophy of the school is a team approach to supporting the educational needs of students who have developmental and/or physical disabilities.

I mention this because spaces like the Beverley School are so important to younger students with autism spectrum disorder. One student, okay, my daughter, wrote the following about the school on its blog:

Beverley isn't a place of work nor a place where you have to go to take tests or to have to be forced to learn something you don't want to learn. You are surrounded by supportive and helpful friends, in gym class, H and E would walk in a circle holding hands and then we would try to throw the rainbow ball into the hoop and it turns out S is quite good at basketball. We had fun and that is, in my opinion what Beverley does best, making work that could be tiresome and changing it and making [it] more fun and comprehensible, something a lot of schools are missing and that Beverley excels at.

I have highlighted the Beverley School, because it is one example of the bright lights for children with disabilities and their families. Today I would like to focus on that aspect of today's motion. How can we support people with autism spectrum disorder and their families or caregivers?

I talked with a family in my community that includes two children with the diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder. The boys have been students at Beverley School. The challenges highlighted by their story are similar to what I have heard from many similarly situated families, not just with autism spectrum disorder but also with severe disabilities. The challenges are financial, and there is a need for caregiving assistance.

I would like to describe the concerns raised in the parents' own words:

Since [both boys] are physically able and indeed physically precocious boys, we are stretched to the absolute limit of our endurance to look after them. While we are fortunate enough to be able to afford in-home private support, this, in combination with our expenditures on camps and special programs, costs us about \$50,000-\$60,000 each year.... As we grow older, we are worn by our sons' disabilities. We worry about their future and our future.... [The boys] cannot be looked after in a home setting as they grow older without professional and motivated caregivers present for 16 hours each day (assuming that they are not in school). There are no publicly provided solutions for a problem like this. We are faced with group home care, which is largely unavailable, or a quite startling financial burden.... [The] publicly supported responses to this sort of disability long ago turned away from

institutionalization. We cannot say that we disagree with this. The resulting vacuum, however, has left us in a completely untenable situation.

The reason I wanted to read that part of that family's testimony is that we need to give voice to some of the people who are directly impacted by the issues we are debating today. It is important for us to take into account their perspectives on the needs we must meet.

Today is about autism spectrum disorder, but the general question of supporting individuals with disabilities and their families or caregivers should also be part of this discussion. The issues raised by the person I quoted earlier are similar to many other disabilities as well.

Last week, I saw the play *The Boy in the Moon* at the Crow's Theatre in my community. The play is based on Ian Brown's book about raising his son, Walker, who has a rare genetic disorder. It pointed to some of the same challenges: parent or caregiver fatigue, financial concerns, wanting proper opportunities for a child, and concerns about a child's future as the parents or caregivers age.

I would like us to consider this universality when we consider such issues as family or caregiver supports where a child has been diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder. I would like us to also consider how we can create a framework that includes all individuals with more severe disabilities and their families.

● (1235)

Today I am advocating for such an inclusive framework, a way to ensure that individuals with severe disabilities who will not be able to live independently, and their families, have proper supports.

I had the opportunity recently to hear from Sister Sue Mosteller, of the Sisters of St. Joseph, as part of a consultation on a national poverty reduction strategy. She provided a moving presentation on supporting people with disabilities and their families. She told the story of a family she was working with. Two sons had chromosome disorders. They required constant supervision, and the parents were exhausted. She flagged the need for parent respite and supporting these families.

A common theme that also arises is a concern about long-term care for individuals who will never be able to live independently. What will happen as parents age and cannot look after their adult children? On this point, I would like to tell members what I heard from someone in my community who wrote to me. He wrote:

Unlike children who grow up and become active members of the work force, a severely disabled person, like our son will never be able to do this. This results in increasing costs for our care of him, not decreasing costs like most families. Combine this with the fact that as he turns 18-21, much of the infrastructure we have relied on, disappears or changes.

Years ago, the system chose to migrate children of this ilk to the home from institutions. I have no doubt that this change has resulted in a better quality of life for the children and families. Frankly, I can't imagine it having been any other way, but the system has not provided enough support to those of us at home. My wife can't work as she has to care for our son, I am still taxed at 50%, even though our mandatory expenses can become debilitating.

...the system is awash with good intentions and poor outcomes.

Business of Supply

The question today is how we move beyond good intentions to get to good outcomes. I have heard from many people today about the funding that has gone to science to find means of early detection, diagnosis, and treatment. We have heard about how the government is supporting initiatives to better understand multiple factors that can influence autism spectrum disorder, as well as about the projects that are being undertaken to understand autism's development over the course of a person's life.

All of this is important, and I am happy to see these steps being taken to support this research. However, today I would like us to also consider the issue of how to deal with the vacuum that has been pointed out by people in my community. What support are we providing to individuals with severe disabilities, specifically those people who will not be able to live independently, and what supports are we providing for their families? As we have moved away from institutionalization, which I applaud, how will we make sure that across our country, the future for these individuals is secure and that the families are supported?

I look forward to working with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to move beyond good intentions to good outcomes.

• (1240)

Hon. Mike Lake (Edmonton—Wetaskiwin, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I really enjoyed the hon. member's speech. It was a bit different from some of the things we have heard from the Liberal members who have spoken so far, coming from a personal background. To be honest, I agree with almost everything the hon. member had to say.

We have before us a motion on a Canadian autism partnership, which has been worked on by experts, self-advocates, and researchers from across the country.

Autism is, by far, the most common neurological disorder facing North Americans today. It is one in 68, as mentioned. If we think of a family of four, one in 17 people in a family will be living with someone with autism.

This is a major step forward, beyond just good intentions, toward real action, something that will make a tangible difference in those people's lives. If we talk to the people who have been involved in this process all along, they are very much engaged in the idea that what happens with the Canadian autism partnership will have a meaningful impact beyond just people with autism. There is a real intention behind moving forward in that way.

I will ask the hon. member the same question I have asked each member who has spoken. Can the people in Canada's autism community count on the member's support when it comes to vote on this motion?

Ms. Julie Dabrusin: Mr. Speaker, I listened to the debate and to what people were saying to try to get a sense of how we should be moving forward. However, when I look at the issues I have raised, I am concerned about making sure we are not leaving people behind when we are talking about a broader framework that would look after people and their caregivers in the long term, and to providing a future.

You just mentioned that you think it would have an impact beyond autism spectrum disorder. However, when we are looking at what we can provide as long-term supports, and looking to the future, I want

to make sure that we consider the other people I have mentioned, such as aging parents and what happens to them as well. It might be that we have to keep discussing exactly how that looks, but what I will commit to and say is that I do not want it to be just a discussion. I really want to try to find some solutions.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Before we go to the next questioner, I just want to remind hon. members to speak through the Speaker and not directly to members. I know it is an emotional topic and sometimes we get carried away. We are all human.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Winnipeg North.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I truly appreciate the context in which my colleague has talked about the bigger picture.

The Minister of Health has literally hundreds if not close to thousands of requests that come into the department on a wide variety of issues. Perhaps the member would agree that it is fair to say that when the government makes these decisions, it takes all sorts of factors into consideration, such as other ways in which it is trying to deal with issues, including autism. Is it not fair to say that this government is in fact acting on the issue of autism in the best way it feels it can?

At the end of the day, when we look at issues, we need to also take into consideration the different stakeholders. In particular, I am talking about the other government agencies and the role they would play in dealing with issues like autism spectrum disorder.

• (1245)

Ms. Julie Dabrusin: Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt that the jurisdictional issues are very complex. That should not be something that stops us from taking further action, but it is something that we have to make sure we have properly considered going forward.

We must absolutely take action on this issue. It is something I hear about all the time from people in my community, how we support individuals and families with children who will not be able to support themselves and live independently. There are jurisdictional issues on which our government will have to have discussions with the provinces to find the proper solutions.

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the hon. member for Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo.

I am honoured to speak to this motion today moved by my friend and colleague, the member for Edmonton—Wetaskiwin.

I remember so clearly when I was elected as a trustee to the Waterloo County board of education in 1978. When the superintendent mentioned the word "autism", I have to be honest that I did not even know what the word "autism" meant. I remember, though, how our officials grappled to address the needs of the children and their families who were suffering with autism. Since that time, it is obvious we have come a long way in addressing this issue, but we still have a very long way to go.

Business of Supply

The impacts of autism are wide ranging for individuals and families affected by the condition. Autism spectrum disorder, or ASD, can present lifelong challenges. For researchers, ASD is particularly complex, as it affects each individual differently. A great deal of valuable research has already been done to uncover the causes of ASD, as well as research into the most effective treatments and long-term implications of this disorder. However, further research is required in order to gain a more solid understanding of this very complex situation.

That is why today's motion is so important. Let me read the appeal that is in the motion. It states:

...the House call on the government to grant the \$19 million over 5 years requested by the Canadian Autism Partnership working group, Self-Advocates advisory group, and the Canadian Autism Spectrum Disorders Alliance, in order to establish a Canadian Autism Partnership that would support families and address key issues such as information sharing and research, early detection, diagnosis and treatment.

Over the past few weeks, I have been contacted a number of times by a constituent in my riding with autism. Allow me to share a few of his words with the House. He said:

I am Autistic—on an extreme of the spectrum called Asperger syndrome. I have been incredibly blessed by the fact that I am high functioning Aspergers and have a great support group of family and friends, so I do not face the same challenges that most with Autism and Asperger syndrome face. While I face few of the challenges that many with Autism and Asperger syndrome do I have do have some idea of the challenges and therefore this is a big issue for me. I have been aware for a few weeks after the statements in the House of Commons by [the member for Edmonton—Wetaskiwin], that in the last budget the Liberal Government has not supplied funding to the Canadian Autism Partnership this bothers me tremendously. I don't like to see any loss of funding to groups that work on Autism planing, strategies and awareness. I have taken a lot of time to decide whether or not to say anything about this because it is a very important issue for me but also a very private one. This is not a question I suppose and I don't know what to do to bring this issue to the Federal governments attention. So this is just me expressing my frustration with the situation to make you aware of my concerns.

Economic action plan 2015, established by our former Conservative government, proposed to provide \$2 million in 2015-16 to create a working group, led by the minister of health, to consult with stakeholders, including the Canadian Autism Spectrum Disorders Alliance, on the development of a Canadian autism partnership. Of the \$2 million in funding, \$1.5 million would be used to support stakeholder participation in the working group. The working group would be tasked with the development of a plan for the Canadian autism partnership that would address key issues, such as information sharing and research, early detection, diagnosis and treatment, and supporting families.

This is exactly what my constituent and thousands of Canadians are asking for. In fact, this young man, now a university student, states:

I was diagnosed as Aspergers on the Autism spectrum when I was nine years old....One of the biggest challenges I face is that my reading comprehension is very weak, I read a level behind my year in grades one and two because of this. Now that I am in university this presents a major challenge because of all of the reading required for my classes....My short-term memory is not very strong but my long-term memory is very strong. As a combination of all of the above school work takes me twice as long as a normal person to complete, this means during school I do not sleep much at all. Some corrections can be made by using text-to-voice software to dictate all of my work, as well as using software to read my work back to me. This is very helpful when it comes to editing essays, and the software can also be used to read my readings to me, which reduces my work time somewhat. Challenges still exist in taking notes...as well as studying. There is really no way to correct the note taking problems, but studying can be addressed by studying aurally in a group. Many of the

ways I can use to overcome or correct my challenges came from professionals and I would really hate for others younger than me not to have access to such services because of budgetary reasons.

● (1250)

The Canadian autism partnership is designed to rapidly drive policy improvement at all levels of government for Canadian families living with autism. Whatever the challenge related to autism, for example, early intervention, education, housing, or vocation, the CAP will bring together the top experts in the country to provide solid evidence-based advice to decision-makers.

As important as what the CAP is, is what it is not. It is not just another autism organization. Rather, it is a true partnership intended to represent the entire Canadian autism community speaking together with one voice on the many things on which the Canadian autism community largely agrees.

The following is taken directly from the Canadian autism partnership project's report "Better Together: The case for a Canadian Autism Partnership":

With input received from 4,963 Canadians representing all ten provinces and three territories, it is clear that there is strong, positive support for the CAP model as presented in this business plan. In particular, stakeholders valued the opportunities that CAP would provide for collaboration and knowledge exchange. They saw the potential for achieving efficiencies in programming and service delivery and the benefits of a knowledge repository. Families and self-advocates were enthusiastic about the potential for being able to influence the research agenda, and recognized that although the proposed CAP may not necessarily address their immediate issues, its focus on addressing complex issues and systemic barriers was an essential part of moving towards improved outcomes for families and individuals and enhancing capacity in communities.

The development of a Canadian Autism Partnership provides a unique opportunity to harness the collective investment, innovation, knowledge and capacity of a nation to get behind one of the most pressing issues of our time by enabling governments, researchers and service leaders to work together to address those barriers that prevent Canadians with Autism from participating in the full experience of our Canadian society.

Individuals with autism and their families want what everyone else wants: to fulfill their aspirations and flourish with the support of their family, friends, and society as a whole. All too often, however, they and their families face a strong stigma and lack of understanding of the challenges they face and the support they need in order to reach their full potential. Families can feel that they are on their own. They might not know which way to turn or where to seek the best advice. However, through their personal advocacy efforts, individuals affected by autism and their families have shown us how resilient they are. People affected by this condition can and do succeed with the right support, as evidenced by the young man from my riding whom I quoted earlier.

It is important that these individuals and their families know that the federal government is working with its partners and other stakeholders to support the autism community by enhancing the evidence base and increasing awareness. This is why the Liberal government must approve this funding.

Business of Supply

Many times over the past 11 years I have served here in Parliament and again today, my friend and colleague from Edmonton—Wetaskiwin has shared his very personal journey with the House. He has demonstrated how a family deals effectively with the enormous challenges faced by those dealing with autism. It has been a real honour for me and my colleagues on this side of the House especially, but for all members, to have met Jaden, to see the fantastic enjoyment that he gets from life, and to experience the joy that he gives to us as members.

I am amazed at the perseverance and tenacity that is needed by every family and community that deals with autism on a daily basis. It is clear that we need to do all that we can to raise awareness and work toward effective support solutions.

I hope that on this important non-partisan issue all members will support the motion put forward by my colleague from Edmonton—Wetaskiwin.

● (1255)

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Toronto—Danforth, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when looking at the specific needs that we are all talking about today regarding autism spectrum disorder, there are commonalities for other families as well who deal with other severe disabilities. I wonder whether my colleague sees options as to how we can serve all families, making sure we are not creating gaps between people who might have a very rare genetic disorder that is not being spoken about today. What does he see as potential openings and a framework to deal with those situations?

Mr. Harold Albrecht: Mr. Speaker, this question gets to the heart of the challenges that are faced by every MP every day. To stand behind or hide behind the argument that there may be some gaps or we cannot meet everyone's needs on all of the range of issues that we are faced with as parliamentarians is an easy way out. It is an easy way out of actually dealing with a problem that we have all recognized in this House for decades. We know that we need to do something, so I would urge my colleagues to please not hide behind the facade of saying, "Well, we cannot help everybody, so we are not going to help anybody."

Others have heard the story of the young guy on the beach where starfish have been washed up on the shore and are stranded there. He walks along, throwing the starfish back into the ocean, and somebody comes along and says, "What you are doing is useless; you are not making any difference." He picks up another one and says, "Well, I made a difference for that one."

I know that story has been told hundreds of times, but it illustrates to me what I think the heart of this issue is and the response that is applicable for the member opposite.

Ms. Tracey Ramsey (Essex, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is clear that on this side of the House there is wide support to support families who have persons living with autism. What is desperately needed, though, is leadership from the government, not excuses about what may or may not be there. It is leadership that is needed, and the provinces desperately need this as well. They need some direction. They need to know that the federal government cares about persons living with autism throughout their entire life, recognizes the support that is necessary, and will put the money into the Canadian autism partnership project.

The money we are talking about is such a small amount of money, yet it would make such a huge difference in the way we go forward in talking about persons with autism in our country. Every person in this House knows someone in his or her family, community, or constituency who is living with autism and who needs the federal government to show the leadership that is necessary.

Does the member agree that \$19 million is a small amount of money to help all of those families and that leadership should be shown by the government today with a vote in favour?

Mr. Harold Albrecht: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her interest in this issue.

We are talking about \$19 million over five years, less than \$4 million a year, and that is a very small amount in relation to the needs out there and in relation to the entire budget.

I want to point out that the Conservative government provided leadership on this issue back in 2015-16, when we committed \$2 million to get this initiative started. Now we are pulling back from a commitment that the Government of Canada made to this entire community and its families.

To me, it is unconscionable because, as my colleague has pointed out, I am convinced there is not one member in this House who can say he or she does not have a relative or a former schoolmate or a neighbour or someone else who has been impacted, and it is not just that one person who is impacted: there are ramifications and challenges faced as well by the families and communities who surround these individuals.

It is incumbent upon us to act and to act now. I hope that we can convince enough members on the opposite side to support this motion, because it is very worthy of support.

● (1300)

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it truly is a privilege to stand and join the debate today on this very important motion.

First of all, I want to acknowledge the member for Edmonton—Wetaskiwin in terms of the passionate support that he has brought to this issue. He has also, in a very public way, shared the joys and the challenges of being a parent of a child with autism. He has done so much, and we need to recognize him here in the House.

I am going to talk in terms of what autism is, share a bit of personal experience, and then talk about the importance of what this motion is and what it will do in terms of the Canadian autism partnership program.

As many have said, autism spectrum disorder is widely considered one of the fastest-growing neurological disorders in Canada, affecting an estimated one in 68 children, so over 500,000 children are affected in Canada.

Business of Supply

It is a lifelong diagnosis that manifests itself in a wide range of symptoms, including difficulty in communicating, social impairment, and restrictive and repetitive behaviours. Individuals with autism and their families face unique challenges over their lifespan that can often lead to crisis situations, so it is not just a health issue that we are dealing with; it is something that has overarching implications. As well, it is a spectrum disorder, meaning that the range of symptoms that people have and how it manifests itself in each person are variable and different.

I want to put those numbers into perspective.

In Canada in 2017, close to 400,000 children will be born. When about 3,800 of them are welcomed into the world, the initial reaction of the doctors and the people who look at this newborn infant will be, "You have a healthy baby boy." Things will often go along quite well for a number of months, sometimes years, but sometimes small things or large things start to cause the parents some concern.

I had the privilege of working as a nurse in a small rural community for many years. Often I would see newborn babies, and part of my role was doing developmental assessments and monitoring developmental milestones for year one, year two, before they entered kindergarten. I will give maybe two examples on the spectrum.

One was a baby that came into the office for an 18-month immunization check. The mom started to express some significant concerns in terms of the verbal ability of her child and the tension within her child. She knew something was not quite right. Things were not going on in the way that her older daughter had progressed in terms of milestones. With a parent's instincts, she knew something was wrong. She ended up getting further assessments and received a diagnosis of autism. That early diagnosis really made a difference in terms of the ability to intervene and to mitigate some of the symptoms that the child was experiencing.

Another mother had a child who was about 10 years old, and she once said to me, "God gave me patience and then God gave me Mark." She did not know that anything was wrong, other than that he had some challenges that she should could not quite put her finger on. He spoke well and was obviously very bright, but there were issues in terms of social interaction and a few other areas of his life, and he had been a particularly challenging child for her as a parent. When that was further investigated, he was diagnosed, and again it was autism spectrum disorder. He had a little help in his school, and it made all the difference in the world to have that diagnosis, to have that support, to learn how to accommodate some of his needs, and he obviously went on to, in his case, a very successful future.

• (1305)

As critic for indigenous affairs, I think it is important for me to also comment on that aspect as an issue. A lot of research has been done, and in the indigenous community it is believed that there is a significant underdiagnosis of children experiencing these problems and that there are significant issues in receiving support and interventions.

The government talks about Jordan's principle and the importance of having equitable services. This motion represents an opportunity, because the Canadian autism partnership group has recognized that it

needs to work with indigenous communities to really provide support and ensure that diagnosis and appropriate supports are available. That is within some of the goals that have been mentioned.

I want to do a special shout-out to the Chris Rose Therapy Centre for Autism in my riding. I first visited that facility probably about 20 years ago. It was for children who were having too much difficulty to be in the regular school system. I was absolutely amazed by the commitment, passion, and support that the team was giving to help the many children who went to their facility. The Chris Rose Therapy Centre has a school program, an extended program, and a summer program, and they have support for adults with autism. Those kinds of facilities are across the country, but sometimes it is hard for a facility that is providing care to have the latest research and the most up-to-date interventions, and again I think the Canadian autism partnership is something that will move us forward in this area.

CAP is designed to rapidly drive policy improvements at all levels of government for Canadian families living with autism. Whatever the challenge is, whether it is early intervention, education, housing, or vocation, it will bring the top experts in the country together to provide solid evidence-based advice to decision-makers.

I am not really quite sure what the Liberals are talking about when they are resisting this motion. I think it is important to recognize that it builds on a lot of work that the federal government has undertaken for a number of years now. In 2007 a Senate report called "Pay Now or Pay Later" recognized that there were some issues. There has been a lot of hard work done by a lot of organizations to get us to where we are now.

The Canadian autism partnership has great guiding principles. One of the Liberals said it would not help with a particular situation. I would encourage her to read the report, because in actual fact it is specifically designed to help in all aspects of life with autism across the spectrum and throughout the entire lifespan.

It also says that CAP must be relentless in terms of its reliance on solid evidence and dedication to converting that evidence into policy that improves life for Canadians and those living with autism.

Again, I would encourage especially the Liberals to read what the guiding principles are and what the plan is when they look at that \$19-million request. I know \$19 million is a significant amount of money, but in terms of a federal government's budget and in terms of what can be accomplished, I cannot think of a better way to spend \$19 million over five years.

Business of Supply

Voting yes for this particular initiative is going to make a profound difference to the 7,000 babies, their families, and the communities that I just talked about, as well as to the centres such as the one in my riding that I mentioned. They will benefit from the ongoing research and advice and support that they will get. I think when people stand to vote in this House, it really is a modest funding request. It will have a profound influence, and I urge all members to support this motion.

• (1310)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon (Parliamentary Secretary for Sport and Persons with Disabilities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo for her speech.

Everybody has a story; we all know someone who has a disability or someone with an autism spectrum disorder, or we know someone who cares for one of these individuals every day.

I am pleased that we are speaking openly about this today, because that did not happen even just a few years ago. My colleague gave some examples of the barriers people with autism face. That is what we want to improve. We want to improve the process, carry out research, and develop ways to help families. We agree that this has value.

Through public consultations held across Canada, we were able to learn more about most of the barriers facing people with autism, as well as people with disabilities. A simple doorway can be difficult to negotiate for someone in a wheelchair, and so can it be an obstacle for someone with a disability.

My question is very simple. Should we be thinking about all people with disabilities and include people with autism in the bill we want to develop?

[*English*]

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Mr. Speaker, there is no point in duplicating the amazing work and consultation that already have happened.

Again, I encourage all members to read the documents. There has been a lot of work, with significant consultation. This process is building. Absolutely, we need to support people with disabilities, and we have a number of initiatives. I am always very proud of the work being done, especially done by our former colleague, Jim Flaherty, who was minister of finance. Every budget he ever tabled in the House recognized the challenges of parents of children living with disabilities. He made a profound difference in that area, which is one of his great legacies.

It is not either-or. This work has been done and it needs to continue to be built upon. I grow concerned when I hear the questions from the Liberals. They should read the document before they vote. They can see how much work has been done.

Let us continue to build on that very important foundation.

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo for her consistent support in the House for a more inclusive society. This motion is really about that, a more inclusive Canada. I always try to stand up for that.

Is the member as frustrated as I am with the circuitous kind of answers we get from the government side? There is only a couple of words missing: “whole-of-government,” which I have not heard yet; and “re-profiling”. Once we hear those two, then we know the answer is not happening.

So far we have had merely vagueness and a bringing in of all kinds of other issues, other than the issue we are actually talking about, which is the strategy to get moving on autism and a national strategy. Is the member as frustrated as I am with this debate?

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Mr. Speaker, if every member of the Liberal government read the documents and had the free opportunity to vote, he or she could do nothing but vote for the motion. This motion would cost \$19 million over five years. It would impact hundreds of thousands of Canadians in a positive way. What better way to spend \$19 million than to help support communities, families, and children and adults living with ASD.

• (1315)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, many colleagues on both sides of the House are celebrating Vyshyvanka Day, which is a day when we wear beautiful clothing, originating from Ukrainian heritage, something of which we are all very proud.

Since the debate began, I have listened to the comments of opposition members, as well as my Liberal colleagues, on how they feel about this very important issue. It is important to start off by saying that we are all very much aware of autism spectrum disorder and the consequences of that on our society. I often hear members across the way, in particular, talk about the numbers, and that range from one in 68, to one in 70-something, to 500,000 children. Therefore, it is important to recognize there are different levels of autism spectrum disorder.

I am familiar with the issue in two ways. First, it is very much a family issue for me personally, as it is for the sponsor of the motion. Second, I come from the perspective of having been a health care critic in Manitoba. The overall expenditures of health care for that government continue to grow into the billions of dollars. I will talk to the importance of the different stakeholders, which include the provinces, territories, non-profit groups, and many others.

For those who may be listening, when we talk about autism, many people might be able to identify quite quickly some of the issues. When we talk about the large number of Canadians who are impacted, which is a significant percentage, one might be able to pick up on it in a relatively quick fashion. However, that is not the only situation, as many people with autism still have not been diagnosed. Therefore, we really do not know the number.

Business of Supply

Asperger's syndrome is a form of autism. For example, many people speculate, and some believe, that Albert Einstein had Asperger's. Dan Aykroyd has indicated he has Asperger's syndrome. Other individuals have talked about this. Because someone has autism, it does not mean he or she is completely dysfunctional. In fact, those people are just as lovable as individuals without Asperger's syndrome and can function fully in society in many different ways. We should also talk about that.

I am as proud of my family members as is the sponsor of the resolution when he talks about his son. I am very proud of the way my family members have been able to overcome some of the disadvantages of having autism. However, I also recognize that certain aspects of Asperger's syndrome will enable some individuals to excel. Some of the greatest musicians in the world have had some connection to Asperger's. I have heard some of their music.

Therefore, when we talk about this, I do not think we should try to apply one label that fits all. I will not accuse members of that, but it is important—

• (1320)

Mr. Mark Warawa: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Relevance is a very important part of the House. During question period, the government can refuse, successfully, not to answer a question. However, this is not question period; this is debate. The member needs to answer the question. Will the government provide the funding for autism, yes or no? He is not answering the question.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): I believe the hon. member can wait until questions to ask that question. I would just like to remind the hon. member that what happens sometimes is people do tend to deviate, and I have had certain debates go in certain directions and then the hon. member often brings it back around and makes it relevant. I will leave that to the hon. parliamentary secretary. I am sure he appreciates all the members coaching him, but I will let him continue.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I am not too sure how my talking about Asperger's syndrome and autism is not relevant to what we are debating today. We are talking about that very subject, and making reference to it. I cannot believe how the member opposite would not have recognized just how important this issue is. Before possibly answering what members might be posing to me at the end of my speech, it is important I share with them both my personal experience and the understanding I have of the issue. It is a wonderful motion that is creating a debate for a full day in the House.

I have heard a lot of wonderful things being said in support of the need for the government to do something on autism. The Minister of Health and the Government of Canada have been very progressive in pushing this issue forward. I could cite some specific examples if that helps members across the way. However, before I do that, it is important we recognize that the Government of Canada is engaging still with many other different groups to identify other potential opportunities for partnerships. It is also engaging with other departments to determine investments that can best help those with autism and their families. I think all of us would agree that the

primary objective here should be how we help those families and those who are directly affected by autism.

We understand that the ministry is engaged on this issue. Opposition members have already made their decision, and that decision is supported by the New Democrats, and that is good for them. We know the fine work the Canadian autism partnership project has done in the past. We recognize that. I have visited the website, as I am sure most members have. The organization has done a phenomenal job in consultations, reaching out, and trying to come back to the government with some proposals. In fact, the Minister of Health had the opportunity to review the issue that was presented and a decision was made in regard to it. The member across the way is asking us to rethink that decision.

However, it is important we all recognize this. Because the member opposite brings forward a motion, asking for an allocation of \$19 million, does not mean the government has not taken this issue seriously. We take this issue just as seriously as the former government did.

The Minister of Health has been meeting with provincial jurisdictions. In fact, we have even achieved health care accords. I would suspect that a good part of the discussions that take place among the bureaucrats at both the provincial and national levels deal with issues like autism and fetal alcohol spectrum disorder. All of these issues are very important for us to deal with. We are not just talking about \$19 million. We are talking about hundreds of millions of dollars when we start to talk about dealing with issues such as autism, fetal alcohol syndrome, and other disabling and challenging issues our children and young adults have to face.

The Minister of Health has a broader responsibility to ensure we are, as much as possible, providing the necessary leadership to deal with these issues in a very tangible way. That is why the parliamentary secretary earlier talked about a couple of things, and I would like to highlight a few of those.

• (1325)

The Canadian Institutes of Health Research invested \$39 million over the past five years. That is a significant amount of money going toward health research. Also, in budget 2017, support for parents with disabled children was expanded to up to \$2,769 per child in addition to the up to \$2,300 as part of the revamped Canada child benefit program. There are also \$5 billion that the government plans to invest in mental health for youth, which will, in fact, have an impact on young people diagnosed with ASD.

There are additional whole-of-government efforts that have taken place that support autism, including supports to families through improvements made to the child disability benefit in the Canada child benefit. Under the leadership of the Minister of Sport and Persons with Disabilities, federal accessibility legislation is currently being developed. Employment and Social Development Canada is investing \$15 million in the ready, willing, and able initiative, RWA, currently being delivered through a partnership between the Canadian Association for Community Living and the Canadian Autism Spectrum Disorders Alliance.

Business of Supply

They give the impression that the government is not moving forward on this issue, but that is just not the case. The Minister of Health has captured the essence of the issue and the bureaucracy within the Department of Health is taking the initiatives that are necessary and can actually make a difference.

I cannot say enough about the Canada autism partnership and what it has been able to accomplish to date. I applaud each and every person involved in that. The Canadian Autism Spectrum Disorders Alliance is a fantastic group that bridges every region of our country, I suspect, through the care and compassion it has demonstrated not only over the last couple of years but for decades of dealing with this very issue. I know that because it was a topic of many discussions in my former life as a member of the Manitoba legislative assembly and the health care critic in the province.

I posed a question the member opposite regarding the need for co-operation, and I did it because of my understanding of how health care services are delivered. If I factor in my personal experience, as I am sure members across the way are aware, it is not just the departments of health in the different provinces having to come to the table on this very important issue. Members can check with the department of family services in the Province of Manitoba, for example, and I suspect they will find other sources of money and supports that are accessed in several departments in the different provinces. They will find that in some areas there are more progressive municipal governments that look at ways to provide support. That is not to mention the many non-profit organizations that deal with this particular issue in a very real and tangible way. Autism spectrum disorder is well established and well understood and, yes, there is room for us to move forward.

I expect the Government of Canada to do what it is doing today: investing real dollars, where it can, that are going to make a difference for those who have autism and, in particular, the families affected as a direct result of it. Where it can provide that direct delivery, I encourage and promote it. I would love to see more research done on it.

• (1330)

I really believe the single greatest thing that the Minister of Health can do on this particular issue is to ensure that she is working with the different stakeholders in trying to assist, and that there is some commonality between the different provinces, to take a look at our best practices in one province and maybe see how they could be incorporated into another province. Some members of this House have already drawn the conclusion that there is only one way to do that best, and that is through the Canadian autism partnership.

I have confidence in the Department of Health and this particular Minister of Health who has demonstrated a caring, compassionate heart when it comes to delivering on what Canadians believe is so important to them and part of our identity, and that is health care services. We have a minister who has been more proactive than the previous four or five health ministers under the Conservative administration, and that can be very easily demonstrated. I have more confidence in her ability to ensure this aspect of health care, the autism spectrum, is in fact being addressed.

When I see the type of budgetary initiatives that the government has in place or continues to support, and the type of other ministerial

involvement, such as the one I made reference to in terms of sports and disability, I see that as encouragement. At the end of the day, I do not believe for a moment that there is a member inside this chamber who does not recognize the importance of the issue. I believe we all recognize that.

I choose to believe that at the end of the day, if we recognize that the Minister of Health—and I repeat what I said earlier—is still engaged with many different groups to identify other potential opportunities for partnerships and with other departments to determine where investments can best help those with autism and their families, that is something I believe is of critical importance.

If we are to move forward, I want this government to move forward in the right direction, so at the end of the day, we will ultimately see the best results we can see, with the finite amount of money that government has.

I disagree with members who say that it is 10¢ a day for this, or it is only \$19 million. I can assure you that every one of the constituents I represent would argue that a million dollars is a lot of money. We could take that approach and say that this is a very good cause, which it is.

Do not quote me on it, but I suspect the Province of Manitoba spent somewhere between \$6.5 billion and \$7 billion on health care last year or the year before. Every dime of that, I would argue, is very important. We understand the importance of health care. We understand the importance of being there for our children and our families. This is a government that understands that, and if we look at the budgetary issues that we have presented to this chamber, we find there are numerous actions that have been taken in order to support our families.

I suspect that, as we continue to move forward, we will see more tangible actions that support the intent of what we are talking about today, and that is to try to deal with this disorder.

• (1335)

Mr. Bob Saroya (Markham—Unionville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I understand the point of view of my good friend from Winnipeg North. He is all over the map. It is the communities that are suffering. Families have issues. Families have major issues with the kids.

I attended a number of fundraisers. I have seen a number of their members of Parliament showing up for the picture ID to say “Hey, we are here with you; we are going to help you out.”

This is the time. The question is simple and short. It is 10¢ per Canadian per year. It is not much money. We can give the Prime Minister \$250,000 for a private island. We can adjust it. It is not much to ask.

I am hoping at the end of the day that the member can tell us if he will support this issue or not. It is just a simple question, yes or no. Three million dollars is not a lot of money, \$3.8 million for the entire country. It is not much to ask.

Business of Supply

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, nor is it much to ask that we recognize that the Minister of Health is engaged with this issue, and that in fact we are working with other stakeholders, dealing with this very important issue. Until we have made the ultimate determination, and we see that in different forms, voting against this particular motion does not mean, in any fashion whatsoever, that I do not recognize the valuable contributions that all those have made toward this particular issue, autism spectrum disorder.

Ultimately, what I want to see as a legislator is that good decisions are being made, and that at the end of the day we will see the best results we can, given the finite amount of money we have. That is something I believe is really important.

I look to the ongoing support from the department of health, and in fact this government, toward autism spectrum disorder.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Before we go on, I just cannot get over how the hon. parliamentary secretary is always helped by people in the opposition. They must really like him to help him along and try to give him stuff to say, but I am sure he can answer all on his own.

Questions and comments.

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I was under the impression that 150-some Liberals got elected, but unfortunately we hear all too often from only one of them.

What I want to talk about today is that I was hoping in this debate we would find a way to get to yes: yes to support for people with autism, yes to support for their families and their support workers, and yes to supporting all those people who surround them with love and want to make sure they succeed.

The hon. member says it is a lot of money. No, I would say it is not a lot of money. What we are not spending now, we will spend later. What we are not spending in this way, we are spending in the wrong way. This is an investment in an inclusive Canada, something we would hope the government would support.

However, we have heard yet another one of those speeches that talks about consulting people, thinking about it, working on it later, and finally coming to a conclusion sometime over the distant horizon. When is the government actually going to take action to support people with autism and their families and make this a more inclusive Canada?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I am not too sure if the member across the way was listening to what I was talking about.

The government has actually taken many different actions that deal with autism spectrum disorder—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The hon. member for Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. I am not sure there is a specific order that prevents the member from doing what he often does, but he accuses people who actually endured his speech of not listening to it.

I would appreciate it if he would give credit to the fact that my questions were based on what he had to say in this House, to which I

listened very carefully, and I found no answers for those people who live with autism.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): I believe that is a point of debate, not a point of order.

• (1340)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, if the member was listening, he would have heard that the Canadian Institutes of Health Research invested \$39 million in the past five years toward autism spectrum disorder; additionally, in the budget, support to parents with disabled children was expanded to up to \$2,769 per child.

As opposed to reading all the things that I have already indicated, I can tell the member that, at the end of the day, once everything has been said and done, I choose to believe that on the issue of autism spectrum disorder, I care just as much as members on all sides of this House. I am hoping that the members across the way will recognize that, if we are going to continue to move forward on this issue, I choose to believe that the Minister of Health understands and has been meeting with the many different stakeholders and is developing a plan that would ultimately see the issues that we want to see being advanced and moving forward.

In time, I think we will see just that.

Hon. Mike Lake (Edmonton—Wetaskiwin, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I cannot speculate on how much the member cares, but I can comment on what I have heard today. What I have heard today is one of the most mind-numbing and condescending speeches I have ever heard in the House. The member talks about the government being “progressive in pushing this issue forward”. That is demonstrably false, demonstrably untrue. The member talked about doing his research, that he knows about the organization, that he visited its website. Lots of people can visit the website.

The member says that the single greatest thing the minister can do is work with different stakeholders. Does the hon. member have any idea how much work went into this with the stakeholders? The member talks about research. Lonnie Zwaigenbaum, Stelios Georgiades, Stephen Scherer, Jonathan Weiss, some of the top researchers in the entire world were part of the autism spectrum disorders working group. There were seven incredible self-advocates as part of the team that put together this ask. The Canadian Autism Spectrum Disorders Alliance worked for two years on this to come up with a way that we could meaningfully help Canadian families living with autism. It is \$3.8 million a year, and yes, I do believe that number is relevant. It is 10¢ per Canadian per year, an investment that would change the lives of hundreds of thousands of Canadians living with autism.

I will ask again. Will the hon. member be voting yes or no for this motion?

Business of Supply

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, from my perspective, I believe that I have been fairly clear on how I stand on the issue of autism spectrum disorder. On a few occasions I have also recognized the many different stakeholders who have been involved in this. I appreciate the fact that the member made reference to specific names, but I would suggest that it goes far beyond those names. There are individuals in every region of the country who truly care about this and who had input. All those thousands who participated in the consultation also need to be appreciated and recognized. That is something which we have done.

We will continue to move forward as the government puts in the budget. We have talked about the implementation of potential legislation. The government is moving forward on this issue. That is something which I believe is important to see and have that debate today. Individuals who are watching can rest assured that the government is proactive on the file.

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, is the member's point of view that government knows best in spite of the fact that the member who has gone out and done consultations, talked to parents, talked to experts in the field, self-advocates about what government should do to move forward? That is how the member came forward with this motion. Is it the view of the member for Winnipeg North that the government knows best? That is what I am hearing from him.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, what I indicated is that the Minister of Health has done her homework on the issue. As she continues to be engaged with the many different stakeholders dealing with autism spectrum disorder, that will continue to take place over the coming weeks, months, and years as we try to advance the issue the best way we can in co-operation with the different stakeholders.

• (1345)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, before I begin my speech, I want to let you know that I will be sharing my time with the member for Lethbridge.

On March 24, 2016, I was in the House of Commons along with pretty much everyone else. I was listening closely to my colleague from Edmonton—Wetaskiwin. It was during statements by members, when we have a minute to talk about a matter of personal interest, and my colleague's words were, by far, the most moving I have ever heard in the House of Commons or the National Assembly, where I sat for seven years.

What was so poignant about his remarks? My colleague told us about his son, Jaden, who was in the gallery at the time. With his trademark sensitivity and a full measure of the sincerity he demonstrates whenever he is invested in something, he shared his deep love for and great pride in his son despite the fact that Jaden has autism spectrum disorder.

His words truly moved me to tears. I shared his statement on Twitter and Facebook. Thousands more anglophones and franco-phones were also touched by what the member for Edmonton—Wetaskiwin said.

Here we are 14 months later speaking to this issue. We are being asked to vote on a motion to address a situation that we should not be in in the first place. Why did the current government have to slow the momentum built by the previous government to help research efforts and persons with autism spectrum disorder?

My comments will be two-pronged. Before getting to the financial and political aspects of the issue, let us first talk about autism. Everyone in Canada knows someone who knows someone who is dealing with autism. ASD was around 20 years ago, but we did not know much about it and had not yet given it a name. Today, it affects 1 in 65 children in Canada. That is half a million children who are affected by autism spectrum disorder. Multiply that number by 2, 3, 5, or 10 to get the number of people directly affected because every father, mother, grandfather, grandmother in this situation is affected. This serves as a reminder to those of us who are fortunate enough to be parents, like me and most people here I presume, that we are extremely lucky to have healthy children.

We need to deal with this situation in a positive and constructive way because the distinctive thing about autism is that no two cases are alike. Each case requires dozens or even hundreds of different measures. People with ASD will be dealing with this disorder their entire lives. ASD begins to manifest itself around the age of two. As my colleague from Edmonton—Wetaskiwin mentioned, in Quebec it takes two years to get an appointment and two more to get treatment. By then, the child is six years old, and it might be getting a bit late for treatment. It is never too late to do the right thing, but science has shown that the younger children are when they begin treatment, the better the results.

This is not about partisanship, political games, or seeking gains of any sort. We need to unite to help people in this situation. That is where we are in this debate.

A few years ago, spurred by the member for Edmonton—Wetaskiwin, and with the support of the former prime minister and member for Calgary Heritage, the Right Honourable Stephen Harper, as well as the then finance minister, the Honourable Joe Oliver, the previous government allocated monies to enable all Canadian autism organizations to work together and help each other out.

We know that health is a provincial jurisdiction, but the federal government has a role to play. That role is to help with research, and to identify and discover best practices. The role of the federal government is to help all the groups trying to find solutions to ASD to work together, and exchange data and information in order to improve the lives of all Canadians affected by this disorder. I would like to point out that half a million Canadian children are affected. That is a lot of people.

• (1350)

That is why our government created the working group to go forward with this. To everyone's surprise, the current government turned down the group's modest request for funding.

Business of Supply

When the budget was tabled, everyone expected the government to carry on with what the previous government started. After all, any government that sees something good happening has a duty to make sure it keeps happening even if it was started by people of a different political stripe. It is important to recognize everyone's work. However, to everyone's surprise, and as the finance critic, I know what I am talking about here, the current government said no to what is really a modest funding request.

The government cut \$19 million over five years. That is \$3.8 million per year or, as the member for Edmonton—Wetaskiwin put it, 10¢ per Canadian. That is not a lot. It is exactly 0.0001% of the budget. The budget is over \$330 billion, and the government is cutting the \$3.8 million that would have gone straight to helping those who help people with autism.

This is an unfortunate, sad, and utterly unacceptable decision. The way I see it, every expenditure is suspect and should be scrutinized. One is either a Conservative or one is not. To Conservatives, money well spent is worth every penny. Let me put that another way.

[*English*]

When it is useful, it is not expensive because it is used. They are important for people. This is the real issue with respect to today's debate. Why did the government decide to cancel the good support that the former government gave to families, to fathers, mothers, grandmothers, grandfathers, who tried to work hard to support their children and grandchildren who have autism spectrum disorder?

The question today is crystal clear. Why did the government decide to cancel the necessary support? This is the main question. We are very sad to see that since the beginning of the debate, no one on the government side can answer this easy question.

[*Translation*]

We know that this government sometimes has a hard time giving straightforward answers. We saw this again last week, when the Prime Minister could not tell us how many times he met with the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner. I have seen this regularly myself, too. I asked the Minister of Finance 24 times when Canada would return to a balanced budget, but never got an answer.

Let us be honest here. This is a humanitarian issue. This is in no way a partisan issue. We need to give our very best in order to help the most vulnerable among us. The federal government has a vital role to play across Canada. Yes, health is a provincial responsibility, but it is incumbent upon the Canadian federal government to unite the efforts of Canadians and all organizations from coast to coast to allow Canadian parents to access the same services and come up with best practices to support people with autism spectrum disorder. The current government has stifled the efforts of the previous government.

With all my heart, I am appealing to the common sense of my colleagues opposite and to their sense of responsibility. I hope they will allow their government to help Canadians in need.

[*English*]

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it seems to me that the government wants to spend money on everything in the world, but it seems unwilling to make a

commitment to a reasonable organization that has spent money well in the past and wants to help children all across Canada who have autism.

I am wondering what my colleague thinks about that.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Mr. Speaker, when my colleague from Sarnia—Lambton asks questions, there is no sign of a political agenda. She is very concerned about social issues and very careful when she talks about them, especially this one, because we are talking about Canadian children.

Let me remind the House that the Liberal government always proudly says that it is the government of the family, that it spends billions of dollars on families, that it is very careful. Just a few days ago the minister from Quebec City said that I, the member for Louis-Saint-Laurent, should be proud because the 21,000 children in my riding will be happier because the government gave a lot of money to them. We are asking the government to keep the money for the people who need it, the people who are dealing with autism spectrum disorder. We are telling the government to keep it, keep it, keep it.

• (1355)

Hon. Mike Lake (Edmonton—Wetaskiwin, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I find it astonishing right now that not one single Liberal member is standing up to ask a question on this member's fantastic speech. It is not really surprising, given the way the debate has gone today so far.

We have heard from those who stood up earlier today on the Liberal side a lot about the past Conservative investments in research and surveillance. Those are and have been really important in understanding autism and the needs of the autism community in Canada.

I would like to ask the member what he thinks the usefulness is of all that knowledge if we do not implement something as tangibly important as the Canadian autism partnership for Canadian families.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Mr. Speaker, that is exactly the main issue of the debate today. If the federal government cancels the support it should give to all the organizations, we will miss this tremendous opportunity to work together.

This is what Canada is all about. Canada is a magnificent country of 35 million people, but we must work together to achieve the goals we have to address, especially in this situation.

The member from Edmonton was crystal clear a few minutes ago about the reality in different provinces. He said he was very lucky that his children were born in Alberta, because in Quebec, it would have taken four full years to address the issue. That is not the case in Alberta.

Statements by Members

How can we help people in Quebec? It is by getting information from Alberta, by working together, and by sharing the experiences. That is exactly what we want. That is exactly what we ask of the government. We hope that a few hours from now, the Liberal members will address this issue with their hearts.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like my colleague to provide some information.

Will the approach proposed by this partnership, which is made up of people living daily with autism, help us save money in health care costs? This \$19-million investment would actually be cost-effective, because it would help us save money through a better exchange of information about practices that might help families and patients.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Mr. Speaker, I sincerely thank my colleague from Quebec for her speech. I believe that she has, and demonstrates, a great deal of maternal social conscience when it comes to these issues.

One thing is certain; every day that we do not work together to combat autism spectrum disorder is another day lost. In the 10 provinces and three territories, 500,000 Canadian children are struggling with ASD. These children need attention, and what is lacking is the shared experiences from coast to coast to coast.

Now more than ever, this is a non-partisan issue. This is a Canadian issue and it is about helping our children. Let us hope that our colleagues across the way show some compassion.

ROYAL ASSENT

[*English*]

The Speaker: I have the honour to inform the House that a communication has been received as follows:

Rideau Hall
Ottawa

May 18, 2017

Mr. Speaker:

I have the honour to inform you that Ms. Patricia Jaton, Deputy Secretary to the Governor General, in her capacity as Deputy of the Governor General, signified royal assent by written declaration to the bill listed in the Schedule to this letter on the 18th day of May, 2017, at 10:32 a.m.

Yours sincerely,

Stephen Wallace

The schedule indicates the bill assented to Thursday, May 18, 2017 was Bill C-37, An Act to amend the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act and to make related amendments to other Acts.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

• (1400)

[*Translation*]

LABELLING OF FOOD

Mr. Rhéal Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, this government, like previous ones, wants to prevent us from knowing what is in our food.

Yesterday, the Liberals, like the Conservatives, voted once again against the bill to make GMO labelling mandatory. Many, many times in recent years, the Bloc Québécois has introduced bills similar to yesterday's bill. People want to know what they are eating. I think that is reasonable.

We are already having a hard time getting Ottawa to support our agrifood industry. Just think of our cheese producers or farmers, who rely on supply management and who have been abandoned by the Liberals. Just think of our fishers.

Not only is the supply of Quebec products decreasing, but now we will no longer know whether what we are eating was modified in a laboratory.

The 40 ghost members, including the Prime Minister, would rather defend Monsanto than Quebec consumers. That is shameful.

* * *

OTTAWA CHAMPIONS

Mrs. Mona Fortier (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with summer just around the corner, I rise today to welcome the president of the Ottawa Champions baseball team, David Gourlay, who is here in the gallery.

The Champions begin their third season this evening with the goal of defending their title as Can-Am League champions.

[*English*]

I am very proud to have the Champions in Ottawa—Vanier, as they support local businesses, such as the Clocktower Brew Pub, Kichesippi Beer, and Gabriel Pizza, and ensure local at-risk youth are employed with quality summer jobs.

The Champions also raise funds for local charities, such as the Miracle League of Ottawa, supporting children with physical and intellectual disabilities in enjoying the game they love.

[*Translation*]

The Champions are organizing two international series this season, which will include a special game for Canada Day and the first professional all-star game in Ottawa.

[*English*]

I urge all colleagues in this place to join with me and cheer, go, Champs, go.

*Statements by Members***CLOVERDALE RODEO AND COUNTRY FAIR**

Ms. Dianne L. Watts (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today, I rise in the House to pay tribute to the Cloverdale Rodeo and Country Fair. This world-famous event will attract approximately 100,000 people over this May long weekend to celebrate the 71st year of the rodeo and the 129th year of the country fair.

Attendees will witness world-class rodeo athletes compete for over \$300,000 in prize money in bareback riding, saddle bronc riding, bull riding, and ladies' barrel racing.

With Canada's 150th anniversary just around the corner, this year's rodeo will have no shortage of Canadian superstars. Of course, we cannot forget the fan favourite, the Mutton Bustin competition, and the amusement park for the kids.

I invite everyone to join me at the Cloverdale rodeo parade Saturday morning, which will be featuring community floats, drill teams, and marching bands. Grab a pair of cowboy boots and join me and the South Surrey-White Rock Youth Council at the Cloverdale Rodeo and Country—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Don Valley West.

* * *

AGNES MACPHAIL

Mr. Robert Oliphant (Don Valley West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I pay tribute to Agnes Macphail, the first woman elected to this House of Commons, and celebrate the Bank of Canada's special commemorative \$10 bill honouring her.

● (1405)

[*Translation*]

Agnes Macphail was elected to Parliament in 1921, in the first election where women had the right to vote. She spent 19 years here working to improve the living conditions of labourers and farmers.

[*English*]

In 1943, she was elected to the Ontario legislature for York East, part of my riding of Don Valley West, and lived on the corner of Millwood Road and Donegall Drive in Leaside. She fought for, and won, Ontario's first equal pay legislation, in 1951.

Next week, as part of the 150th anniversary of our Confederation, I will join students at Leaside High School to honour the phenomenal achievements of an organizer, activist, feminist, role model, and Leasider: Agnes Macphail.

* * *

[*Translation*]

CHILDREN AND THE FUTURE

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I know that I will likely soon have to answer the question, "Mom, why do you do the job you do?" I could answer that I do this job so that my daughter and her friends will have a future that I am proud of and that gives them hope.

I want my daughter and all of the other little girls in the world to have the same opportunities in life as boys. I want all indigenous

children to have access to the same quality of education as my child does. I want my children to be able to go fishing on our beautiful lakes without being too afraid to eat the fish they catch.

When it comes time for my daughter to choose a profession, I want her to still have access to good quality jobs instead of living in insecurity. When it comes time for her to leave home, I want her to be able to find affordable housing. When it comes time for her to have her own children, I want her to be able to properly support them.

There are many other reasons why Mom does this job, and all of them come down to making the world a better place. It is not always easy, dear daughter, but we must never give up.

* * *

[*English*]

TEEYAN

Mr. Ramesh Sangha (Brampton Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, every year at the onset of the monsoon, the Teeyan festival is celebrated by women with their maternal kith and kin.

On this Mother's Day, Punjabi media tycoon Sukhi Nijjar of Watno Dur organized a thriving Teeyan event at the Powerade Centre in my riding. At the Powerade Centre, more than 7,000 women of all different ages, in traditional costumes, came out to demonstrate that mothers are the pillar of strength in the family. I congratulate Sukhi Nijjar on his vision and success.

"Be content and have a smile on your face, even if you are having a bad day", says 106-year-old supercentenarian mother for all seasons Dorothy Gardner. I am lucky to have Dorothy in my riding. Keep on walking.

* * *

ACHIEVEMENTS IN MARKHAM—UNIONVILLE

Mr. Bob Saroya (Markham—Unionville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to a brilliant young man from my riding of Markham—Unionville. Aidan Aird is the founder of two not-for-profit organizations and has won many top awards at the Canada-Wide Science Fair.

Aidan has received two global distinctions for his charity and science-related work. More notably, in 2016, Aidan was celebrated as the 360°kids volunteer of the year for his efforts to support homeless teens in York Region.

Most recently, Aidan was awarded the STEAM Horizon Award, which is a \$25,000 scholarship, and the \$100,000 Schulich Leader Scholarship from the University of Toronto. Aidan will be attending U of T's prestigious engineering science program and plans to major in aerospace.

To Aidan Aird and his incredible family, Markham—Unionville and Canada are proud of you. Congratulations.

Statements by Members

[Translation]

CANADIAN ARMED FORCES AND FLOODING

Mr. Yves Robillard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, like other places in Quebec and across Canada, Laval was struck by terrible flooding. This awful situation, which I saw first-hand, did, however, showcase the exemplary sense of duty of our military personnel. I also witnessed this sense of duty when I was part of the Canadian delegation sent to France to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the Battle of Vimy Ridge. Our soldiers are just as united today as they were in the past, in all branches of the forces that are assisting their fellow Canadians today.

I will be with my constituents this weekend for the big cleanup in Laval. Please join me, and let us draw inspiration from the solidarity and resilience of the members of the Canadian Armed Forces.

* * *

● (1410)

[English]

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Ms. Pam Damoff (Oakville North—Burlington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the work of reconciliation with our indigenous peoples is one of the most critical issues facing Canada today. In my riding of Oakville North—Burlington, I recently hosted a free screening of *We Were Children*. The film portrays the profound impact of residential schools and forces us to take a long, painful look at our nation's past.

After the movie, we had an emotional panel discussion, led by three very special guests, Sherry Saevil, Stephen Paquette, and Elijah Williams, who shared their own journey of reconciliation.

I also recently had the pleasure of announcing funding for Conservation Halton's restoration of one of the longhouses at Crawford Lake, a truly special place where Halton residents learn about our indigenous people. In the coming weeks, I will be hosting my youth council there to take part in a blanket exercise.

In my community, we will continue to seize the opportunity of Canada's 150th anniversary to support each other along the path of truth and reconciliation with our indigenous brothers and sisters.

* * *

CRIMEAN TATARS

Mr. Kerry Diotte (Edmonton Griesbach, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today is the 73rd anniversary of the Soviet regime's brutal deportation of the Crimean Tatars. On May 18, 1944, Soviet forces ripped Crimean Tatars from their homes. They packed them onto cattle cars and sent them on a long, dark journey to central Asia. Thousands died. It was an attempt to eradicate a small nation from the very face of the earth. In other words, it was genocide.

Today Crimean Tatars face renewed peril at the hands of Vladimir Putin's illegal occupation. Once again they face attacks on their freedom of speech, their faith, and, in many cases, their lives. The same evil ideology is at play in the Soviet regime's attempt to destroy the Crimean Tatars and in modern-day Russia's theft of Crimea from Ukraine.

The Liberal government must do more to stop this Russian aggression.

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UNDERWATER VEHICLE COMPETITIONS

Mr. Seamus O'Regan (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, two weeks ago, students from all across Newfoundland and Labrador competed in the MATE underwater remotely operated vehicle competition at the Marine Institute in St. John's. I stand today to recognize the outstanding achievements of O'Donel High School and Mount Pearl Senior High, which finished first and second in the competition respectively. The competition between the two schools from my riding was a nail-biter, with the teams finishing less than one point apart.

Next month, the two schools and a team from Memorial University will travel to the international MATE competition in Long Beach, California, to compete against teams from all around the world. Teams from 10 countries will be competing against our two teams from Mount Pearl, Newfoundland.

This is yet another example of people from my province punching robotically well above their weight.

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MANITO AHBEE FESTIVAL

Mr. Doug Eyolfson (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the member of Parliament for Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, it is my pleasure to extend greetings and a warm welcome to all who are participating in and attending the 2017 Manito Ahbee Festival in Winnipeg, Manitoba.

Named after one of the most important traditional indigenous gathering sites in Turtle Island, the Manito Ahbee Festival brings together people from across Canada and around the world to experience the very best in indigenous music, art, and culture.

Starting with the lighting of the sacred fire, this wonderful celebration offers all Canadians the opportunity to honour and develop a deeper understanding of indigenous culture and heritage and to celebrate its importance in Canada's multicultural mosaic.

Those who have asked themselves what they can do in this time of reconciliation and healing can consider this their official invitation to Manito Ahbee.

I wish to commend everyone involved in making this event such a significant success and offer my best wishes for an enjoyable and memorable festival for all.

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DAN JORGENSEN

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Dan Jorgensen. Dan loved adventure, and after his retirement he spent his time enjoying the thrill of rushing water, riding his motorcycle, and jumping out of planes. He was doing what he loved last week, kayaking in Manitoba, when he lost his life.

Statements by Members

Dan was the kind of person who stood up for what was right, even if it was not easy. As a police officer, he uncovered suppressed evidence during a murder trial, which led to the resignation of a number of senior officers and justice being served. Dan earned the trust and admiration of many and went on to become the chief of police in Kenora.

Danny, as his family knows him, was also my cousin. He always had a big story, a strong opinion, and a knack for never being at a loss for words. Danny brought energy and passion to everything he did, including his efforts to help the homeless and less fortunate in the Kenora region.

Danny loved his family and his community. His passing leaves a big hole in that community and in our family. Danny Jorgensen, you will be missed.

* * *

• (1415)

CRIMEAN TATARS

Hon. MaryAnn Mihychuk (Kildonan—St. Paul, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today, May 18, we commemorate the 1944 forced deportation campaign conducted against Ukraine's indigenous Crimean Tatars under Soviet leader Joseph Stalin.

There are still people alive today who remember the day when the entire population of Tatars was given 30 minutes' notice to leave. Most would never see their homes again. There were 240,000 who were deported, and nearly 100,000 of the exiled men, women, and children loaded onto cattle cars died en route or shortly after their arrival in the Urals, Siberia, and central Asia.

Ukraine's Crimean Tatars have been returning to their homeland over the decades. However, today we should recall this tragic history and think of them currently experiencing the heavy hand of Russian occupation, exile, and worse.

* * *

WINERIES IN ESSEX

Ms. Tracey Ramsey (Essex, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am so proud of the many wineries in my region of Essex. From planting to processing to retail, our local wineries create a complete supply chain and a distinct brand for our regional agricultural, tourism, and retail sectors.

I was disappointed to see the Liberal budget unfairly target wineries with a 2% increase to the excise tax that will be tied to the consumer price index.

Wineries in Essex are small businesses, and the Liberals still have not fulfilled their election promise to reduce the small business tax rate. The jobs created by wineries are rooted to the community by the very vines that grow in the fields in Essex. Our fertile soil, mild temperatures, and longer growing season are all key components to the stellar wineries from Aleksander, D'Angelo, Black Bear, Colio, Mastronardi, North 42 Degrees, Sprucewood Shores, CREW, Cooper's Hawk, Muscedere, Oxley, Viewpointe, and Pelee Island, just to name a few of the more than 20 wineries in Essex.

I call upon the government to help create the next generation of specialists and keep them on the land and on family farms to help this sector grow and thrive, just like the grapes on the vine.

* * *

TURKEY

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren (Chatham-Kent—Leamington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, since the failed coup attempt in Turkey on July 15, 2016, allegations state that 180 media outlets have been shut down, 120 journalists have been arrested, over 3,500 judges and prosecutors have been dismissed, and over 27,000 people have been arrested and detained in Turkey. Even a Canadian was arrested for tweeting negative comments about the president, and is awaiting an appeal from the courts. Reports from the Kurdish province speak of persecution and of elected officials being jailed, and the list goes on and on.

Last week, I met with Turkish Canadians who told me that the long arm of the Turkish government is reaching foreign soil. They introduced me to a wife whose husband was arrested in Saudi Arabia and is now being held in a Turkish jail. That is one of the many stories we hear of people who are crying out to the rest of the world for help and are increasingly being isolated and left on their own.

We must call on the Turkish government to answer these allegations and hold it accountable for its actions by standing up for those who have been ignored.

* * *

SRI LANKA

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Scarborough—Rouge Park, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, eight years ago today, the 26-year-old armed conflict ended in Sri Lanka, yet peace has not been achieved on the island. The scars of this war remain deep within the hearts of Tamils around the world as a result of the 100,000 lives lost, the occupation of over 65,000 acres of land, the fate of Tamils who surrendered, the thousands of Tamils who were abducted by government and paramilitary forces, and the numerous Tamils who languish in prisons under the draconian Prevention of Terrorism Act.

The Sri Lankan government stands accused of war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide. Human rights violations continue daily, with Tamils living in fear of the occupying military. Even today, they are barred by the state from mourning their loved ones.

I met many of the victims last July during my visit to the island. They seek answers, which can only come from a fair, independent, and internationally mandated process of accountability. I want to reaffirm our commitment to seek truth, justice, accountability, and peace.

ORAL QUESTIONS

●(1420)

[English]

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, many Liberals claim that closing the Vegreville immigration office was to “manage middle-class taxpayer dollars responsibly”, and to “spend tax dollars wisely”, and to “save money”.

Yesterday, *Global News* exposed all that was a massive Liberal deception. The facts reveal this cold-hearted decision will actually cost taxpayers millions.

The minister can fix his predecessor's mistake. Will he reverse it now?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, sadly, about 20% of the available positions at the current location are vacant. The move will address the staffing challenge, allow for an expansion of immigration operations, and create additional jobs for Alberta. In fact, the new centre will accommodate 312 employees and will effectively double the capacity of the existing system.

We recognize the relocation has an impact upon staff and family, and we will continue to make every effort to minimize those impacts.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is actually all nonsense. Just last week, the Minister of Infrastructure and Communities claimed that the Liberals were closing the office because they “want to be responsible for how they use taxpayers' dollars”, but Canadians now know the truth.

Rural Liberal MPs, the NDP, and federal public service workers everywhere should be outraged. If this can be done to Vegreville, this can happen anywhere.

The Liberals covered it up for months, falsely claimed staff were not up to the job, and are devastating a small town in the process.

How can Canadians possibly trust anything the Liberals say?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the decisions relate to expanding the capacity of the immigration system in Alberta. It is about growth. That is the issue at stake here.

At the present location, there is a—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: The idea of question period is not for everyone to talk at the same time. It is to have questions and people to listen to the question, to have answers and people to listen to the answers. Whether they like them or not, whether they are satisfied with them or not, the deal is that we listen.

The hon. Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness has the floor.

Hon. Ralph Goodale: Mr. Speaker, the immigration issues in Alberta are all about growth and expansion. The difficult reality at the present location is a 20% staff vacancy rate. The new location

Oral Questions

will help expand capacity, improve recruitment, shorten wait times and upgrade services in and for the province of Alberta.

The new jobs will be created and every current employee will be guaranteed a job at that new location, about an hour away.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is about the eighth different excuse in the last seven months about why this is happening. However, let us be clear about what is happening.

The minister is spending millions of tax dollars to shut this office down in a small town represented by a Conservative and moving jobs to a vulnerable Liberal riding. It is unbelievable. My constituents should not have to pay for it. Neither should taxpayers.

The Liberals are not saving money. They are wasting millions and they are attacking rural Canadians like always. How can the minister live with himself?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, growth presents challenges. The fact is that with the growing population in Alberta and the growing attraction to Alberta of new immigrants wanting to go to that part of the country, immigration services in and for the province of Alberta need to be expanded.

That expansion is best accomplished in the new location, where the number of employees will increase to 312 and the overall capacity of the system will in fact be able to accommodate the growth expected into the province of Alberta.

* * *

[Translation]

TAXATION

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is really too bad that a member with so much experience in this House would make such unacceptable comments.

This is not the first time, either. The people in Vegreville are not the only ones in Canada who are suffering. Hard-working Canadians from all across the country can see the government digging ever deeper into their wallets.

The government cancelled tax credits for school supplies and children's fitness and arts courses. The government raised taxes on liquor, alcohol, beer, wine, and more.

Why is this government so greedy when it comes to taxpayers' wallets?

●(1425)

Hon. Scott Brison (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have lowered taxes for the middle class. We have made important investments in infrastructure in every community in Canada. Frankly, it is very important to continue to invest to stimulate economic growth and create jobs for the middle class across Canada. We will continue to do so.

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Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this government keeps cutting tax credits for Canadians. Who would have thought that the Liberal government would cut the public transit tax credit one day? That is what the Liberal government did. Who would have thought that the government, who was elected on a promise to run small deficits, would run astronomical deficits one day?

Why does the government keep hitting taxpayers so hard in the wallet?

Hon. Scott Brison (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, since December 2015, Canada's unemployment rate has dropped to 7.1%.

We have created 250,000 jobs in the past six months. Our plan is working well and that is why we must continue to make investments and create jobs for the middle class.

[English]

We will do what is fair for all Canadian families. Our tax measures benefit those who need the help the most.

* * *

[Translation]

GOVERNMENT APPOINTMENTS

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal House leader rises every day to defend her own boss's ethical scandals. How can she possibly have the credibility to choose the next Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner when this person will most likely continue investigating her boss?

If the Prime Minister felt the need to recuse himself from choosing the next commissioner, why does the Liberal House leader not feel the need to do the same?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have implemented a new, open, transparent, and merit-based appointment process. Our aim is to identify high-quality candidates who will help to achieve gender parity and truly reflect Canada's diversity.

We encourage all Canadians to apply. The process that we introduced is a good one.

[English]

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the reason the Liberal House leader is forced to stand and defend the Prime Minister day after day is that there is no minister for ethics on the government side. That is why we have an Ethics Commissioner.

The independence of the Ethics Commissioner is of paramount importance, no matter the political party.

What would the Liberals have said if Stephen Harper, as prime minister, had named Paul Calandra to choose the ethics commissioner during the Senate scandal?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member should be happy to know that we knew the system under the previous government was

not working. That was why we committed to Canadians to introduce a new, open, transparent, merit-based process, one in which positions that were available would be openly disclosed online. All Canadians are able to apply.

Our aim is to identify high-quality candidates who will help to achieve gender parity and truly reflect Canada's diversity. All Canadians are encouraged to apply for positions on commissions, boards, crown corporations, agencies, and tribunals across the country. As I have said, positions are available online. I have full confidence that the person who takes the post will take it seriously.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals have lost all credibility on independent appointments by choosing a Liberal minister as commissioner.

If the Liberal government had chosen, say, a former Conservative, it would have shown it was serious about accountability and moving beyond partisanship. However, that is not what it did.

Could the Liberal House leader, in charge of defending Liberal ethical scandals, please explain in what official capacity Gerry Butts communicated with Madeleine Meilleur before she was nominated?

• (1430)

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government believes in the importance of the official languages commissioner and the office of the official languages commissioner in the protection and promotion of official languages.

We are committed to find the best candidate to occupy this important position through a rigorous, open, and merit-based process. We conducted multiple interviews. I had a chance to talk with my critics from the two parties opposite. They both acknowledged she had great experience, great expertise in the field. That is why we are convinced Madeleine Meilleur is the best the candidate for this office.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is not about Madeleine Meilleur's integrity or her experience; it is about a fake consultation process.

[Translation]

The Prime Minister has just chosen a Liberal minister to be the official languages commissioner. Ms. Meilleur wanted to be a senator, but the Prime Minister made it clear that he preferred her to be commissioner.

We learned today that Gerald Butts, the Prime Minister's principal secretary, had contacted Ms. Meilleur previously.

What right do Gerald Butts and Katie Telford have to interfere in this so-called non-partisan appointment process?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government believes that the position of Commissioner of Official Languages plays an important role in protecting and promoting the official languages.

Oral Questions

As we have said several times, we knew that we could find the best candidate for this position with a rigorous, open, and merit-based process. That is why we conducted multiple interviews. I also had the opportunity to speak with the critics of the two opposition parties. They told me that she indeed has the experience and expertise. The leader of the second opposition party just confirmed that. That is why I am convinced and we are all convinced that Ms. Meilleur is the best candidate for the position of Commissioner of Official Languages.

[*English*]

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, here is what the newly nominated languages commissioner said about her attempt to become a senator: “I thought I could contribute as a senator, but the Prime Minister made it clear that he did not want any politicians in the upper chamber.” If the Prime Minister says that his nominee is a politician and she agrees, then why is he appointing her to a position that is, by law, non-partisan?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are extremely proud of Mrs. Meilleur’s candidacy. As many of the opposition critics, and even the leader of the second opposition, have mentioned, Mrs. Meilleur is highly qualified and has the experience for this important position. Not only that, many organizations that are involved in the protection of minority linguistic rights have saluted and said that she has the right experience, the right expertise. That is why we are convinced this is the right candidate.

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let us get this straight. After retiring from her Liberal cabinet post, she went to the Liberal Prime Minister’s principal secretary to request a Liberal patronage position. Gerald Butts, the Prime Minister’s top political adviser, told her she was too political to be a senator. Instead he offered her a job that is by its very definition non-political.

How is it that everyone can see this massive conflict of interest except the Liberal Prime Minister?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as part of the process to find the best candidate for the position of Commissioner of Official Languages, we obviously interviewed many people. We wanted to find the best candidate.

I would like to point out to my colleague, who may not be aware of Ms. Meilleur’s experience and expertise in this area, that she was behind the campaign to save the Montfort, Ottawa’s French-language hospital. She also had a hand in creating the counterpart to the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages in Ontario. Her track record speaks for itself. Several opposition members have already said so. We are convinced that she is the best—

The Speaker: Order. The hon. member for Mégantic—L’Érable.

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L’Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when the Liberal Party was elected in 2015, Liberals across the land started dreaming not about the nation’s finances or the middle class, but about how they could personally cash in. The latest story stars Madeleine Meilleur, who dreamed of a job for life as a senator, but the Prime Minister did not want to get involved in that, so he said no.

That, however, is not the end of the story. Madeleine Meilleur, proud Liberal donor, came away with a consolation prize: Commissioner of Official Languages.

In Liberal Party parlance, does transparency mean “applying” online at liberal.ca?

• (1435)

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said, our government believes that the Commissioner of Official Languages plays an essential role in protecting and promoting the rights of linguistic minorities.

We worked hard to find the best person for the job through an open, merit-based process. There were several interviews, and I discussed it with the opposition critics, and we agreed that she has the knowledge and experience. That is why we are certain she is the right candidate.

[*English*]

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in addition to the official languages commissioner, we now learn that the price of appointment as a superior court judge also involves generous donations to the Liberal Party, with two of the latest appointees being none other than generous Liberal Party donors.

For a Prime Minister who promised a new merit-based appointment process, is it just a coincidence that so many Liberal Party donors are being appointed, or is this just the latest example of a Liberal promise made and a Liberal promise broken?

Hon. Jody Wilson-Raybould (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I always appreciate the opportunity to stand up to talk about our new open and transparent judicial appointments process.

I have been fortunate enough to find 60 significantly meritorious candidates who reflect the diversity of Canada and appointment to the superior courts across the country. I look forward to continuing to make announcements about judicial appointments and am very pleased with how the bench across the country is shaping up.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals’ election platform promised that they would appoint parliamentary watchdogs that were accountable only “to Parliament, not the government of the day.” This process is a complete sham. These watchdogs will not be accountable to Canadians. They will only serve Liberal partisan interests.

Now that a Liberal insider has been hand-picked by the Prime Minister as the official languages commissioner, what Liberal Party donor can we expect to be cast in the new role of ethics commissioner?

Oral Questions

When it comes to appointing officers of Parliament, will the Liberals just stop the charade and admit that only Liberals asked by Gerald Butts and Katie Telford need apply?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we believe in the importance of the office of the official languages commissioner, because we believe in the importance of promoting and preserving the official languages of this country.

We were committed to finding the best candidates after a thorough process that was open and merit-based. We had the chance to do multiple interviews and also to go through an important and thorough process. I had the chance also to consult with my critics, and ultimately, we all agreed that Madeleine Meilleur has the qualifications for this important position.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): It is clear, Mr. Speaker, that the Prime Minister's time away from hosting cash-for-access events has put the process back several months by not being able to accept resumé with cheques attached. However, he is back tonight in Vancouver with his new cash-for-access and who wants to be the ethics commissioner countrywide tour.

When the Prime Minister gets back to Ottawa from his tour, will he be handing resumé over to the government House leader, Gerald Butts, and Katie Telford stacked in the order of the highest cheques given to the Liberal Party?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the way the new open, transparent, and merit-based appointment process works is that Canadians can apply. They do not have to be affiliated with anyone. They can choose to apply and they deserve to be considered. That is why it is an open, transparent, and merit-based process.

We are delivering on exactly what we committed to Canadians. Our aim is to identify high-quality candidates. We will achieve gender parity and truly reflect Canada's diversity. Under the new process, over 140 appointments have been made.

* * *

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Ms. Tracey Ramsey (Essex, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the United States has formally triggered the clock on renegotiation of NAFTA. With hundreds of thousands of jobs on the line, the Liberals still have not disclosed their priorities to Canadians. After the Liberals told Canadians not to worry, Donald Trump sought massive tariffs on Canadian lumber and launched verbal attacks on our energy and dairy sectors.

Canadians are seriously concerned about their jobs. When will the Liberals stop appeasing the U.S. president and stand up for Canadian jobs?

• (1440)

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the notice that was given by Ambassador Lighthizer today is a step that has long been anticipated. It is a routine part of the U.S. domestic process. NAFTA negotiations have not yet begun. The formal notification today means that those negotiations can begin no sooner than 90 days from today.

I was pleased to meet with Ambassador Lighthizer on Tuesday, less than 24 hours after his swearing-in. It was his first meeting with a foreign official.

We are ready to stand up for the Canadian national interest and we will always do that.

[Translation]

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this morning, the United States began the process of renegotiating NAFTA, and I agree that it came as no surprise. Ninety days, that is not far off. President Trump was clear about his intention to protect American jobs and industries. We need a government that will hold its own when defending our industries and our jobs.

How can Canadians have confidence in this government when it is not even prepared to disclose the priorities it will defend during the negotiations?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I already said, today is a technical step in the U.S. domestic process that we have long anticipated. We recognize that trade agreements must keep pace with the changing economy. However, I want to underscore that we will always proudly and vigorously defend our national interests and Canadian values.

* * *

[English]

TAXATION

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government has told the provinces that if they refuse to impose a carbon tax, the Liberals will impose it for them.

Today, a technical document showed that the federal carbon tax will cost at least 11¢ a litre for consumers at the pumps, and of course thousands more for home heating, electricity, and groceries. Now the government claims that it is considering giving some of that money back to the people who will pay it. How will it be possible, though, for those people to know if they are actually getting their money's worth, when the government continues to hide the real cost to the average family of the federal carbon tax?

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, unlike the party opposite, Canadians know that polluting is not free. We are seeing droughts, fires, and floods across the country and around the world, which has impacted on human health. That is why we are working with the provinces and territories to put a price on pollution. Four out of five Canadians already live in a jurisdiction where there is a price on pollution.

Let me be perfectly clear. In the case that a federal plan has to apply because the province has not acted, revenues will go back to the province.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. I am having trouble hearing the answers. I am certainly having no trouble hearing the questions. I need to hear both.

Oral Questions

The hon. member for Carleton.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in its 26-page technical report on the federal carbon tax, the government has thought of every single way to wring every single dime out of taxpayers in the relevant jurisdictions. There is talk of registered fuel importers, registered fuel distributors, surplus credit, and special bringing-in rules. There is all of this detail, except one detail. How much will it cost for the average family to pay the damn tax?

The Speaker: Order. I am going to ask the hon. member to withdraw the word which he knows is unparliamentary. Could he do so now, please?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: It is withdrawn, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, four out of five Canadians already live in a jurisdiction where there is a price on pollution, through the leadership of the provinces and territories. We appreciate that. We are working with the provinces and territories because once again, unlike the party opposite, we know that polluting is not free. We know that climate change is real. We know that acting on climate change will not only ensure a more sustainable future for our kids and grandkids, but it will also produce innovation and create good jobs, because we are going to have the solutions of today and tomorrow.

• (1445)

[Translation]

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, here is the Liberal Party's record since it came to power: 30,000 full-time jobs lost and a \$30-billion deficit that keeps ballooning every day.

The Liberals' plan to go into debt on the backs of our children and grandchildren and to keep taxing Canadian families is simply not working.

The Liberal government insists on having a carbon tax that will put even more of our Canadian families into debt. When will Canadians finally get a break and a chance to breathe?

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want Canadians to be able to breathe. That is why we have a Canadian plan for the climate and that is why we are putting a price on pollution. We are seeing the effects of climate change. They are real and we are working with the provinces and territories, including Quebec, which already has a price on carbon, because that is what we must do for our children and grandchildren. This will help grow a cleaner economy.

[English]

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, global refineries in my riding may move their operations and jobs elsewhere. Two levels of carbon tax in Ontario will force these jobs to the U.S. but will not reduce their carbon footprint. This carbon tax has already killed plant expansions, causing them to be built in the U.S., and it will hurt small business.

Why does the environment minister want to kill more jobs in Ontario?

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased that through

the leadership of the Ontario government, there is a price on pollution in Ontario. In fact, there is a price on pollution in provinces across the country.

I was actually very pleased—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, order. Most members in all parties are able to sit through question period and hear things they do not like without reacting, as difficult as it might be at any time, through a question or an answer. I would ask others who have difficulty with that to try to restrain themselves.

The hon. Minister of Environment has 20 seconds.

Hon. Catherine McKenna: Mr. Speaker, I do not understand why the party opposite is against innovation and good jobs. In fact, I just tried a minivan made in Windsor. It is the first electric hybrid minivan. It will reduce emissions. It will cost less money for consumers, and it is creating good jobs in Canada. That is the innovation we want. That is the future we want for our kids.

The Speaker: I would ask the member for Foothills, and a few others as well, not to heckle throughout the answer.

The hon. member for Sherbrooke.

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[Translation]

CANADA REVENUE AGENCY

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we learned more news about the KPMG affair. Now it appears that the Canada Revenue Agency is involved in a cover-up. Indeed, we have learned that some correspondence between KPMG and the CRA has completely disappeared. Poof, like magic, all the KPMG files are gone. Come on. This is disgusting and utterly indefensible.

Instead of rehashing the same old talking points, will the minister tell us what happened to that correspondence? If she cannot find the right cue card, then will the Minister of Justice tell us what happened to the incriminating correspondence?

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the CRA has already confirmed, a diligent search for records was conducted and all records management guidelines were followed.

The Canada Revenue Agency is the client department represented by the Department of Justice in this case, and given the different roles, the CRA retains different records.

The independent third-party review I ordered last year included an examination of thousands of records and many days of interviews. It is shameful to suggest that the examiner drew conclusions without sufficient evidence. It is not consistent with her decades of experience or her seniority—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Edmonton Strathcona.

Oral Questions

[English]

FINANCE

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, speaking of missing files, despite commitments made by the government at the G20 to eliminate the billion dollars' worth of perverse subsidies for the fossil fuel sector, the Auditor General reports he has found little evidence of action, let alone any clear credible plan. Worse, the Auditor General reports he was denied access by both the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Environment and Climate Change to the very information necessary to conduct his audit.

Eliminating these perverse subsidies was part of the Liberals' election plan. When will Canadians finally see action, or is it just another broken promise?

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we thank the Office of the Auditor General for its hard work, and we expect its recommendation.

Our government has a strong plan to invest in clean growth that will help create middle-class jobs and get the country on the path of a low-carbon economy. We have made a commitment with our partners in the G20 to phase out the inefficient fossil fuel subsidies by the year 2025, and we are on track to meeting that target. Going forward, the government will provide budget preparation information and all documents to the Auditor General.

* * *

• (1450)

[Translation]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Darrell Samson (Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the men and women of the Canadian Armed Forces and their families make huge sacrifices to serve Canadians. As the member for Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook, which is home to many soldiers and veterans, I can personally say that being sent abroad definitely makes things more difficult for our troops and veterans.

Can the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence tell us a little bit about what the government is doing to help our soldiers?

Mr. Jean Rioux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question. In recognition of the critical and dangerous work that Canadian soldiers do around the world, all members of the military who are deployed overseas as part of a recognized operation will have their salaries exempted from federal income tax. This exemption will apply to salaries up to the pay level of lieutenant-colonel and will be retroactive to January 1, 2017. What is more, it will not have any impact on the assessment and awarding of hardship and risk allowances.

[English]

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC): Mr. Speaker, no matter the final result, the provincial election in B.C. has put the Trans Mountain expansion project at risk, with avowed pipeline opponents now making up about half of the legislature.

The Prime Minister approved this pipeline project last year, but since then has done nothing to champion it in B.C. Press conferences in Ottawa and speeches in Calgary and Houston will not help get this job-creating project built in British Columbia.

When will the Prime Minister ignore the fears of his B.C. caucus and come and sell the project in B.C. to ensure that the pipeline he approved actually gets built in B.C.?

Hon. Jim Carr (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we approved the pipeline. This is a federally approved pipeline that went through the most rigorous of all possible assessments.

The approval of the National Energy Board and then the subsequent approval of the Government of Canada comes with 157 conditions. I should also say for members opposite that these decisions were made on time, loyal to what the Government of Canada had said to the people of Canada.

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister is in B.C. today, but he is not there to champion the pipeline that he approved.

It is clear that the Liberal B.C. caucus wants this project to fail, and it does not want the Prime Minister to sell the pipeline to British Columbians. If the Prime Minister does not personally intervene to promote the Trans Mountain pipeline project, a project he personally approved, it will not get built.

When will the Prime Minister stop putting the jobs of B.C. Liberal MPs ahead of the jobs of tens of thousands of energy workers? When will he finally start to champion this project in British Columbia?

Hon. Jim Carr (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the approval of the Trans Mountain expansion project is only one of many decisions that the government has taken to acknowledge the leadership of the Province of Alberta in the energy sphere and the number of jobs that will be created by it.

Even just today, the Premier of Alberta announced \$225 million in loans for the rehabilitation of abandoned oil wells, because of a \$30 million grant from the Government of Canada. Again, we acknowledge the importance of the Alberta energy industry, even if members opposite cannot seem—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, order. The hon. member for Calgary Midnapore.

Oral Questions

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal government continues to attack Calgary and Canada's economy.

After so-called consultations, the Prime Minister's panel recommended the National Energy Board be moved from Calgary to Ottawa. With no solid evidence supporting the recommendations, the Liberal government decided that politicians and lobbyists would make better decisions than scientists and industry experts.

Does the Prime Minister really believe that career politicians in Ottawa can make better evidence-based decisions than experts who live on-site in Calgary?

Hon. Jim Carr (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, just last week I had the pleasure of visiting Calgary to announce multi-million-dollar investments with the Government of Alberta and the private sector, which was way beyond the kind of investments that we saw in Alberta.

That is the confidence we have in Alberta. We know that Alberta is the centre of the energy industry in Canada. It has been that way for a long time. I am sure it will be that way for decades in the future.

• (1455)

Mr. Bob Benzen (Calgary Heritage, CPC): Mr. Speaker, even Alberta Premier Rachel Notley has described the Liberals' decision to move the NEB from Calgary to Ottawa as "dumb", a sentiment I wholeheartedly agree with.

The additional red tape and the extended timelines will kill our struggling energy industry at a time when Canadians, and especially Albertans, need jobs and economic opportunity.

Will the Minister of Natural Resources reject these dumb changes that are designed to hobble our energy industry?

Hon. Jim Carr (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the expert panel of five individuals, including one from Alberta, have spent months consulting Canadians on what a world-class regulator would look like.

There are 26 recommendations. The Government of Canada will now carefully assess these recommendations. As I said a moment ago, Alberta has been a leader in the energy sector for Canada for decades, and I see that it will not only maintain the status quo but it will grow.

We have confidence in the energy environment in Alberta.

* * *

HEALTH

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government convened a panel to revise Canada's guidelines on opioid prescription. This is an important step to address the overdose crisis.

However, now we learn that one of the members of that panel was a paid adviser for pharmaceutical companies, including Purdue, a major opioid producer.

Given the record of misrepresentation by the drug industry that fed this crisis, how did the government allow an individual with a clear conflict of interest to help draft new prescription guidelines?

Hon. Jane Philpott (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I indeed was concerned when I heard these allegations of potential conflict of interest. As a result, I want to make sure that the guidelines will have the confidence of physicians and other prescribers who expect to use them. I have asked the associated university to do a thorough investigation of what took place and to report back to me. I have also asked the Canadian Institute for Health Information to convene a meeting to have experts advise as to the acceptability of the guidelines and whether they indeed will have the confidence of those for whom they have been written. I will report back further to the public, as necessary.

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VETERANS AFFAIRS

Ms. Irene Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, just as in 2016, the Liberals introduced a bill with substantial changes to veterans benefits, then immediately crammed those changes into an omnibus budget bill. This effectively mutes debate and evaluation of veterans benefits. The Liberals denied the veterans affairs committee any time to even discuss the bill. There are serious issues regarding benefits for our veterans and how they are being administered.

Why are the minister and the Liberal government afraid of basic review of the changes that they are rushing through?

Hon. Kent Hehr (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are committed to veterans and their families in delivering the services they need where and when they need them. We have been showing that commitment since day one of our election by improving financial benefits and by improving access to services. In fact, we followed up on that commitment in budget 2017.

I am very proud of the fact that we will be opening a centre of excellence on PTSD and mental health issues to better support veterans and their families. We are moving forward in a positive direction. We will continue doing this throughout the rest of our mandate.

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FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, evidently our foreign minister and her predecessor hold opposing philosophies. Stéphane Dion was guided by a philosophy of responsible convictions. Dion rejected Magnitsky-style legislation that would make corrupt foreign officials accountable because he was afraid of antagonizing Vladimir Putin.

Yesterday, the foreign minister announced her support for Bill S-226, the Sergei Magnitsky law.

Oral Questions

With her support now, would the minister confirm that Mr. Dion's philosophy of responsible convictions and Russian appeasement are no longer guiding Canada's foreign policy?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what I can confirm is that I have the highest regard for Stéphane Dion. He is a legendary Canadian public servant. He is one of the Canadians who deserves credit for keeping our country together at a moment of great peril, and all Canadians owe him a tremendous debt for that.

As our foreign minister, Stéphane Dion was a leader of bringing Canada back, of elevating our voice on the world stage. I am proud that Stéphane Dion has agreed to serve as our ambassador.

• (1500)

Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after 18 months of Liberal foot-dragging on Magnitsky sanctions, in the face of unanimous foreign affairs committee advice and the arrival in the House of strong private member's legislation, the government has finally signalled it will support Senator Andreychuk's bill.

However, there are 12 other recommendations in the committee report aimed at fixing Canada's dysfunctional sanctions enforcement, to increase capacity, coordination, and commitment between departments and agencies.

Will the government take this advice as well, and act?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do want to start by saying I was very pleased last night with our discussion of Bill S-226 and I was pleased to announce that the government will be supporting this bill.

I would like to recognize the work of the member for Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman on this bill, as well as my colleague the member for Etobicoke Centre and the great Irwin Cotler. This is a real example of the House working together in across-party support for Canada working on human rights. I also want to support the work of the committee. I am reviewing the other recommendations very carefully. It is a unanimous report, and it is work very well done.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in a technical briefing, the parliamentary secretary said that 100% of the B.C. first nations supported the tanker ban. She neglected to mention the very many who count on energy as an opportunity for their future.

This is a government that committed to free, prior, and informed consent. This is hardly an example of getting that free, prior, and informed consent.

Is the minister prepared to table in this House a list of the coastal first nations that support the tanker ban and the dates on which they were consulted?

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government has consulted extensively with indigenous groups, communities, and stakeholders to listen and gather input on the tanker moratorium. Since January 2016, we have held 75 engagement sessions to discuss improvements to marine safety and formalize the oil tanker

moratorium. We are committed to continue working with indigenous peoples and stakeholders across the country to advance measures to enhance marine safety, protect the environment and communities, and support economic development.

* * *

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mr. Randeep Sarai (Surrey Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we owe a great duty to those who have given so much in service for all Canadians. Canada's veterans and their families deserve our care, compassion, and respect. As the Lower Mainland grows rapidly, more and more veterans call Surrey home.

Could the Minister of Veterans Affairs update the House about the government's efforts to ensure that veterans across the country get the services they need when and where they need them?

Hon. Kent Hehr (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague from Surrey Centre for his passion and advocacy for veterans and their families. Next week is a big week for Veterans Affairs as we will be reopening the last of the nine offices closed by the former government. We will be opening up the Prince George office.

I can also say it is exciting that we will be opening up a brand new office in Surrey, B.C., where we will be able to serve 7,000 veterans and their families. We then will be able to provide our programming, one-on-one help they need to help build their lives. We are very proud of this.

* * *

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Hon. Michelle Rempel (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadian citizenship that was obtained by fraud or deceit is not a right because, according to Canada's laws, that person was never entitled to it in the first place. This principle is at odds with a Federal Court judge's ruling otherwise. If this ruling is implemented, it will risk motivating people to lie on their citizenship application.

Will the federal government protect the integrity of our immigration system by appealing this ruling, and if so, when is it going to make this announcement?

Oral Questions

[Translation]

Mr. Serge Cormier (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as everyone knows, our government warmly welcomes newcomers to Canada and appreciates the significant contributions they make. We also know the value of Canadian citizenship, and we will not allow anyone to cheat the system or undermine its integrity.

We also believe that procedural fairness is very important, and we do not take the revocation process lightly. However, in some cases, it is necessary. Our government will carefully examine the Federal Court's decision and respond within the time frame established by the court.

* * *

● (1505)

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Salaberry—Suroît, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Transport visited my riding to announce that the dismantlement of the *Kathryn Spirit* would begin this spring following a bidding process. He confirmed this to the House after I asked him a question. It is now mid-May, the bidding process is not yet under way, and the dismantlement has not begun either, obviously.

Can the government give me a precise date for when the bidding process will be launched and when the work will begin, and tell me how long it will take to dismantle the *Kathryn Spirit*?

[English]

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is work to do, and our national oceans protection plan will provide that comprehensive plan to address abandoned, derelict, and wrecked vessels in Canadian waters. We will be introducing new legislation that puts the responsibility and liability on vessel owners to properly remove and dispose of their vessels. These are meaningful steps in the right direction to address this multifaceted issue.

* * *

HEALTH

Mr. Darren Fisher (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, mental health awareness and improvements matter to me both as a parent and as a parliamentarian. We have been hosting mental health town halls in Dartmouth—Cole Harbour. We have produced our first report on youth mental health, which I submitted to the minister just last week. We know that the Government of Canada is investing \$5 billion over 10 years in targeted mental health care funding to the provinces and territories to improve access to mental health services.

Could the Minister of Health please update the House on the progress she is making in working with the provinces and territories to ensure this new targeted mental health care spending is most effective?

Hon. Jane Philpott (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for Dartmouth—Cole Harbour for his advocacy on behalf of mental wellness. I thank him for the report he delivered to me, which was very thorough and informative.

As he indicated, our government has committed \$5 billion of new funding to provinces and territories. We know that there are more than 500,000 young people in Canada who are on a waiting list to receive access to mental health care and services. The money that we are giving to the provinces and territories is enough to entirely clear that waiting list. This is good news and we will be working with the provinces and territories to deliver a set of metrics, and we look forward to seeing better access to mental health care.

Hon. Mike Lake (Edmonton—Wetaskiwin, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Liberals in the House today have spoken a lot about important past Conservative investments in autism research and surveillance.

The Canadian autism partnership was created to put that world-leading knowledge to use with a meaningful impact for Canadians with autism. The investment: a modest \$3.8 million a year. Again, one dime per Canadian.

We did not get an answer yesterday and have gotten none so far this morning, so I will try again. Will the minister commit today to funding the Canadian autism partnership?

Hon. Jane Philpott (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I believe it is important to reiterate that autism spectrum disorder is a disorder of great significance, and it has a significant impact not only on individuals but on their families for their entire lives.

It requires a whole-of-government response, and in fact, that is what our government is doing. As the member indicated, we are investing in research and data and surveillance and training. We are also investing in a range of government programs that will have a positive impact on these families, including the child disability credit and including the Canada child benefit.

The Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour is also investing in a program called ready, willing, and able, which I understand is already having—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères.

* * *

[Translation]

CANADA REVENUE AGENCY

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of National Revenue promised that the person investigating ties between KPMG and the Canada Revenue Agency would have access to all of the necessary documents. It turns out that all of the documents were indeed available—except for the ones the agency decided to destroy. How is that for transparency?

Did the minister allow CRA employees to destroy documents that would have shed light on the incestuous ties between KPMG and her department?

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to set the record straight.

Business of Supply

Our government believes in tax fairness, which means that all Canadians pay their fair share and are treated fairly by the tax system. Our government came to power wholly committed to stepping up our efforts to fight tax evasion and tax avoidance internationally.

As I have said, the Canada Revenue Agency is taking this matter to court and will use every legal avenue available. That is what the government and Canadians expect. I hope I have made that clear to my colleague opposite.

• (1510)

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, of course everyone is treated fairly, especially KPMG.

While the Standing Committee on Finance was looking into KPMG's activities on the Isle of Man last year, the Liberal Party was appointing a KPMG executive to the position of treasurer. While the rest of us were denouncing the tax evading machine, the government was awarding contracts to KPMG. Now a government official is destroying documents related to KPMG.

Is the minister going to sanction the senior government official who destroyed the evidence proving the incestuous ties between her agency and KPMG, or is she going to promote that individual?

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Canada Revenue Agency is the client department represented by the Department of Justice in this case. Given the different roles, the CRA retains different records. The independent third-party review I ordered last year included an examination of thousands of records and numerous days of interviews.

I repeat, it is shameful to suggest that the examiner drew conclusions without sufficient evidence. It is not consistent with her decades of experience or her years of service as dean of the Dalhousie School of Law.

* * *

[English]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the government if it could please share with us what is happening the rest of this week and when we come back after our week in the constituencies next week.

[Translation]

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this afternoon, we will continue the debate we began this morning on the Conservative opposition day motion. Tomorrow, we will begin debate on Bill C-46 on impaired driving. Next week, members will work in their ridings.

When we come back, we will proceed with Bill C-6 on citizenship.

[English]

On Tuesday and Wednesday, we will continue with second reading debate of Bill C-46.

Thursday, June 1, will be an allotted day.

I would like to underline the fine work that took place in committee of the whole yesterday evening. It was productive, with many good exchanges that elevated the quality of the debate in this place. I would like to sincerely thank all hon. members and their respective staff, and also the House of Commons staff, for their hard work, which went late into the night. The next committee of the whole will be the Monday we return to this place.

Finally, as has been done in the past, I will be giving notice of a motion today to extend the sitting hours until the summer adjournment in June to midnight from Monday to Thursday, which I will be moving upon the return from constituency week. I trust that the opposition parties will support this motion.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Mr. Speaker, I am rising on a point of order. During question period, the member for Kanata—Carleton indicated that she had specific documents in terms of the coastal first nations that supported the moratorium ban and the dates the consultations happened. I would ask that she table those documents, as per the question.

The Speaker: I do not see the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport rising to table documents. I gather that she is not going to table those documents.

The hon. member for Rivière-du-Nord.

[Translation]

Mr. Rhéal Fortin: Mr. Speaker, during statements by members, I said that 40 ghost members, including the Prime Minister, found it easier to stand up for Monsanto than for Quebec consumers, in reference to yesterday's vote on GMOs.

My hon. colleague from Sherbrooke pointed out to me that the members for Brome—Missisquoi, Pierrefonds—Dollard, and Vaudreuil—Soulanges voted in favour of his bill. I want to correct my statement to say that it was not 40, but 37 members.

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for Rivière-du-Nord, but this is a matter of debate. I believe he knows that.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY**OPPOSITION MOTION—AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER**

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

Ms. Rachael Harder (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, earlier this year, the Prime Minister and his Liberal government decided to give nearly \$400 million of taxpayer money to bail out Bombardier, which is a Montreal-based aerospace firm here in Canada. As a Conservative, of course, I disagree with this use of taxpayer dollars to rescue a private corporation from its own financial mismanagement, but that is beside the point. What is on point, however, is the fact that while Bombardier was wailing about the possibility of going under, the company was simultaneously giving large bonuses to its executive members.

Business of Supply

One might ask what Bombardier has to do with autism, the topic at hand today. The answer is simple. In their 2017 budget, the Liberals cut funding that was supposed to go toward the formation of the Canadian autism partnership. The partnership requires a modest \$19 million over the course of five years. That is less than \$4 million per year. That is less than half of what the Bombardier executives are currently making in bonuses.

The government that says it represents the middle class is in fact taking money from the middle class to give big payouts to companies like Bombardier and its top executives. We are actually taking money from the middle class and giving it to the wealthiest among us. Meanwhile, the Liberal government cannot seem to find \$19 million, which is a meagre amount, in light of what I am talking about with regard to Bombardier, for those families that need it most, those that are impacted by autism.

To be frank, I believe this is an injustice, not only to these families but to all Canadians, not because all are impacted by autism but actually because society functions best when all of its members are given opportunities to reach their full potential.

In Canada right now, one in 68 children are diagnosed with autism. This number actually goes to one in 48 among boys. More than 500,000 Canadians are living with autism today, and it is the fastest-growing and diagnosed neurological disorder in the country.

Autism is a brain condition associated with poor social skills and has a wide range of symptoms, including communication difficulties; social and behavioural challenges, including obsessive behaviour; and hypersensitivity to sound, light, or other sensory stimulation. While the autism of a computer scientist might go unnoticed, at the other end of the spectrum, one-quarter of those with autism are entirely non-verbal.

Autism is a condition that defies simple generalizations. It is not a condition for which we can put people in a box and define them one way or another. Like all individuals, those who have autism have their own personalities, interests, skills, abilities, passions, and potential.

I want to focus on potential. Canada is a land of potential. It is a place where we bring refugees in from all over the world to give them the opportunity to realize the raw potential that lies within them. Every Canadian deserves this opportunity. Like you and me, those who live with autism possess greatness within them. They are intelligent, they are creative, and they are lively, and there is something wonderful in each of them to give back and contribute to this great country we call home. However, unfortunately, their potential often goes untapped.

About half of those with autism are of average or above-average intelligence, yet very few actually graduate from high school, and of course, even fewer go on to complete post-secondary education. Approximately 25% of those with autism are employed, and only 6% are competitively employed. These numbers are very concerning to me, because they represent a tragic loss, a loss to our society, when we could actually be benefiting and enjoying the potential of each of these individuals if they were given the right support.

Sadly, hundreds of thousands of people actually live rather idle and isolated lives, because they are forced to do so. Families struggle

to know how to best support their loved ones, because there just are not the resources or the research to back up those resource developments. These families are actually in significant need of help. The help they are asking for at the moment takes the form of the Canadian autism partnership.

Do these individuals not deserve more? Do they not deserve an opportunity to function at their greatest possible potential? Particularly in light of the Bombardier bailout, I believe this is a very small and common-sense request.

• (1515)

What are my Conservative colleagues and I are asking for? We are asking that the Minister of Health acknowledge that individuals with autism and their families face very unique challenges in life, and these challenges span over a lifetime. They often result in a crisis situation due to the condition, and families then have to deal with those.

Furthermore, as I stated earlier, autism is not just a health issue for the individual and his or her family members and loved ones. It actually has overarching implications for Canadian society as a whole. My colleague, the member for Louis-Saint-Laurent said earlier that this was not an autism issue, that this was a Canadian issue. He said it well. It is not something that we can just put on those families or those individuals who have to wrestle with autism and find the necessary supports in order to live a life with autism. It is not just on them. The onus is on us as a society.

To be quite frank, the loss is ours as well. Again, these individuals possess such great potential.

Accordingly, those of us on this side of the House are calling on the government to grant \$19 million over five years, as requested by the Canadian autism partnership working group, Self-Advocates Advisory Group, and the Canadian Autism Spectrum Disorders Alliance. We are asking for this in order to establish a Canadian autism partnership that would support families and address key issues such as information sharing and research, early detection, diagnosis, and treatment government.

Mostly, we are calling on the government to believe, as we do, that those who live with autism have tremendous potential and should be empowered to function according to the greatness that lies within each and every one of them.

In 2015, the Conservative government provided \$2 million to support the development of a Canadian autism partnership. A working group was created and it was mandated to come back to the government with a proposal for best steps forward. Over the course of 16 months, it did just that. At the end of 2016, it made a proposal for the 2017 budget.

The request of the working group was moderate and reasonable. The working group asked for \$19 million over five years. With this money, a national partnership would be formed between organizations from coast to coast. The focus of its work would be to represent the entire Canadian autism community, speaking with one voice and acting in unity to assist this community in living vibrant lives.

Business of Supply

Sadly, the current government chose to ignore this noteworthy request and the work that was accomplished by this group. It struck its request from budget considerations.

This is very disheartening. We have the opportunity to support a grassroots initiative, where more than 5,000 individuals gave their feedback on what this partnership should look like, and were willing to do the groundwork. We also have the opportunity to empower people to reach their full potential. We also have the opportunity to support the vulnerable. We also have the opportunity to facilitate an environment where all people are given equal opportunity to prosper.

Our Conservative government, under the leadership of Stephen Harper, believed in the potential of those who lived with a disability. I will name a few things we did during our time in government.

We increased the landmark registered disability savings plan. We invested \$218 million per year for labour market agreements for persons with disabilities. We invested \$30 million annually in the opportunities fund to help persons with disabilities prepare for and obtain meaningful employment. We supported caregivers and recognized the incredible contributions they made by creating a tax incentive. We provided \$15 million over three years to the ready, willing and able initiative of the Canadian Association for Community Living in order to connect persons with disabilities to a job. We invested \$11.4 million over four years to support the expansion of vocational training programs for persons with autism spectrum disorders. We removed the GST and the HST on more health care products and services. Last, we expanded tax relief under the medical expense tax credit.

We believe in the potential of each and every individual, including those who live with a disability. We call upon the current government to believe with us in the potential of those who live each and every day with autism and their family members, who need the assistance of the government through this partnership.

• (1525)

[Translation]

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon (Parliamentary Secretary for Sport and Persons with Disabilities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for her speech.

Last June, we introduced an ambitious process to consult people with disabilities. We consulted different groups more than 18 times as part of nine round tables. In total, we consulted nearly 6,000 people, including representatives of ASD organizations. We also met with independent groups, in each of our offices, which ensured that we had a very good understanding of autism.

In her speech, my colleague opposite mentioned a few figures. The amount of \$19 million keeps cropping up and some members opposite said that the cost is 10¢ per Canadian.

We, too, have some figures. What about the \$39 million invested in health research? What about the \$5 billion invested by our government in mental health, which also affects autistic people? What about the \$77 million we have invested in accessibility?

Can my colleague make comparisons with those figures?

[English]

Ms. Rachael Harder: Mr. Speaker, I give the hon. member's government credit for the steps it has taken to increase accessibility. The consultations that have taken place are commendable.

I find it interesting and quite curious that the government likes to talk a lot about consultation, saying that it has been consulting and that it is launching another consultation. It is interesting that it has held nine round tables and feels that somehow covers the entire country, therefore we are good to go. I do not know if that is as deep or as broad a consultation that is necessary to come up with the policy and legislative initiatives to serve all those who live with a disability.

Nevertheless, the topic at hand today has to do with the autism partnership. This working group came together and collectively put this ask forward to the government. It is a moderate ask of \$19 million over the course of five years, which is less than \$4 million per year. However, the government shut that down. Meanwhile, it somehow still found money in its purse to give \$400 million to Bombardier and its executives.

[Translation]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, people living with functional limitations often lose specialized services or financial benefits when they reach the age of majority.

People with any type of disability often live below the poverty line. I would like to know whether the member intends to work with the NDP to ensure that people with autism do not lose the services that help them live above the poverty line when they become adults.

[English]

Ms. Rachael Harder: Mr. Speaker, the question at hand has to do with the Canadian autism partnership and whether the government will move forward and honour the request of this grassroots initiative, and the phenomenal work it has done to support families that live with autism. That is the question of the day. My question for the government is whether it will follow through with this initiative, which is noteworthy and worthy of celebration. This group is deserving of the funding in order to support these families.

With respect to the member's question as to whether we, as a Conservative caucus, would be willing to work with the NDP on future initiatives with respect to autism, that would depend on what those initiatives were. However, we hold an open hand and definitely want to serve the communities with people living with disabilities. Therefore, we will do all we can to do that well.

Ms. Pam Goldsmith-Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation.

It is a pleasure and an important challenge for all of us to discuss the motion tabled by the hon. member for Edmonton—Wetaskiwin related to autism spectrum disorder.

Business of Supply

I would like to thank the hon. member for his ongoing efforts in raising awareness about the needs of individuals and families affected by autism spectrum disorder. Many Canadians are dedicated in the same way in which the hon. member is, and today is a significant day on their behalf.

Dr. Glen Davies is another champion. He says that the prevalence of autism is accelerating at an alarming rate. In 1975, just one in 2,500 children were being diagnosed. Today, it is one in less than 100. He goes on to say:

The next set of solutions will be at the convergence of a wide variety of disciplines and include families, communities and a wide range of thinkers. No one group can do this alone. Communities, schools, health care systems, and governments must work together.

I believe it is in this spirit that the member has brought forward the motion and it is in this spirit that networks are being built across the country. This is precisely what the government is assessing at this time, as we engage with many groups to identify potential opportunities for partnerships and as we engage with other departments to determine where investments can best help those with autism and their families.

I would like to take this opportunity to talk about the Pacific Autism Family Network in British Columbia, which has been envisioned and built through an inclusive and collaborative process, including families, individuals with autism spectrum disorder and related disorders, clinicians, community professionals, researchers, and representatives of government within the framework of the Pacific Autism Family Centre advisory committee.

The Pacific Autism Family Centre is a family-first model. It is the first of its kind in Canada and North America. At the centre, key organizations are brought together under one roof so everyone is working together, sharing information and ultimately supporting families.

Autism BC, the oldest organization in British Columbia, is central to the hub as is the Autism Support Network, the provincial ministry of education, and the provincial ministry of children and family development. Autism Speaks is a major funder and partner, which focuses on research, and is highly supportive of this model of collaboration. The Miriam Foundation provides resource materials and information with the intent of delivering the best service to every individual. The Sinneave Family Foundation is another partner. Its vision is that every adolescent and adult in Canada with autism spectrum disorder will be supported in realizing his or her highest quality of life.

The fact of having these partners under one roof makes life so much easier for families and their children.

The 60,000 square foot centre is the vision of Wendy and Sergio Cocchia. Sergio also serves on the previous government's Canadian Autism Spectrum Disorders Alliance. The province of British Columbia gave a huge boost to the centre through a \$20 million capital contribution, followed by a significant capital campaign.

At the centre, there are service providers, medical and dental practitioners, and a partnership with UBC to train health care professionals, while in university, to become aware of and comfortable with people with autism. The centre has a preschool

where 50% of the children are on the autism disorder spectrum and 50% are not. Behavioural analysts are being trained.

Apart from the significant funding the federal government provides to some of these research and support partners, the centre also partners with the federal government to deliver the ready, willing and able program and the employment works program. The ready, willing and able program helps employers across British Columbia to hire people on the spectrum and to sustain them on a permanent basis. The employment works program works on the other side of the equation with individuals to connect them to placement opportunities.

The Pacific Autism Family Centre is leading Canada in job placements. Having just started in January 2016, there are over 100 people in permanent positions today. It is going so well that they are being contacted daily by parents who wish to be part of this program on behalf of their children over 18. The centre also reaches out to companies to participate. For example, SAP has a mandate of hiring 1% of its staff from people on the spectrum by 2018.

The collaborative model is serving families. Informing researchers and families is the second pillar for the centre. It serves as a hub for research. Supported by first-class technology from Telus, this research model is a two-way forum so that research is going directly to families and families are informing new research. Again, this is at the heart of our government's approach.

● (1530)

Third, the centre is building spokes out from this hub. New smaller locations are opening in British Columbia. A small one has opened in Williams Lake and a more major one in Prince George. Bringing services together, providing access to information that is available at the central location, and expanding adult programming is very important in parts of the province, and indeed the country, that are more remote. Equal access and inclusion are critical aspects of public health and healthy communities, and those who need it most should be our top priority. Living away from urban centres presents challenges that the Pacific Autism Family Network strives to address.

The network believes that autism is a condition that affects whole communities. As such, we need an integrated solution that includes community education, teacher learning, the training of specialists, more awareness for medical practitioners, and support for siblings, parents, and extended families. Governments cannot do it alone. The Pacific Autism Family Network is about coming at this together. It is about saying, "Let us pool our resources and work with governments to get out in front of this issue. Let us be the leader and show the world how this could be done."

Business of Supply

For our part, the federal government is making significant investments each year to support research focusing on ensuring that children and adults affected by autism spectrum disorder and their families have the best support and treatment possible. Over the past five years, the federal government has invested close to \$40 million in research through the Canadian Institutes of Health Research. Canadian researchers are recognized as global leaders.

At the Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto, the autism genome project is composed of researchers from more than 50 research centres across 11 countries as the world's largest research project on identifying genes associated with the risk for ASD. Our government continued to make significant investments in research and innovation in the last two federal budgets. In budget 2016, the federal government announced a new ongoing investment of \$30 million per year to support investigator-led research through the Canadian Institutes of Health Research. This investment represents the highest amount of new annual funding for discovery health research in more than a decade.

As I went over this speech this morning about what today's debate was on, I thought, for the most part, it would be very difficult to say which party was speaking. My Conservative colleagues talk about a shared leadership model, putting research into practice, and bringing all of the initiatives into one place, and I could not agree more. Our government is reviewing the important work of the Canadian Autism Spectrum Disorders Alliance to this very end.

There are other significant efforts under way. One is to create a national autism strategy under the leadership of one of the senators. Another is a major effort from the Medicare for Autism Now network to advocate for health care funding. These are important voices, too.

Members of Parliament clearly care. Today's debate is important. On behalf of the families in my riding, many of whom are leading the charge, as is the hon. member, I am confident that our government, the Minister of Health, the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, and other ministries involved will operate within a collaborative model to improve the lives of those living with autism spectrum disorder.

● (1535)

Hon. Mike Lake (Edmonton—Wetaskiwin, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my first comment is just to say how much I appreciate, of all of the members across the way, the preparation that went into the member's speech. Clearly, she has done her homework. She knows what she is talking about. I really appreciate that.

I have one minor clarification. It is important to clarify that CASDA had nothing to do with the government. CASDA was a coming together of the Canadian ASD Alliance and organizations on their own. It was recognition that there needed to be a voice that represented the autism community, and that was how CASDA came to be. CASDA is one of the voices calling for a Canadian autism partnership, and most of the members of the Canadian Autism Partnership Working Group are also members of CASDA.

It is interesting that the member named a lot of the organizations, including the Pacific Autism Family Network, and the Cochias. Sergio Cocchia was a member of the 12-member expert working group. There is also Autism Speaks Canada, the Miriam Foundation,

The Sinneave Family Foundation. Those are four of the 12 members of the working group. There is CASDA as well. If we talk about research, four different top-notch researchers who are part of the Canadian autism partnership were all calling for the same thing: \$19 million to form a Canadian autism partnership to meaningfully inform policy at every level of government across the country.

My question is simple. Does the hon. member support the CAP?

Ms. Pam Goldsmith-Jones: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the clarification and for recognizing the work I put into my speech.

As you know, this is so important to Canadians. It was certainly talked about in the last election. With regard to our government's position, we are absolutely taking advantage of the great work that was done by the network and we will come forward in a way that represents exactly the spirit of this motion in due time.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Before I go to another questioner, I just want to remind all members that it is a very emotional topic and it is not hard to talk across to each other, but we still have to go through the Chair.

● (1540)

Mr. Wayne Stetski (Kootenay—Columbia, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in my riding of Kootenay—Columbia, we have the East Kootenay Autism Society, the Kootenay Boundary Autism Society, the Kootenay Family Place behaviour support services, and autism and ABA services, Cranbrook and Kootenay. This is a very important issue to many of my constituents.

I am really trying to understand how the government cannot justify in its mind investing \$19 million to help these very important organizations deliver on their services to people with autism. It is a pretty simple question.

Ms. Pam Goldsmith-Jones: Mr. Speaker, the reason I chose to explain the model of the Pacific Autism Family Network is to reinforce what I think every member of this House is saying. There are many groups. It is such a personal journey for people.

The service that we can provide to Canadians is to figure out how these networks work best together, and work most efficiently and most effectively. That is exactly what our government intends to do.

Hon. Mike Lake: Mr. Speaker, I would just query that, and point out again that all of the organizations that the member talks about are working together. They are speaking with one voice. Their ask is very specific right now after two years of work: a \$19 million over five years Canadian partnership.

I would specifically ask the member, will she vote to support the motion?

Business of Supply

Ms. Pam Goldsmith-Jones: Mr. Speaker, once again I would like to thank the hon. member for bringing this motion to the floor of the House of Commons today. I think it will be a discussion that is very closely watched by Canadians, those who are affected by autism spectrum disorder and by our compassionate society.

Our government looks forward to building on the strengths of an inclusive, engaged, and caring community.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon (Parliamentary Secretary for Sport and Persons with Disabilities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first and foremost, I want to thank and congratulate my colleague from Edmonton—Wetaskiwin.

Today, I have the privilege of rising in the House to speak to autism spectrum disorder. I would like to begin by talking a little bit about my interest in this cause. I had the opportunity to say earlier how close the cause of autism is to my heart. My wife has dedicated her life to teaching young people with autism, and she has been working in that field for a number of years now. My most recent encounter with people with autism was last month. I participated in the AlterGo Special Olympics in Montreal with a group of young people with autism. It was a privilege for me to accompany and support these young people, as I have done for other activities. This cause is very dear to my heart. I am here in the House to attest to that. In my opinion, we all agree that autism deserves special attention because it affects one in 68 children in Canada.

Autism spectrum disorder is widely recognized as the fastest-growing neurological disorder in Canada. There are a wide variety of symptoms associated with ASD, including difficulty communicating and social impairment. Autism is not just a health problem. It has widespread implications for Canadian society. Take for example parents' concern for the future of their children. The unemployment rate for people with autism is well over 50%.

It is obvious that we are facing a major challenge. Despite the progress the country has made in raising awareness and accepting people with disabilities, there is still a certain degree of stigmatization.

• (1545)

[*English*]

It is critical to include people with autism in our workforce, and more generally, to further include them in all aspects of Canadian life. An inclusive Canada is good for employers and good for business. Our government encourages employers to tap into the rich talents of people with disabilities. Thanks to ready, willing, and able, an initiative funded in part by the Government of Canada's opportunities fund for persons with disabilities, a good number of organizations are raising awareness and bridging the employment gap for people with intellectual disabilities and autism spectrum disorders. In fact, ready, willing, and able was recently recognized at the Zero Project Conference in Vienna, Austria, for its important work.

When we challenge the stereotypes and look beyond the disability, we quickly realize the wonderful potential of people's abilities, and we contribute to combatting prejudice.

We are committed to improving the quality of life for people living with autism and their families. One Government of Canada program designed to do just that is the enabling accessibility fund. This program supports community organizations and workplaces to help improve accessibility and participation in their organizations. Our government believes in the benefits of this program, which is why budget 2017 proposes to provide an additional \$77 million over 10 years to expand its activities and enable the program to support more small and mid-sized projects in Canadian communities and workplaces.

We have also provided an additional \$4 million over two years, starting in 2016-17, to the enabling accessibility fund's community stream through budget 2016.

Our government is also aware of the costs of taking care of a child with a severe disability. That is why we continue to provide the child disability benefit, which is an annual amount of up to \$2,730 per child eligible for the disability tax credit. This is in addition to the \$2,300 average increase Canadian families now receive from the recently revamped Canada child benefit.

These are practical measures that we have in place to help families living with autism.

[*Translation*]

However, we need to take a step back and look at the bigger picture. It is unbelievable that over 50% of complaints received by the Canadian Human Rights Commission are related to disabilities. It is beyond belief, when you think about all the other possible grounds, including race, gender, and sexual orientation, just to name a few.

Most of those complaints have to do with employment. In Canada, as elsewhere in the world, barriers to employment are huge for people with disabilities. Unemployment and underemployment rates are high, which is unacceptable.

In June of last year, we launched an ambitious public consultation process across Canada. We met with Canadians and stakeholders to talk about what an accessible Canada means to them. We held 18 public consultations and nine thematic round tables from coast to coast to coast. There was an important online component. We organized a national forum for youth. We gained valuable insights from some 6,000 Canadians who told us about some of the obstacles faced every day by Canadians with disabilities or functional limitations. We heard about physical and architectural barriers that prevent people from moving about freely in their community, the persistence of certain mentalities, beliefs, and false notions about what people with disabilities can and cannot do, and outdated practices that do not take into account the obstacles to accessibility facing Canadians every day.

For the most part, Canadians with disabilities had the same message, namely that they are not second-class citizens. They are citizens who deserve the same rights and responsibilities as all other Canadians.

The same goes for people with autism.

Business of Supply

That is just one of the reasons why we are drafting accessibility legislation. This legislation will systematically address barriers in areas under federal jurisdiction. This would include banking services, transportation, telecommunications, and of course, the federal government itself.

Canadians with disabilities have been fighting for decades. We want to address the problems head on instead of just dealing with human rights complaints after the fact. We are looking for ways to prevent discrimination and exclusion from the outset.

What can we do to change the culture and remove barriers? How can we create a fully inclusive society not just for people with autism, but for all Canadians? Can we improve accessibility and integration through legislative means?

That is exactly what this government intends to do and that is what is driving our efforts to create federal legislation on accessibility, which includes autism.

• (1550)

[English]

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I do realize my colleague is new in the House. I just want to remind him what we are talking about today. We are talking about a \$19 million investment over five years, which was requested by the Canadian Autism Partnership Working Group.

To give him a little bit of history, when I came to the House in 2004, this group was entirely ignored. One of the champions was a friend of mine and a friend of this House, Senator Jim Munson, a Liberal Senator, and he really tried to focus and sharpen the pencil so that we could get some action with autism, because there was nothing out there.

Over the years, with my colleagues in the House and everybody across the hall, we worked hard to see what we could do to make a difference, because this is not just kids with autism, but it is their families, their friends, and everyone involved. The sad thing is that it was working really well.

What this motion is asking for is just to allow the continuation of that good work and expansion, because when we see something in research and see something in practical application that is working, at the federal level, it is worthwhile to continue with that.

I know the member is talking about all people with disabilities, and I respect that very much, but this is not either/or. The government makes different investments. This is something that has really worked, and all we are asking for really is a very small investment. As my colleague from Carleton constantly says, this would be less than the bonus of one Bombardier executive in order to meet this commitment to our autistic partners.

All I want to ask is whether the member would please consider supporting this great initiative.

[Translation]

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate my colleague's question. I thank him for that.

I am new to the House, but in 18 months I have spent time interacting with a number of organizations and quickly gained experience during the consultations we held across the country.

I also want to say to my colleague opposite that there are people in my family who have been living with autism spectrum disorder for 16 years. It is something we talk about at the dinner table quite regularly. We have acquired rather detailed knowledge thanks to all the organizations we consulted.

I am very comfortable advocating for disability as a collective priority and drafting legislation that takes persons with autism into account.

[English]

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, former U.S. vice-president Joe Biden used to say, "Don't tell me what you value. Show me your budget, and I'll tell you what you value." I think that is an appropriate concept to bring up here today because all day long we have been hearing some very heartfelt speeches from members on the government side about the absolute need of the autism spectrum disorder community across Canada and how they understand the needs, how they empathize with the needs, how they understand that steps have to be taken. However, I have yet to hear a single Liberal member of the government say that they will commit in the budget to giving a very small amount, \$19 million over five years, to actually address that problem.

Will the member stand in the House and vote in favour of this motion to actually provide \$19 million for autism in this country, yes or no?

• (1555)

[Translation]

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

We take autism very seriously. We have invested \$39 million in the Canadian Institutes of Health Research over the past five years. We have invested an additional \$77 million in accessibility, which includes support for people with autism. Our budget also provides for a \$20-million investment in neurological sciences, which includes research on autism.

When it comes to accessibility in Canada, I will be an ardent advocate for people with autism.

[English]

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member could have simply said no.

I am pleased to be splitting my time with my hon. colleague the member for Windsor—Tecumseh.

Business of Supply

I am privileged and proud to stand in this House to support this incredibly important motion from my hon. colleague from Edmonton—Wetaskiwin on a number of fronts. Professionally, I am the health critic for the New Democratic Party and I think I have acquired some understanding of both autism spectrum disorder and the needs of people and their families across this country who are touched by it, and I am the father of a child who has a different kind of global developmental delay. It is not autism but it is similar. Through her experiences, and as the parent of a special needs child, I have been exposed to the wonderful world of developmentally challenged children, teenagers, and adults. I have been fortunate enough to meet these fabulous, wonderful Canadians who are touched by a number of different afflictions, including autism spectrum disorder, Down syndrome, different forms of developmental delays, Tourette's syndrome, anxiety disorders, and cognitive impediments. However, I can tell members that I have never met Canadians who are more generous, more kind, more co-operative, or who more enjoy life, love their families, participate with gusto in our communities in every facet, and contribute to Canada in profoundly important ways.

I can count myself privileged to be friends with people with autism spectrum disorder of many ages. The first point I want to make is that it is not a disability but a health challenge, but with an investment of resources and funds, we can make a significant difference in their lives, no different from what we do for many Canadians who are afflicted with any number of different health conditions.

I want to review a couple of facts that put this motion into perspective. We know that one in 68 children are currently diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder. We know that the prevalence of ASD has increased over 100% in the last 10 years. We know that autism is the fastest growing and most commonly diagnosed neurological disorder in Canada. We are not sure how it is caused, but we believe it is linked to a number of genetic and environmental influences. We also know that autism is an equal-opportunity condition as it occurs in all racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic groups. We know that autism is a lifelong spectrum disorder. We know that early intervention can make a lifetime of difference. We know that mental health concerns such as anxiety and depression are common in individuals with ASD. We know that the unemployment rate for adult individuals with ASD is a shocking 80%. However, we also know that, with the right supports, all individuals with ASD can thrive and meet their potential.

This is not necessarily cheap. We know that treatments for those on the autism spectrum can cost between \$50,000 and \$100,000 per year. We also know that early intervention is critical, that parents with a child born with autism spectrum disorder need a quick diagnosis and access to every kind of modality and treatment that exists, as we know that can make a tremendous difference in their lives.

We know that ASD is a family condition, that moms, dads, sisters, brothers, aunts, uncles, and relatives are all touched in some way by autism. We know that, depending on their place of residence, not all affected Canadians have access to the same quality of care. We know that provincial health plans do not provide equal levels of coverage. We know that wait lists across this country are far too long for just about every family with a member suffering from ASD.

● (1600)

We know that there has been some progress over the last few years. In November 2016, the Canadian autism advisory group presented a final report to the health minister. It contained a proposed business plan for a Canadian autism partnership and a request for \$19 million over five years, which is the genesis of the motion before the House today. However, unfortunately, the Liberal government decided against funding this partnership model, and in response, advocates have taken to social media to flood the minister and the Liberal government with over 3,000 tweets calling for full funding for this partnership.

What we need and what the motion calls for is the development and implementation of a plan that represents a comprehensive approach that would address both systemic issues and the complexities of individuals on the autism spectrum. This plan would create opportunities for many autistic individuals, along with their families and caregivers, to benefit from the efforts of decision-makers to enhance coordinated and timely support. We need to reduce the frustration and isolation that often accompanies their search for appropriate and effective intervention and care.

The motion before us and the \$19 million it calls for would create many efficiencies. The plan would create a national platform for multisectoral collaboration and innovation to drive systemic change. It would foster focused, robust, and accessible knowledge translation and exchange, promoting greater efficiency of effort and resources. It would provide an authoritative access point for reliable data to inform policy development, funding decisions, and service delivery. It would increase collaboration among all segments of the autism sector, promoting broader influence on the research agenda in Canada and accelerating the time from research to implementation.

It would initiate a unique indigenous engagement strategy that would reflect the cultural values of Canada's indigenous communities and address their specific needs. It would build the capacity of northern and remote communities by providing a hub for shared information, policy, and research, as well as collaboration with more well-resourced parts of the country. It would forge effective partnerships to enable the pooling of resources and it would achieve greater equity across all provinces and territories. The motion before us is something that every member of the House should probably stand in their place and support.

I know that we are always calling for government to spend more money, but the hon. member for Edmonton—Wetaskiwin put it very well the other day when he said we are talking about 10¢ per Canadian per year. That is how much it would cost for us to make a profound difference in thousands, or maybe tens of thousands, of Canadians' lives.

I want to conclude by talking about some very important people in my province of British Columbia.

I am fortunate to count as a friend Abbe Gates and her son Lucas Gates. They both have recently been hired by the Pacific Autism Family Network, and the amount of work that they have done in bringing individuals of all ages and degrees out of their isolation and in developing programs that are helping these people achieve their potential is unbelievable.

Business of Supply

Abbe Gates is a prime mover behind creating Friday Night Friends, a group at the Hillcrest Centre, where young adults with all sorts of differences come together and socialize, including many people with autism spectrum disorder.

After having her daughter refused in her attempt to join a typical kids' soccer team, she started the Blazin' Soccer Dogs, which is a children's soccer league in Vancouver that is open to every child, of every ability, with every kind of challenge.

People in Canada with developmental disabilities are some of our most cherished people. They all are worthy of support, and I want to make a plug also for the House not to forget the many Canadians who have some form of developmental delay and not forget that these people need resources and funding as well.

We can start by voting for this motion and starting to devote more resources in this country to help Canadians reach their potential. Let us shift money to make sure every Canadian can be as healthy as he or she can be.

● (1605)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, literally millions of public dollars are allocated every year for autism spectrum. It is important we look at the many different aspects of health care. It was suggested earlier today that there were many other issues. I raised fetal alcohol syndrome disorder and the profound effect it had on children in my constituency, in the province of Manitoba, and in fact all of Canada.

The association approached the ministry of health and the ministry made a decision in the last budget. We have clearly indicated that the government is still engaging with many groups to identify other potential opportunities for partnerships and with other departments to determine where investments can best help those with autism and their families.

The Minister of Health has been very genuine in reaching out, trying to have a positive impact on this issue. We have seen additional dollars, far beyond \$19 million, being invested in mental health. Investing in mental health helps with autism spectrum disorder, not to mention other budgetary lines.

If a member of the House chooses not to vote in favour of the motion, it does not mean the member does not support providing resources to deal with autism or fetal alcohol syndrome. It would be the equivalent of me saying the member across the way voted against the budget, therefore he voted for all the money we allocated out for those important issues. Would he not agree that all members of the chamber recognize its importance and that maybe at times we might have a different approach to dealing with it?

Mr. Don Davies: Mr. Speaker, there was a lot in that question, but I will start with this.

It was the Government of Canada that in July 2015 supported the launch of the Canadian autism partnership project, which was tasked with developing a national autism spectrum disorder working group as well as a self-advocacy advisory group. This group was tasked with developing a plan and presenting it to the federal government. That was an important process because it engaged stakeholders on the ground in developing the plan. It presented its plan to the Liberal

government in November of last year and it included \$19 million. The Liberal government made a grave error in not accepting that.

The hon. member pointed out other sources of funding in the broad health envelope that have been dedicated by the government. That is true, but what the member is essentially saying is that enough money has already been spent. Well, this motion calls on the government to spend a bit more.

Canadians will be the judges about what a member's vote in the House means. Canadians will judge whether it was appropriate for a member to stand in the House and vote for or against a motion that calls for an additional \$19 million over five years to help put into reality a plan that was developed by stakeholders across the country to help families and individuals deal with autism. If I were the member, I would contemplate that vote very carefully. I would suggest that he vote in favour of the motion if he believes this extra money is needed. I think it is.

On the one hand, we can say that the government expends money in health care and some of that goes toward autism and other important health issues. However, this is a segregated motion calling for a specific allocation of funding for a specific, well-thought out plan. Every member should look at this carefully and support it. I will. The New Democrats will. I hope Liberal members will as well.

● (1610)

Ms. Cheryl Hardcastle (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today in support of the Conservative opposition day motion. The NDP has long been a proponent of creating a national strategy on autism, and we look forward to the day that we have one that is more than a mere paper entity.

Canada's current approach to autism spectrum disorder has let down thousands of Canadians on the autism spectrum and their families. We share their disappointment and we stand with them in their call for action in support of the Canadian autism partnership.

We continue to see a significant increase in the number of Canadians being diagnosed on the autism spectrum, yet all across Canada, vital services, supports, and resources have not kept up with the increasing need. It is time for the federal government to finally sit down with the provinces and territories to negotiate an accord, backed by real funding, to address the lack of applied behaviour analysis and intensive behaviour intervention, also known as ABA and IBI, in Canada's school systems, and the lack of public health care coverage for behavioural treatments, and the lack of appropriate housing accommodation for adults on the autism spectrum.

The Liberal government's refusal to fund the Canadian autism partnership, CAP, at \$19 million over five years is rather indefensible. While this model is not a substitute for real funding to provide essential services and supports for those on the autism spectrum, the CAP would play an important coordinating role at the national level.

Business of Supply

The NDP believes that given the scale of the problem, it makes no sense for the Liberal government to refuse to make this small investment in so worthwhile an initiative just because it was something that was brought forward by the previous Conservative government. Of course, this refusal to fund would be entirely defensible if the Liberals were bringing forward their own well-funded and targeted national strategy, but I think we all know that such a plan is not forthcoming.

Autism is not a matter that any of us should be playing politics with. On the other hand, it is unfortunate that the previous Conservative government never got around to backstopping its own initiative with the funding or political commitment necessary to improve the service delivery and support.

As Kathleen O'Grady, research associate at the Simone de Beauvoir Institute in Concordia University has noted, autism does not affect Liberals or Conservatives or NDPers; it is an equal opportunity neurodevelopmental disorder that affects Canadians across the political spectrum and clear across the country.

I would like to take a moment to look at some of the specifics of autism in Canada. At this time, one in 68 children is currently diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder. ASD is caused by a combination of genetic and environmental influences. It is now the fastest growing and most commonly diagnosed neurological disorder in Canada. As my hon. colleague stressed earlier, its prevalence has increased over 100% in the last 10 years.

Autism occurs in all racial, ethnic, and socio-economic groups, and is a lifelong spectrum disorder. Mental health concerns, such as anxiety and depression, are common in individuals with ASD. Sadly, the unemployment rate for individuals with ASD is over 80%.

Treatments for those on the autism spectrum can cost between \$50,000 and \$100,000 each year, yet depending on their place of residence, not all affected Canadians have access to the same quality of care. Provincial health plans do not provide equal levels of coverage, and wait-lists are often several years long. People on the autism spectrum lose access to public education and specialized services as they grow older and become adults.

Last, the most important point I would like to make is about early intervention. Early intervention can make a lifetime of difference. I heard this from so many professionals who came forward and talked to me during the election campaign. They are professionals and work with children, and were applauding our proposed early childhood affordable day care strategy, because early interventions are so much an intricate part of what a national strategy would entail.

• (1615)

With the right supports, all individuals with ASD and other disorders can thrive. The earlier the intervention, the more successful the outcome. We know about early intervention leading to success no matter what challenge a child may have. The earlier we can identify that a child needs support, and the earlier appropriate support can be provided at the right time and in the right way for that particular child, the more likely it is that the child will be more successful than he or she would otherwise have been. It is because they have had early intervention that we see children who are now in

the regular school system and we see children graduating from high school and university.

As I mentioned earlier, New Democrats have always been champions on this issue. Going back to 2006, the NDP health critic, the member for Vancouver Kingsway, previously introduced Bill C-327, an act respecting a Canadian autism day, in recognition and support of the many Canadians affected by autism spectrum disorder.

We believe, however, that at this point, there have been enough studies, enough round tables, enough consultations, and enough motions debated in this chamber. As well, let us not forget the Senate. It is time for us to do something.

Anyone following this issue for any length of time can be forgiven for being just a tad cynical about the debate we are having here today. There has been everything done around this issue except for the serious concrete action required, backstopped with the right amount of funding that matches the scale of the challenge presented to us. If this is not why we are here today, then we may as well move on to something else, as I have no intention of further insulting and hurting the families, caregivers, and institutions that have been dealing with this matter for decades. These people have invested so much of their time and expertise in the real, meaningful consultations they thought they were bringing forward in the model proposed to the Minister of Health.

Canadians are looking to us for leadership and for action. That is why we are here. Therefore, I urge members to give it to them today. Let us no longer kick this particular can down the road.

I mentioned the Canadian autism partnership project earlier, and I would like to elaborate on what this project entails, as I believe it is pertinent to this debate. The partnership was launched with an investment by the Government of Canada in July 2015. It was charged with developing a national autism spectrum disorder working group and a self-advocates advisory group; a comprehensive stakeholder engagement strategy; and a business plan for the implementation of a permanent Canadian autism partnership.

Since the CAPP was launched, the national working group, along with the self-advocates advisory group, has guided the stakeholder engagement process. There have been 22 meetings with 101 government representatives in all provinces and territories, 17 consultations in 14 communities with relevant stakeholder groups, and 4,371 responses to an online survey hosted by the CAPP website. Throughout the process, a special focus has been placed on the needs of indigenous people and northern communities to identify their priorities and the appropriate methods to examine meaningful responses to their service needs, both on and off reserve.

The development and implementation of the Canadian autism partnership represents a comprehensive approach that would address systemic issues and the complex needs of individuals on the autism spectrum. I believe this partnership is step one in beginning to introduce and seriously address this issue. I am proud to support it here today.

Business of Supply

•(1620)

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for Windsor—Tecumseh and also the previous speaker for the NDP, the member for Vancouver Kingsway, who has been a huge supporter of autism initiatives throughout the years.

The member made a great argument. As she stated, autism really should not be a partisan issue. One of the things she said, though, really concerned me, and I wanted to ask her about it. I have heard that one of the reasons the Liberals do not want to support this is that it was brought forward by the previous Conservative government. At the time, we got a lot of support from all parties.

This was an initiative that over the years has gotten stronger and better. What we are asking for, and what my colleague is asking for, is 10¢ per Canadian for this initiative that is affecting literally hundreds of thousands of Canadians.

Is there any good reason the member can think of for not supporting the motion? When she said that it is because it was from the Conservative government, is that something she really feels in her heart to be true?

Ms. Cheryl Hardcastle: Mr. Speaker, since being elected, I have had the privilege of working for people not only in Windsor—Tecumseh but for people who come to me as the critic for persons living with disabilities. I have to say that it is hard not to be cynical when we see how thorough the consultation has been, when we see how many silos there are operating right now, and when we realize that the 10¢ per Canadian my hon. colleague is proposing is something that can be applied in so many areas besides the autism spectrum.

We need national strategies. We are spinning our wheels. We can be maximizing the resources we have now. The knowledge transfer, the research, and the expanse of knowledge we can be tapping into require a national strategy. It is the role of the federal government to be facilitating that. That is why I believe that moving forward with the expertise makes all the sense in the world, and I cannot understand why we are not doing it.

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I just want to salute our member for Edmonton—Wetaskiwin for the fight he has taken on for so long and the advocacy he has done for so long for his son and for those who are suffering. Actually, suffering is the wrong term. It is those who have been blessed with autism spectrum disorder. One can only hope we have champions like our colleague from Edmonton—Wetaskiwin to fight for whatever ails us or whatever challenges are in our way. We all owe a debt of gratitude to my colleague.

Mr. Speaker, last week I attended the sixth annual autism walk in my community of Prince George. I met a young gentleman by the name of Eric, who was five years of age and proudly wore a t-shirt that said, “Autism is my superpower”. He is a superhero. He is a rock star in our community. I have another constituent by the name of Cory Walker, who is an incredible advocate for autism spectrum disorder.

Earlier we heard the parliamentary secretary stand up and say that his family has dealt with autism spectrum disorder for more than 16 years, and he is quite satisfied to not support this motion. I can only

think that the only reason that gentleman and the government will not support this motion is that it is a Conservative motion. Does our hon. colleague feel the same?

•(1625)

Ms. Cheryl Hardcastle: Mr. Speaker, I made the statements in my speech for a reason. All I can go back to is that I see people every day, persons living with different abilities, who are beautiful people, and they are gifts to all of us. We need national strategies. The only way for us to do that is to recognize the merits of these kinds of approaches and to not work in silos.

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with my colleague, the member for Richmond—Arthabaska.

Mr. Speaker, today we are debating a motion brought forth by my colleague and dear friend, the member for Edmonton—Wetaskiwin, and I want to thank him very much for this. I am surprised that we are actually debating this. I am shocked that the government has not signalled that it will be supporting this.

Autism spectrum disorder is widely considered the fastest-growing neurological disorder in Canada, affecting one in 68 kids, including my own son. Before I get into my personal experience with the disorder, I would like to discuss autism and raise more awareness about what it is exactly.

In the past, in the early days, autism was recognized as distinct subtypes, including autistic disorder; childhood disintegrative disorder; pervasive developmental disorder, not otherwise specified; and Asperger syndrome. In May 2016, they were merged into one diagnosis, and that is what we are calling autism spectrum disorder.

ASD is a lifelong diagnosis that affects those who have autism in many different ways. The symptoms can include social impairment, restricted and repetitive behaviour, intellectual disability, and motor and attention difficulties, just to name a few.

However, those who have autism, including my own son, can also excel in certain areas, such as music—for example, my son can play three instruments—languages—he can speak a couple of languages really well, and I cannot even speak English or French properly—art, and even visual skills. This is one of the wonderful things about individuals with autism. Each individual is unique.

Forty per cent of those on the spectrum, like my own son, have above average academic and intellectual abilities, and about 25% are non-verbal. However, they can learn to communicate using other means. We just need to give them those resources.

Signs of autism usually tend to emerge around the ages of two or three, but more needs to be done to raise awareness about the signs to help families detect autism early on.

The motion brought forward by my colleague addresses an issue he knows all too well and for which he has been a great champion for many years. It calls on the government to grant \$19 million over five years, which has been requested by the Canadian autism partnership working group, the self-advocates advisory group, and the Canadian Autism Spectrum Disorders Alliance.

Business of Supply

Unfortunately, this funding was nowhere to be found in budget 2017. The Liberals do not seem to realize that this funding is needed to help establish a Canadian autism partnership program that would support families and address key issues, such as research, early detection, diagnosis, and treatment.

In contrast, in the 2015 budget, under the previous Conservative government, the Canadian autism partnership project, CAPP, was established. It is worth noting that many Liberals supported that idea, such as Senator Jim Munson, a Liberal senator.

The national ASD group, led by the Minister of Health and some of Canada's leading autism experts, was established to guide the work of CAPP, which received \$2 million in funding to explore a partnership concept through broad-based engagement that would address all the issues I have raised.

Our 2015 election platform also promised:

...we'll continue to support the Autism Spectrum Disorder Working Group's work to develop a Canadian autism partnership. We'll be read to support the initiative in areas of federal jurisdiction once the development work is complete.

As we have all heard, this should not be a partisan issue. This is a matter that needs to be addressed at the federal level but has, unfortunately, been ignored by the Liberal government.

It is disappointing to hear and see that Liberal MPs would rather hand out millions of dollars to Bombardier executives so they can reward themselves with big bonuses over providing necessary funding for issues such as autism spectrum disorder.

My friend, the member for Carleton, put it into perspective. One bonus to one Bombardier millionaire executive would pay for the entire autism commitment.

I want to share my family's own experience with autism spectrum disorder. It is not something I share very often, but I assure members that I have received permission. Since this is an important issue, and we need to raise as much awareness as possible, I spoke with my son last night and I got his permission.

My son was diagnosed with Asperger's, which was one of the previously separate subtypes of autism that I mentioned earlier in my speech.

Those who are diagnosed with Asperger's are considered to be at the high-functioning end of the spectrum. However, he, like many others who are eventually diagnosed with Asperger's, had difficulty with social interactions.

Without a doubt, we faced many challenges. There was growing frustration with the school system and the medical system, since he was poorly diagnosed.

• (1630)

There was frustration with the system then and, unfortunately, there is still frustration for many families now. My son was very fortunate, because, unlike many Canadian families facing the same and sometimes more difficult circumstances, we had the means to put him into a private school so that he could get the attention he needed due to the challenges he faced. We held him back a year, which was very controversial, but he was able to get some wins: he raised his self-esteem and confidence. Achieving all of this took

many years of hard work, because it was hard work for him. He worked hard on his social interaction skills so that he could start to read social cues. He actually had to intentionally make eye contact while having conversations with another person.

After years of frustration, misdiagnoses, and hard work, I am extremely proud to say that in spite of all of his challenges, my son has just finished his second year of medical school and is one of the youngest kids in his class. People who meet my son today would never know that he faced these challenges when he was younger. Some people would know, and my colleague from Edmonton—Wetaskiwin probably would know, but because of his gift, he had to work harder, and we as a family had to work harder. We had to educate ourselves and the people around us. Today, I can honestly say that he is one of the best communicators I know, and I am more proud of him and his accomplishments than ever.

As I said, my family was fortunate enough to have the means to ensure the best care and education was available to my son, and this is not the case for all Canadians. We still lack public awareness, especially in our school systems. We lack research and treatment, and most importantly, we still lack proper and early diagnoses.

The Liberals cannot ignore this issue any longer. Yesterday, the Minister of Health chose to ignore questions from my colleagues about autism spectrum disorder funding. She kind of skirted the question. Today she was asked again, and she again refused to answer. The reality is that she is failing hundreds of thousands of Canadians who are living with autism spectrum disorder. I am not just talking about the kids; I am talking the moms and dads, the sisters and brothers, and the people in the community.

This is the Minister of Health's and the Liberal government's opportunity to do the right thing. This is \$3.8 million, which is a rounding error in comparison to what the government is spending around the world on other kinds of initiatives. In fact, this is a smart and responsible investment that can make the lives of many Canadians better. I encourage all members of the House to vote in favour of this motion so that proper funding can be allocated to this very important issue.

I want to speak a little more about my son, because he is an example of this. Because he was able to get the help he needed, he is going to help other Canadians, with a perspective that very few of us have. One of his frustrations, but also one of his gifts, is that kids with Asperger's can focus like a laser. If they are interested in something, they can do it, and they can achieve it better than many other ordinary Canadians. If we look back in history, we could name numerous people with autism: Temple Grandin, who many people know is on the speaking circuit now; Charles Darwin had autism; Albert Einstein; Jerry Seinfeld thinks he's on the spectrum; Isaac Asimov; Susan Boyle, the singer; Dan Aykroyd, the Canadian comedian. All of these people achieved wonderful things in spite of the challenges they faced.

Business of Supply

It is so important for us in the House to know that we can make a difference. When I look at the ask my colleague has made of the House and also at the big picture, it is a small investment for such a large return that will affect Canadians. This group has worked hard since I have been in the House. As I said earlier, Mr. Speaker, you and I were both elected in 2004 and there was not much out there, but today there is. By making this very small investment, the government can make a huge difference not only to Canadians affected by autism spectrum disorder but to all Canadians, because when these kids get the help they need, they can achieve anything. I believe that. Let us vote for this motion today and support my colleague from Edmonton—Wetaskiwin.

● (1635)

Hon. Mike Lake (Edmonton—Wetaskiwin, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to pass on a special thanks to the member's son for being courageous enough to allow the member to share his story, because that can be tough. It is a big decision for a lot of people. It again reminds me of the incredible group of self-advocates who are part of this budget ask, who are part of this ask today, part of the partnership working group process. Seven of them came to Ottawa at the beginning of April and advocated strongly and articulately for this Canadian autism partnership.

I think again about the incredible researchers in this country who are supportive of this ask. I think about all of the stakeholder groups and organizations from coast to coast who are supporting this ask. I think about the Canadian Autism Spectrum Disorders Alliance and the families that I hear from every single day across this country who speak to the absolute necessity of taking out second mortgages on their homes to pay for evidence-based treatment for their kids, families who are wondering what will happen to their kid when they pass away, and even what housing options are available for their kids. I think of the members from multiple parties who we heard talking articulately about the importance of some of these things.

As a parent, maybe you could speak to the importance of the Canadian autism partnership with respect to your family's experience.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): I want to again remind hon. members to speak through the Speaker and not directly to the other members.

The hon. member for Oshawa.

Mr. Colin Carrie: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his comments because I am very proud of my son. I am proud of all of my three kids, but this was the first time that I told his story in this House, and I did ask him, so I thank him for that.

The work that has been done by the autism community is invaluable. When I look at the amount of awareness, the opportunities, and the options that are coming forth, I can see that we have some momentum. That is what is really saddening for me. This group has worked across partisan lines and does have momentum.

As I said, I have been very fortunate, but there are families out there right now who are struggling. When we are looking at the future of Canada, we can see that autistic Canadians are one of the untapped resources that we can reach out to. We can get them more involved. Many people with autism are not as engaged as they could

be. I know that with the bit more of an edge that could be provided if we keep this momentum going, these people will contribute and will continue to contribute to make Canada great. All they need is continued support. Therefore, I ask all members of this House to please support this motion.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am the NDP critic for housing and a member of the all-party anti-poverty caucus.

I often hear about how many people living with disabilities also live below the poverty line. Earlier, someone mentioned that 80% of adults with autism spectrum disorder do not have jobs. It can be very hard to find an apartment or suitable housing with limited financial resources.

Does my colleague think we should pay special attention to housing to help people with autism spectrum disorder and others with disabilities, such as his son?

● (1640)

[*English*]

Mr. Colin Carrie: Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Hochelaga has pointed out something that many people with autism are facing, which is the issue of housing.

Do I think we should focus specifically on it? No, I do not, but it is part of the picture.

People with autism want to be able to afford their own rent. People with autism want to be employed. She mentioned the percentage of autistic people who are unemployed. There is no need for that.

One of the things that I am really proud of with respect to the initiatives we have seen over the last few years is that there are programs out there that are matching employers with people who have autism, and they are contributing. They are a part of our everyday lives. We see them in our own communities, in the grocery stores we go to or when we are out and about doing our daily affairs. We need to be part of that and continue it.

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Mégantic—L'Érable, Rail Transportation; the hon. member for Calgary Rocky Ridge, Government Appointments.

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, before I give my speech, I want to say that I am very proud to rise in the House today to speak to the motion moved by my colleague from the riding of Edmonton—Wetaskiwin, which addresses a very important subject, autism spectrum disorder.

Business of Supply

Since arriving in the House a year and a half ago, I have gotten to know him and how hard he works. He has shown remarkable perseverance on this file and has been doggedly determined to convince us, the caucus members, to move this motion. This is the kind of file that could have been set aside or deferred until later. However, it is important to consider the needs of the children and adults presently living with this disorder.

As I was saying, I have the immense pleasure of rising in the House to offer my support to the people and families dealing with autism spectrum disorder.

As we all know, this disorder affects many Canadians across the country. It is currently the fastest-growing neurological disorder in Canada. In fact, one in 68 children will be diagnosed with autism, which can take different forms but usually results in difficulties with communication, behaviour, and social interactions.

Despite the fact that I do not have the same expertise as the member for Edmonton—Wetaskiwin, the sponsor of this motion and father of a child with autism, I have had the opportunity, over the course of my career, to interact with people affected by autism. I know that they face many challenges, but I have also heard many stories of caring and love.

I say that because, before becoming an MP, I was the mayor of a municipality. At that time, I was frequently approached by parents, families, and children who were seeking support through community organizations. Before that, I was a teacher and principal at elementary and secondary schools, where I interacted with children with autism on a daily basis. I could see that their parents, despite how much they loved their children, were still experiencing some level of distress over the days, weeks, and months. They were sending us a message.

I would like to tell a personal story. When I was the principal of a high school in Plessisville, there was a young boy who was being assessed and ended up being diagnosed with Asperger syndrome. I believe it is similar to autism, but I am not an expert on the subject.

People's natural reflex, based on ignorance, was to send him to a group with extra support, or a group for students with behavioural issues. A psychologist friend of mine with a PhD, who was involved in his case through a community organization in my region, asked to meet with me as a private individual. She knew the child and told me that I should not put him in a group with extra support because he was a different kind of kid with particular exceptionalities, but he did not have behavioural issues. Here was a kid who understood the rules but had his own exceptionalities.

It is funny because sometimes I wondered if maybe he was the “normal” one compared to the other children.

In class, the teacher gave a very simple instruction: you must raise your hand before you ask a question. This student simply followed the instruction given by the teacher. He saw students all around him who asked questions without raising their hands and disrupted the class. He got upset at one point and the teacher asked him to leave because he was disrupting the class. He came to my office and I tried to piece together what had happened. The professional explained to me that the student had reacted because the others did not understand the rules of the class. I thought it was rather odd that a child was

being punished simply for wanting everyone to follow the rules. All that to say that perhaps he was the one who represented what was normal, and the others were the ones who had behaviour problems.

I say this a bit tongue in cheek, but still, it shows how little understanding we had of this issue at that time. A great deal of work has been done since then with our professionals so they can better understand and support these kids in class.

Stories like this one, about kids who integrate into social and group activities at school or who receive extra help in class, are often the ones we have in mind when we think of people with autism.

However, this is only part of the problem, because people still have the disorder after they finish school. We must therefore not limit our reflections to just children and teenagers when we try to come up with solutions to this health problem.

•(1645)

We have to understand that these young people will grow older with autism and will need other types of supports in their adult lives. That is when reality hits and the lack of resources is most dire. We can say that there is a huge gap between the services that young people receive when in school and those they receive after graduating, because most of the care and services stop once they reach the age of majority.

This transition from life as a student to life as an adult, which presents significant challenges for most Canadians, becomes suddenly very difficult for these young people with this disability, if we can call it that. They are cut off from most of their resources, which causes a great deal of stress and anxiety.

The working group that established the Canadian autism partnership project, which we are debating today, describes the lack of resources for adults living with autism. It says that the services and programs needed by adults living with autism generally do not exist or are not accessible in all regions of Canada, especially opportunities for jobs that are adapted to these individuals. It adds that provincial and territorial policies vary and that, no matter the location, families and individuals living with autism deplore the lack of support. Things get worse when autistic people reach retirement age. They usually do not have a pension or income because they have been unable to work over the course of their lives.

This reality is addressed in today's motion, where it refers to the challenges people with autism face over their lifespan. Let us not forget the parents, loved ones, brothers, and sisters who continue to support a loved one with this disorder, not to mention those living alone.

Although these two situations are different, with some living with their family and others living alone, the issue of housing is critical. Every person should be entitled to safe, affordable, and adapted housing whether we are talking about an existing house, a residence for persons with disabilities, or an individual apartment.

Business of Supply

As mentioned earlier, employability is another important aspect. This might include adapting the workplace or creating adapted jobs. Ultimately, we must ensure that there are prospects for all autistic adults so that they may contribute in their own way and fully participate in their community's economic activities. That is the foundation of their physical and mental health.

This community involvement also has to include opportunities for socializing. The school system allows them to interact with other peers and friends and to develop and build relationships that are important for human development. However, once school is over, unfortunately, these opportunities for social development tend to dwindle, something that must be remedied immediately.

Like those of everyone else, the needs of people with autism change over the years, and those needs must be met. Today, we need to ask ourselves to what degree those needs are being met and take real action to address the gaps. That is what this motion does by proposing to properly fund a Canadian autism partnership. Such a partnership would give us the ability to assess what is being done across the country and ensure that people with autism and their families have what they need. I want to emphasize that it is also important to think about the families. This partnership would help us put people with autism and their families in contact with health care professionals, teachers, researchers, and decision-makers in order to facilitate the sharing of information and best practices.

These conversations between the federal, provincial, territorial, and municipal governments are essential so that we can share innovative solutions that can help people with autism across the country. By setting up this unique partnership, we will ensure that people with autism and their families can live their lives with dignity.

In closing, I want to recognize all of those people who are living with autism and their families. I thank them for their passion and dedication. We will continue to fight for them so that they have the resources they need. We will ensure that all parliamentarians support the motion, without partisanship.

•(1650)

[*English*]

Hon. Mike Lake (Edmonton—Wetaskiwin, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is telling that the Liberals are almost non-existent in this debate today. Even when the opportunity arises to ask questions, no one stands up. No one asks a question.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, I have been around throughout the day. I have stood up. I even stood up in the last round to ask a question, and I am a member of the Liberal Party caucus.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): That is more of debate.

I would like to remind the hon. member for Edmonton—Wetaskiwin that we cannot refer to who is present and who is not. I will let him continue.

Hon. Mike Lake: Mr. Speaker, I was not actually referring to who was present or not present. I was just talking about engagement in the debate.

It has been a really rough day for the Liberals who have had to be in the House. I almost feel sorry for members who have had to stand up and read from their talking points. There is quite a distinct difference between the debate we hear on that side of the House and the debate from Conservative and New Democrat members who are able to speak passionately about something that they believe is really important today.

The motion is very clear. It is a very non-partisan motion. It is very easy to support, and yet Liberal members have had a really tough time defending their positions today because they are really indefensible.

I learned a lot from the member. That was an incredibly articulate speech. One of the things I love about these types of debates is that opportunity to learn. One of the things the member spoke about is his experience as a principal.

We get so caught up in talking about kids issues or one specific part of the autism spectrum that sometimes we lose sight of the fact that the Canadian autism partnership is designed to address lifespan issues, people across the spectrum and throughout their lifespan and the issues that they might face. Maybe the hon. member wants to speak to that a little more from his experience.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alain Rayes: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for giving me the opportunity to continue. I want to make the connection here with the boy I was talking about who helped me learn so much. It just so happens that a friend of mine has a PhD and has worked with young people with autism spectrum disorder, including some diagnosed with Asperger's.

The boy I mentioned was enrolled in school. Typically, he would have been put into a group of students with behavioural disorders who need help, but it was recommended he not be. In fact, he was put in a class for gifted students that we called "window on the world". The kids worked with laptops. He was exposed to all kinds of interactions, which was really hard for him socially. A few years later, I heard that he was in CEGEP, which is like the first couple of years of university in Quebec, completing his information technology diploma.

A few years ago, this child might have been sent to a school for children with severe behavioural disorders because we had little knowledge of the condition. Today, he has a diploma and is a functioning member of society because he was lucky enough to cross paths with people who could help and support him.

It is unbelievable that the government, the party in power, is not supporting such a motion. We are talking about less than \$4 million a year for five years. I work on the banking and infrastructure file and when I see that the Liberals are able to find billions of dollars to help their friends and when I see the millions of dollars spent by some ministers on refurbishing their offices, I just think this is scandalous. We are talking about less than \$4 million a year for five years according to an independent, non-partisan report that calls for support for families across Canada, without discrimination.

I am proud of my colleague for holding his ground and persevering. He was determined to get his motion on the Order Paper and to highlight this problem.

Business of Supply

Again, we hope that the Liberals will end up having a change of heart.

●(1655)

[English]

Mr. Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak about an issue affecting Canadians from coast to coast, autism spectrum disorder, or ASD.

I would like to thank my friend and colleague, the member for Edmonton—Wetaskiwin, for his hard work and his passion on this file. I am sure it is greatly appreciated by many across the country. He is doing a fantastic job, and I encourage the member to keep going on this journey, pushing this file forward.

I would like to thank all the members who have spoken before me and who will continue to speak after me. It is a very important motion and a very important issue. It affects people directly, the people suffering from ASD, as well as their families that are dealing with this. It is a terrible thing to have to deal with. I know my mother suffered from a very progressive form of MS. For the family unit to continue pushing forward, it is extremely difficult for all around, but we persevere and we continue to move forward.

Before I continue, I would like to mention that I am splitting my time with my hon. colleague from Carleton.

I would also like to recognize the organizations from coast to coast for their tireless work. I am certain everyone in this chamber knows of someone on the spectrum. They are our family, friends, neighbours involved in our communities, and they contribute to society. They are some of the most kind, generous, and, not to mention, incredibly smart people in our towns and cities.

For those at home, the motion we are discussing calls:

...on the government to grant the \$19 million over 5 years requested by the Canadian Autism Partnership working group, Self-Advocates advisory group, and the Canadian Autism Spectrum Disorders Alliance, in order to establish a Canadian Autism Partnership that would support families and address key issues such as information sharing and research, early detection, diagnosis and treatment.

With the enormous amounts of money the Liberal government is spending on items with far less return on investment, like multi-million dollar office renovations, free tickets to a Broadway play, a taxpayer-funded vacation to billionaire island, or even lush spending on executives at Bombardier, this \$3.8 million for each of the next five years is a comparatively small amount that could make an incredible difference to families across the country.

I sincerely hope the motion will receive support on all sides of the chamber. It is an issue that crosses political, economic, social, and cultural divisions. The funding requested will directly and positively affect Canadians. It is an opportunity to really help those who need it.

Here are some quick facts about ASD in Canada.

One in 68 children are diagnosed with autism, which is a 100% increase in just a decade. Boys are nearly five times more likely than girls to be diagnosed with ASD. Over 500,000 Canadians are living with ASD. It is the fastest-growing and diagnosed neurological disorder in Canada. In fact, lifelong caregiving can cost up to \$5.5

million dollars more than the cost for a neuro-typical developing child. It costs approximately \$60,000 a year to care for someone with autism, with most of that cost being special education and loss of parental income.

This conversation also reminds me of the battle the Ontario Liberal government lost a few years ago, when families of the 30,000 Ontario children with autism had to fight. Premier Kathleen Wynne told them that when their children turned five, or nearly five, they no longer qualified for intensive behaviour intervention, IBI. This is the only treatment that is statistically effective at improving the development of autistic children.

After a hard fight by opposition parties and the families of those affected by the short-sighted decision, Premier Wynne finally backed down. I am hoping their federal cousins will do the same and rethink their decision.

Autism spectrum disorder is a complex developmental brain disorder that can affect the normal function of the immune and nervous systems. It is a lifelong diagnosis that manifests itself in a wide range of symptoms, including difficulty communicating, social impairments, and restricted and repetitive behaviour. Individuals with autism and their families face unique challenges over their lifespan, potentially leading to families in crisis situations. People living with ASD face daily challenges, depending on where they fall on that spectrum.

●(1700)

As I mentioned earlier, ASD does not discriminate. It is one of the fastest growing neurological disorders in Canada. It is important that we understand some of the daily effects of it on Canadians. By no means is this an all inclusive list, but it is important for everyone to realize the daily challenges and issues that people suffering from ASD and their families face.

Children with ASD are eight times more likely to suffer from one or more chronic GI problems than any other children. Seventy per cent have feeding or eating problems, including restricted eating or obesity. More than 50% have one or more sleep problems. One-third of people with autism are non-verbal. One-third of people with autism also have intellectual disabilities. Between 50% and 70% of people with ASD have one or more co-occurring mental health conditions, including ADHD, anxiety, depression, and bipolar disorder. Epilepsy affects around one-third of people with ASD compared to an estimated 1% to 2% of the general population. This is a serious disorder that has lasting problems.

I am proud to be standing here to offer my support for the motion on behalf of the many families and people affected by ASD. While I may not always agree with my colleagues opposite, I would find it quite troubling to see any member stand up in the House and oppose this.

Business of Supply

During my research for this speech, I also learned that approximately 25% of individuals with autism are employed. Most of this group is considered high functioning, and only six per cent are competitively employed. With increased research, early detection, diagnosis, and treatment, we could have an even larger percentage of people living with ASD in the workforce, which would not only benefit them but their families and all Canadians.

I would like to discuss the impact of this motion in my riding. I am proud of the many organizations in my riding of Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock that directly help people and families with ASD. I would like to reiterate a story from my riding about a local person with autism in Haliburton who, thanks to the efforts of Point in Time and the support of the Haliburton community, completed high school and is currently excelling in college.

We have many similar stories across my riding and across this country of the great work of organizations and people supporting those with ASD. It is important to recognize these organizations for their great efforts: Point In Time; Community Living in Kawartha Lakes and Haliburton County; Five Counties Children's Centre; Horses Help Canada in Millbrook; Kawartha Lakes Autism Support; Kids First, Inc.; Kinark Child and Family Services; Camp Kirk; and the Durham Chapter of Autism Ontario that looks after Brock Township. There are of course many others.

I would also like to mention the Maier Centre for autism services. While this organization is not in my riding, my colleague from Edmonton West has done outstanding work with this group.

Unfortunately, due to its two most recent budgets, the Liberal government has neglected to make any pledges to autism organizations in Canada. This is in contrast to our previous government, which pledged \$2 million in 2015-2016 to support stakeholder relationships on a Canadian autism partnership, of which \$1.5 million would be used to support stakeholder participation in that working group. The group was tasked with developing a plan for the Canadian autism partnership that would address key issues such as information sharing and research, early detection, diagnosis, and treatment for supporting families.

Autism is a cross-partisan issue. It affects people from coast to coast. As I said, probably every member in the chamber knows someone affected by autism.

• (1705)

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing and Urban Affairs), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have been listening to the debate with great interest. I applaud the advocacy work and the lived experiences that we have heard expressed here today. This is a serious issue, and many approaches need to be pursued in order to provide not just better treatment but also better therapies as well as support for families.

One of the concerns that many parents express to us is the lack of supportive housing for their children as they age and the parents are not there in later years to care for them. For the last 15 years there has been no program of supportive housing that permitted medical supports and medical financing from departments of health, whether provincial or federal, to combine with CMHC grants and public

housing grants to create the supportive housing required to allow these individuals to live independently.

In light of the fact that the budget for the first time puts those resources in place to create exactly the kind of supportive housing that is required, is the member opposite prepared to support that part of the budget to make sure we create supportive housing to allow children with autism to age gracefully with the support they need to be as productive as possible?

Mr. Jamie Schmale: Mr. Speaker, I do appreciate the question and if the hon. member wants to separate that from the budget, I am happy to support that, but obviously there are many problems that I and many people on this side of the House have with the budget.

I would like to build on what the member opposite was talking about. When we look at the return on investment that these organizations can provide to help families dealing with other members of their family with autism, we see the benefit that can happen and the good that can come out of this, and for a relatively small amount, \$3.8 million over the next five years. I think we would see incredible investments and incredible steps forward. I hope the members opposite will have a change of heart and will support the motion.

Mr. Wayne Stetski (Kootenay—Columbia, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank all my colleagues today for their speeches, but particularly the members from the NDP and Conservative Party for their very personal stories related to autism. I really do believe in fact-based decision-making. The facts as I understand them are, first of all, the autism community was asked to come up with a plan and a strategy collectively, which it has done. Second, it has asked for \$19 million over five years, which is less than \$2 million per year. Third, we have heard that autism is a growing concern in Canada in terms of the number of people suffering from autism.

Given those facts, can the member help me understand why the Liberal government is not supporting this \$19 million over five years?

Mr. Jamie Schmale: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question from my friend across the way, although I do not know what goes on in a Liberal member's head. I will speak to what I am thinking and I do appreciate the opportunity to do so.

To the member's comment, the results that \$3.8 million over the next five years would have is a huge benefit for those families dealing with members who are living with autism. We think of the work that these groups can do in coming together. Some of the top researchers and scientists in their field, some of the top advocates for moving forward with the autism file would be coming together, discussing and coming up with ways to move forward. This would be a huge return on investment. To not even move in this direction, to simply ignore the fact that this relatively small amount of money can come back with huge benefits for all Canadians is simply unfortunate.

Private Members' Business

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Resuming debate, the hon. member for Carleton. I would like to point out that he has approximately five minutes. We will run out of time before we reach the full 10 minutes.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this debate reminds me of a visit I made to a grocery store in my community. A lady walked up to me with her daughter. The lady thanked me for having sent her a birthday card, as her autistic daughter stood in the aisle tapping her hands on the canned foods beside her. We talked for a little while, exchanged pleasantries and caught up. As the two of them were about to leave, her mother asked me when my birthday was so she could send me a card. I said told her it was June 3. Without even looking back at me, as she continued to tap away on those cans, the little girl said “That’s a Tuesday.” We were in February, so I opened up my BlackBerry and sure enough, June 3 would fall on a Tuesday, a fact that she had instantaneously calculated, without even listening to our conversation. She did not even look back at us to show pride for her incredible intellectual accomplishment.

That led me to understand the treasures of the autistic mind, treasures that we do not yet fully understand how to unlock. They are treasures that have been glimmering in places all around the world.

I think of the famous Temple Grandin, who is an animal behaviour expert and the author of about a dozen books on autism and animal treatment. She has designed systems for slaughterhouses, which are now used to treat about 50% of the cattle that go into slaughterhouses and end up on the plates of American consumers across the United States. In fact, McDonald’s has said that her standards are required of its suppliers because they guarantee humane treatment of animals.

How did she do this? How did she design these different systems? For example, there are dipping vats to disinfect the cows, grip flooring to prevent them from slipping, and curved pathways toward the stun guns so no animal can see the fate of the one before it, all designed to reduce the immense anxiety that would naturally come with that experience for the animal, which ultimately reduces the cost and increases the efficiency of animal treatment.

She did this because the visual track of her mind is 400% larger than the average mind, a fact that the University of Utah was able to establish when it did imaging of her mind. This incredible intellectual advantage was difficult to harness and easily concealed. When she was a child, it took her until age three to even learn how to speak. The amygdala in her brain was unusually large, which is the emotional nerve centre of her mind. A school bell sounded like a drill going off in her brain, which she explains in her wonderful book. These incredible sensory overloads almost incapacitated her completely, but for the fact that her mother believed in her and worked with her to teach her how to read, to speak, and write.

Meticulon, a company in Calgary, is turning autistic people into well-paid IT professionals so they can earn an independent life for themselves and eventually, hopefully, their families.

Peter Thiel, the co-founder of PayPal, has said that he believes autism is almost necessary to be a successful innovator in the high-tech sector. This is the potential we have the ability to unlock.

However, we need the knowledge that the autism partnership would bring, the best practices to expand those successes across the country. For the small cost of a few million dollars a year, less than the cost of one Bombardier executive’s salary this year alone, we could disseminate that knowledge and create a real success for Canadians.

I call on all members of the House of Commons to support that opportunity by voting for the motion and enacting it as quickly as possible.

• (1710)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): It being 5:15 p.m., pursuant to an order made earlier today, all questions necessary to dispose of the opposition motion are deemed put and a recorded division deemed requested and deferred until Tuesday, May 30, at the expiry of time provided for oral questions.

• (1715)

Mr. David de Burgh Graham: Mr. Speaker, I believe if you were to seek it, you would find unanimous consent to see the clock as 5:30 p.m.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): It being 5:30 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members’ business as listed on today’s Order Paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

CONVEYANCE PRESENTATION AND REPORTING REQUIREMENTS MODERNIZATION ACT

Mr. Gordon Brown (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC) moved that Bill S-233, An Act to amend the Customs Act and the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (presentation and reporting requirements), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Sarnia—Lambton for seconding this bill. I am here today to support a proposed amendment to the Customs Act and the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act and to request the support of my fellow members in the House of Commons.

Private Members' Business

Bill S-233 aims to amend cumbersome and overly restrictive regulations to allow small pleasure craft to enter Canadian waters freely, so long as they do not intend to anchor or come ashore. As the regulations currently stand, American boaters who even knowingly drift into Canadian waters without reporting to the Canada Border Services Agency can face hefty penalties, which seem grossly disproportionate to the harm that is done. These include the immediate and permanent seizure of the vessel, humiliating physical restraints, and fines from \$1,000 up to \$25,000. The payment of such fines is often demanded on the spot with the threat of being towed to Canadian shores, and made to lie face down on the boat's floor for the duration of the trip. This is not how Canada should be treating our closest allies.

The current regulations found in the Customs Act were implemented during prohibition in order to stop the smuggling of alcohol across the Canadian border. An update is clearly long overdue as our rules should reflect the fact that we have made more than 80 years of progress toward the great relationship that we have with the United States today. Amending this legislation would not only strengthen our relationship with America but would also promote tourism to Canadian destinations by presenting Canada as a welcoming and fair destination. The U.S. already offers certain small crafts an exemption from formal reporting because such vessels are classified as low risk.

Canadians, therefore, are extended the trust to drift in and out of American waters, so long as they announce their intention to do so just once during the entire boating season. In contrast, many boaters from the United States feel unable to fish in certain regions out of fear that they might accidentally drift too close to the border and face severe penalties from Canadian authorities. Even in my own riding of Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, long-time fishers and boaters have expressed frustration that they are unable to navigate the Thousand Islands waterway because Canadian laws are severe, unclear, and inconsistently applied.

Checking in currently requires either a trip to a CBSA checkpoint, which is costly in time and fuel, or the use of a cellphone, which is an unreliable service which has already resulted in the wrongful punishment of one family who made multiple attempts to call in, but still faced \$3,000 in fines for what should have been a pleasant day on the water. Even when cellphone signals function offshore, which is far from guaranteed, boaters are not always spared from reporting to a checkpoint, an unnecessary inconvenience which often leads Americans to choose locations far from Canada's borders.

We share border waters with 10 states, in which more than 3.2 million small pleasure craft are registered, giving this bill the ability to have a positive impact on many lives, including those of Canadians. Not only do the boaters impacted aim to share our beautiful scenery, but they also contribute to our economy by purchasing Canadian fishing licences and encouraging travel to Canadian destinations. In fact, United States citizens purchased 331,327 Ontario fishing licences in 2015 alone. In this way, less restrictive regulations are of mutual benefit. The provinces receive extra funding and the tourism industry thrives on both sides of the border, all the while strengthening the relationship between Canada and the United States.

Unfortunately, our regulations have already done some damage. Americans who have already been subjected to the unfair treatment outlined in the Customs Act say they are no longer willing to buy Canadian fishing licences nor will they promote visiting our country at all, dealing damage to our tourism industry. In one such case, an American citizen, Roy Anderson, who had been fishing in Canada all of his life, was punished for breaking regulations he did not even know existed. After Anderson was heavily fined and briefly detained, he vowed that he would never again purchase another Canadian licence and stated that his friends would not even dare approach the border for fear of losing their boats or being subjected to massive fines.

• (1720)

Anderson even made the statement that, in his eyes, Canada clearly does not want Americans entering our country. Anderson's story appeared in the press dozens of times as Canadians and Americans alike criticized the actions of Canada Border Services Agency and repeatedly called on these regulations—which they viewed as antiquated, outrageous, and unfair to the American people who so kindly grant us access to their water—to be changed.

This is not the image of Canada that should be portrayed in the media. Canadians are kind, welcoming, and fair. We are not aggressors who feel the need to harass harmless fishermen on a day out with their families. We have a great country with many things of which to be proud. The media should have no shortage of happy and positive stories to write, but these stories are being overshadowed by policies that do not reflect the image of the Canada we know today. If we want the media to write kindly about us, we must always strive to give them reason to do so. With each story that portrays Canada in a negative light, fewer American citizens feel welcome in our country. We cannot stop the press from writing about us, but we can give it reasons to write kindly.

The first step is making things right in our own regulations and understanding that, if we do not change the way we treat our visitors, they are unlikely to continue coming back. As it is, businesses and fishing associations in Canada and the United States have already begun to complain about our treatment of U.S. citizens. The St. Lawrence River Walleye Association in New York State has expressed concern that our policies could put a serious damper on relations between our countries, as its members feel unwelcome and threatened by our current regulations. After hearing stories in the media, many fear drifting too close to the Canadian border and incurring fines that they cannot afford to pay. Many simply choose to stay home.

Private Members' Business

Similarly, Scott MacCrimmon of Ed Huck Marine in Rockport, Ontario, has called the regulations one more barrier to visiting the Thousand Islands and feels that our unwelcoming attitude toward American citizens is creating a division between the countries and preventing Americans from doing business in Canada at all. MacCrimmon stated that the frustration and confusion that stems from these regulations is harming relations between Canada and the United States. From his perspective, as Americans come to feel unwelcome in Canadian waters they are less likely to visit at all, a great source of concern for those working in the tourism industry who rely on seasonal visits from American citizens to stay afloat.

A number of Canadian chambers of commerce have also echoed these concerns, even pointing out the devastating impact that these regulations are having on their marketing efforts. The Gananoque chamber of commerce even stated that the proposed amendments would aid in the promotion of not only the Thousand Islands but every Canadian market town bordering the United States. It further stated that, given our 150th anniversary, Canada should be doing everything possible to promote our natural beauty, rich history, and cultural diversity.

We should therefore aim to be ever more accommodating and inviting to the southern neighbours who treat us so kindly. The days of prohibition are over, and it is also time that we do away with old regulations intended to solve an issue that is long gone. There is no longer any need to check every boat that happens to cross into our territory, and it is therefore excessive and unnecessary to make these requirements of American boaters. Small pleasure craft pose little to no threat to Canadian safety, so long as they steer clear of our shoreline. It is therefore imperative that we begin treating our American neighbours as friends and not criminals.

This bill has already passed the Senate of Canada. Senator Bob Runciman worked with the government on some of the technical amendments that it wanted to see in this bill. It did pass the Senate unanimously. I am looking forward to seeing this bill move through the House of Commons and on to committee in the hopes that we could see this bill through before our boating season gets into full swing. We know that we are coming up on the long weekend here, across Canada, and traditionally it is the start of the boating season, but it really gets into full swing as we move toward Canada Day. This would be a great way to celebrate Canada Day, to see this burdensome issue go away.

It really is an issue. We have Patty Ritchie, who is a New York State senator, who has come to also testify as a witness in front of the committee in the Senate, as I did myself. I really think it is overdue that this bill pass this House and that we get this fixed. Let us bring our legislation into 2017 and do away with regulations that do us no service.

• (1725)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the comments from the member across the way. I think we have hit on a really important issue, if we expand on it to bring in the idea of the importance of tourism to our country. We get a lot of Americans who fly in. There are all sorts of wonderful resources in Canada they enjoy tapping into. If there are things we can do to further enhance that, I think that would be positive. We

have before us, as the member has accurately portrayed, a piece of legislation that will move us forward, I believe, on the issue.

I wonder if the member has any statistics he might be able to provide on the number of individuals or regions it would actually impact. I know that Manitoba has many waterways. Some say there are tens of thousands of rivers and lakes. Does he have any statistics he would like to share with the House?

Mr. Gordon Brown: Mr. Speaker, that is a good question. First, what this bill does is harmonize the regulations we have with the United States. We have been doing a lot of work over the last number of years, as a country, to harmonize regulations with the United States.

This bill would not only affect people in my area of the country, along the Great Lakes, the St. Lawrence, and the Thousand Islands, but would affect the Lake of the Woods area and the western border area between British Columbia and Washington state. It would also affect the St. Clair River and other boundary waters.

I think the key is, first, to harmonize those regulations with the United States, and second, to make sure Canada is seen in a positive light. As I said before, the current regulations have been inconsistently brought about, so they are not being implemented in a consistent fashion. It is really putting us in a bad light. I know there is negative press. I have seen it first-hand from our friends in upper New York state. This would put us in a much better light and should in fact drive more tourism into Canada.

Ms. Tracey Ramsey (Essex, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague, the member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, for sponsoring this important piece of legislation.

In my riding of Essex, I am surrounded by water, as our boundaries border with the U.S. on Lake Erie, one of the Great Lakes, as well as on Lake St. Clair. Boating, recreational fishing, commercial fishing, all of these things are incredibly important to the vitality of my region.

I think I just heard that the government will support this. That is a positive thing to be hearing from the other side of the House, because it impacts so many people, in particular in the summer months.

The member spoke a bit about the economic relationship we have at this moment in time with the U.S. This is an ideal opportunity for us to strengthen our relationship with the U.S. and have a win, really. I wonder if the member would speak to the way it could strengthen the economic and tourism relationship we share with our neighbours to the south.

Private Members' Business

Mr. Gordon Brown: Mr. Speaker, as the member knows, representing an area in southwestern Ontario, we have similar issues. Being welcoming and open to our American friends and showing that we want them to visit keeps us from getting into those negative stories. I know first-hand that friends on the U.S. side really saw us in a negative light. The media was quite horrible. It was really unnecessary, because it was something most Americans and Canadians thought they did not need to do. They did not think they needed to report as long as they did not land or anchor. By moving ahead with this change in our regulations, it will put us in a positive light. It would be great if we could see this finished up, in terms of the committee and through the House, before the House rises in June so that we no longer have to endure that negative press. Also, as I said before, this will be a great way to celebrate Canada's 150th birthday, just a short five or six weeks from now.

• (1730)

Mr. T.J. Harvey (Tobique—Mactaquac, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am proud to rise today to speak to a subject matter important to many constituents in my riding of Tobique—Mactaquac, New Brunswick, and highlight our Government's support for Senator Runciman's bill, Bill S-233. I would also like to congratulate my colleague, Senator Runciman, the office of the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness and CBSA on their close collaboration and hard work to get the bill to this point.

Last, I would like to thank my hon. colleague from Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes for sponsoring the bill in the House. I believe that the final result following amendments demonstrates a clear and cohesive bill.

I will provide a bit of background on this.

In December 2016, Senator Runciman introduced Bill S-233, the conveyance presentation and reporting requirements modernization act, to relieve persons on board conveyances, such as private boats, tour boats, cruise ships and private aircraft from having to report to the Canada Border Services Agency when they passed incidentally into or out of Canadian waters or airspace.

In several parts of Canada there are lakes and waterways that cross the Canada-U.S. border, not unlike my riding of Tobique—Mactaquac.

Currently, Canadian law requires that all boaters who exit Canadian waters, do not land on the American side, and make no contact with other vessels are required to report to CBSA upon returning to Canada. Many of these travellers live in New Brunswick and are my constituents. I have several hundred kilometres of border and it is dotted with small lakes and some large lakes. They are very low risk, from a CBSA perspective, and the reporting requirement creates frustration and confusion among boaters who often cannot tell where the international boundary line falls while on the water. It also creates increased workload for CBSA officers who could better use their time to examine higher risk travellers.

In the United States, boaters are only required to report their arrival to customs and border protection if they have docked at a foreign port, or have had contact with another vessel in foreign waters. Simple activities like fishing, water skiing or touring do not trigger reporting requirements so American rules do not require recreational boaters to report to U.S. CPB for similar activities.

The differences in American and Canadian reporting requirements have been a source of frustration, as my colleague had mentioned, for individuals and businesses in my riding of Tobique—Mactaquac. They either enjoy parts of their lives or make a living on our shared waterways along the border between New Brunswick and Maine. I have received many calls over the past year from constituents in my riding, declaring their concerns, especially concerning East Grand Lake and North Lake in the Forest City area, a place where, despite our international divider, individuals have formed friendships, family ties and share much more than the waterways in which their homes and cottages are built.

The bill's objective is to address this situation by exempting private boaters, or people on other water-borne craft, from having to report to the CBSA when crossing into or out of Canadian waters for fishing, sightseeing and other low-risk activities, pastimes that owners of pleasure crafts on the shared waterways enjoy doing on a daily basis on summer days in New Brunswick.

For private boaters, the passage of the bill will reduce confusion across the boating community and bring the benefit of a reduced reporting requirement, while also more closely aligning our marine reporting requirements with those of our US counterparts.

Eliminating the need to report to the CBSA would reduce the red tape and more closely align Canada's reporting process with those of our U.S. counterparts. This would streamline the movement of low-risk travellers and goods, without compromising our commitment to ensuring the safety and integrity of Canada's borders and protecting the health and safety of Canadians. This goes hand in hand with what my constituents have been asking for: continuity and consistency of enforcement along our border, with the focus being shifted away from friendly, everyday boaters and those who call the lake their home and onto more high-risk activities along our borders.

Let me walk my fellow parliamentarians through some of the bill's key aspects.

What is really key to the bill is that it proposes to both reduce burdens on, and thereby benefit, water sports enthusiasts and businesses in communities on both sides of the border.

People aboard boats, whether they are private, tour or cruise ships, will no longer be required to report to the CBSA in the following circumstances: when they do not land on Canadian soil, and when they do not let off existing passengers or take on board new passengers when in our waters.

The legislation's primary purpose is to ensure that private boats, or leisure boaters, who depart Canadian water but have not touched foreign soil or made contact with other vessels, do not have to report to CBSA customs upon their return to the Canadian shore.

Private Members' Business

•(1735)

Similarly, it will exempt American boaters who have no intention of touching Canadian soil or rendezvousing with another vessel in Canadian waters from having to report to the CBSA before they return to the United States. This bill also applies to aircraft that may cross unintentionally into Canadian airspace without landing.

To sum up, these changes make for streamlined reporting requirements to reduce the administrative burden on people crossing into and out of Canadian waters or airspace incidentally.

By more closely aligning our reporting processes with those of the United States, we are accommodating low-risk activities in a manner that respects our steadfast commitment to ensuring the safety and integrity of Canada's borders. On this point, let me emphasize that care has been taken to ensure that this bill's changes do not come at the expense of security.

While this is a positive step forward, I would be remiss if I did not mention the concerns that some people in my riding have voiced. They wonder if specific local examples such as the ones I will describe might be considered in the future.

The marina where individuals go to fill up their boats with gas on the shared waterways in my riding is on the Maine side of the water. This is where everyone gets fuel for boats and lawn mowers, other pleasure craft, and vehicles. This is the nearest fuel outlet. The alternative is travelling 45 minutes to transport large quantities of fuel, which is very unsafe for small vehicles.

It used to be that individuals would report in via phone upon pulling up to the marina to fuel up and then phone in again to report they were coming back to Canada. The phone is still available to report fuelling up, but when people finish fuelling, it is no longer possible to use it, because to return to Canada, they have to physically come back to the border to report.

This requires navigating a particular area or passage, which may be fine for jet skis and some boats at some points in the year when the water is fairly high, but it is extremely risky and dangerous for larger boats to navigate this narrow passageway, and there are lots of those around. Navigating this passage was not necessary when people could just phone in to report their return from the marina.

While it is recognized that border security is of the utmost importance, individuals are craving a solution. They want to revisit another means of reporting without navigating narrow, dangerous waterways.

I thank the House for the opportunity to share that local concern.

During the course of this bill's development, the upper chamber agreed to strengthen reporting exceptions and to make certain that the CBSA and its law enforcement partners would have everything they need to do their jobs effectively. As a result, amendments were made to apply the same set of newly proposed conditions under Bill S-233 to both loop movements—which are cross-border movements in and out of Canadian, foreign, or international waters that return to the same place of origin—and direct transits, which are cross-border movements from one location outside Canada to another location outside Canada, or from one location within Canada to another location within Canada.

These amendments specify that the vessel or aircraft must not take on or disembark people or goods and that the vessel or aircraft must not anchor, moor, land, or make contact with another conveyance.

In addition, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police has also confirmed that the reporting exceptions being brought forward would have no impact on their ability to fulfill their mandate.

As a result of these important consultations, along with the collaboration of hon. senators, I am confident that the measures in this bill would reduce burdens on individuals and businesses without sacrificing public safety.

I would like to extend my congratulations to Senator Runciman for bringing this legislation forward. Achieving two quite different objectives—facilitating legitimate low-risk activities and trade while maintaining the safety and security of Canadians—is not always easy to achieve. This is a great example of working across party lines in co-operation and collaboration to adapt this bill, resulting in a positive outcome for the boating community on shared waterways throughout Canada's borders along the U.S.

Bill S-233 does just that. To quote Senator Runciman:

This not only strengthens border security, because direct travel faced no such restrictions before, but it also simplifies reporting requirements.

It was also agreed that this bill, as it now does, must explicitly clarify that border services officers would retain powers similar to those they have under both the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act and the Customs Act. This means that CBSA officers could continue to require people to answer customs or immigration questions regardless of whether or not they are exempted from reporting. Whether it is necessary to verify a person's goods, work permits, or other immigration documents, or to compel an examination, under this bill officers would maintain their ability to enforce the CBSA's mandate and maintain border integrity.

Upon consultation, the CBSA has told us that the legislation would have limited operational impacts on their operations, as passengers aboard aircraft are already exempt from reporting when passing through Canadian airspace. Following an amendment in the Senate, the proposed legislation indicates that Canadian authorities would continue to have the authority to board and examine travellers and conveyances, if needed, to combat illicit activities and maintain border security.

Whether people are taking the shortest route between two destinations or whether they are fishing or pleasure-cruising, they would not need to report unless they anchor, moor, or land, or unless an officer makes a demand.

I am confident that Canadians will benefit from the streamlined and simplified system proposed—

Private Members' Business

• (1740)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I am sorry, but the member is out of time. I was trying to show you how much time you had left, but you were so engrossed in your speech.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Essex.

Ms. Tracey Ramsey (Essex, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to participate in today's debate on Bill S-233, an act to amend the Customs Act and the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, regarding the presentation and reporting requirements.

I would like to begin by acknowledging the hard work of the member for Beloeil—Chambly, who serves as our critic for public safety. His great work in the House and his dedication to his riding has made me proud to have him as a colleague.

I am very pleased to see Bill S-233 come up for debate, and I am also grateful that the member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes has sponsored this legislation. I know the member is also the sponsor of his own private member's bill, Bill C-273, which is quite similar to Bill S-233. I have read Bill C-273 and I spoke with people in my riding about it a number of months ago.

My riding of Essex has many kilometres of shoreline along beautiful Lake Erie and Lake St. Clair, and the issues that Bill S-233 seeks to address are certainly important to the concerns of the people that I was elected to represent. This legislation seeks to modernize Canadian requirements for boaters who cross from the United States into Canadian waters but who do not land, anchor, or moor.

Currently, people out fishing or pleasure cruising who cross into Canadian waters have an obligation to report to the Canada Border Services Agency, even if they have no intention of stopping or coming ashore. They are allowed to do so by phone or in person at one of the border security checkpoints. Those who do not report to CBSA can face hefty penalties, including the immediate and permanent seizure of their vessel, physical restraints, and fines of \$1,000 to \$25,000. These penalties seem grossly disproportionate to the harm done.

There have been media reports of American boaters unintentionally entering into Canadian waters, then being fined and forced to pay the fine on the spot to avoid having their boat seized. Every summer we see cases like this of people being fined. These stories spread and they deter both Americans and Canadians from enjoying our shared bodies of water and participating in activities that are important economic drivers for our communities, like in the town of Belle River, close to where I live.

This is why this legislation is so important to me. Essex is home to three significant bodies of water. To the north, we have Lake St. Clair, a freshwater lake that we share with Michigan. There are many boating and sailing clubs and marinas located along these shores, as the lake is very popular with recreational users. In fact, I live only a couple of blocks away from this beautiful lake.

To the west, we have the Detroit River, a heritage river that flows from Lake St. Clair to Lake Erie. It is an important transportation route and a major element of our international border with the U.S. It also played a significant role in the prohibition era, which

contributed to our rum-running history, where liquor was frequently smuggled across the river into Detroit. In fact, we can still find many heritage homes with hidden rooms. Various books have been written about this interesting period in time.

To the south, we have Lake Erie, a beautiful Great Lake where fishing, agriculture, and tourism are all important economic activities for our region.

In the summer months, boaters from both sides of the border are active users of our shared bodies of water.

In Windsor-Essex, many of my constituents use I-68s, which are permits issued under the Canadian border boat landing program that is operated by U.S. Customs and Border Protection. The program allows boaters that are citizens or residents of Canada or the U.S. to enter or return to the U.S. by pleasure craft with only one inspection conducted by U.S. customs per year. People in Essex will apply each year at the beginning of the boating season. I-68s allow them to travel by pleasure craft within 25 miles of the shoreline along the U.S. border with Canada for up to 72 hours without being inspected. Without an I-68, boaters must present themselves for inspection.

However, Canada does not have a similar program that allows boaters to spend time on our shared bodies of water without worrying that they may have unintentionally crossed the border and are subject to a heavy fine for failure to notify CBSA. Instead, we have overly bureaucratic requirements that can be very frustrating for people in my riding of Essex as well as for other Canadian and American boaters.

Over the past year, many people have contacted my office with questions about the in-transit exemption and confusion over the reporting rules for Canadian boaters who enter U.S. waters, but do not anchor or touch shore, and then re-enter Canadian waters.

Sometimes people receive conflicting information, and from year to year, how authorities interpret and apply the rules seems to differ greatly. This lack of consistency is understandably frustrating for people who want to enjoy the water without fear of facing fines for inadvertently breaking the rules.

• (1745)

I am currently advising my constituents to get their NEXUS cards, report in with CBSA before re-entering Canadian waters, and ensure that all adults and children in the travelling party carry their proper identification. If the rules are not clear, people should contact CBSA or U.S. customs before they even head out onto the water.

As I have outlined, boating is an important activity for people in my riding, and the legislation we are debating today will have a direct impact on my region. Bill S-233 may not fix all the confusion or inconsistencies surrounding the rules for Canadian boaters, however, it makes important changes to modernize Canadian legislation, and ensure that our laws are effective in promoting the goals they were intended to.

I spoke earlier about the Detroit River and the region's rum-running history. Canadians may be surprised to learn that many of Canada's existing boating rules were put in place over 80 years ago during the prohibition era to stop the smuggling of alcohol through Canadian waters. Clearly, it is time to take a fresh look at the rules and modernize them to reflect today's realities and more closely align our requirements with our friends in the United States.

In fact, the existing rules have damaged our relationship with the U.S., and have negatively impacted Canada's tourism sector. I know this is true in my region of Windsor-Essex, as well as in my colleague's region of the Thousand Islands. People in my region have been working hard to convince our American boater friends to return to our marinas. After 9/11, there was a significant downturn in U.S. visitors. Our region has been working steadily to turn this trend around. More visitors means more economic benefits for our region.

I have discussed boating requirements with the Windsor-Essex Regional Chamber of Commerce. It strongly supports legislative action that strengthens our marine industry and encourages American tourists to visit our region, which has so much to offer for other visitors. We have outdoor activities, including fantastic cycling trails and waterfront trails. Point Pelee National Park and Pelee Island are internationally renowned. Wine tours are a popular activity, as we are home to many different wineries that produce quality wines year after year. We have some great museums that chronicle our region's rich history, from the War of 1812 to the prohibition era and the Underground Railroad.

I speak often in this place about the strong trade relationship between Windsor-Essex and Detroit. People cross our border every day for work and play. Our regions and our economies are deeply integrated. However, the relationship is not static and we must always work to strengthen it in ways that benefit the people in our communities.

That is why I am pleased to offer my strong support for Bill S-233. It is time to remove the impractical, unnecessary reporting requirements for U.S. boaters. This is an important courtesy that we can extend to our American neighbours and that will no doubt benefit Canadian boaters and communities like mine in Essex.

Mr. Gordon Brown (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Tobique—Mactaquac and the member for Essex for their support for this bill.

The member for Essex rightly pointed out that I had introduced a parallel bill to Bill S-233 in the House, which was Bill C-273. Therefore, I am delighted to see support across party lines for this bill.

We do not need to have any more debate on this. We can move it on to the committee so members of the public safety committee can

have a further look at it and then move it back to the House so we can have a debate at third reading.

I also want to thank the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness for his work in finding the technical amendments that were required to see the government support this bill.

I do not think we need to do much more talking about this today. I want to thank everyone for their support for the bill.

● (1750)

[*Translation*]

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.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I declare the motion carried. Consequently, this bill is referred to the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security.

(Motion agreed to, bill read the second time and referred to a committee)

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

[*Translation*]

RAIL TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is an honour for me to once again rise to talk about the Lac-Mégantic file, particularly when we consider the good that has come out of the tragedy that befell Lac-Mégantic on July 6, 2013.

On May 5, 2017, I asked the Minister of Transport a question regarding the Institut en culture de sécurité industrielle de Mégantic. Unfortunately, this project was not approved by Transport Canada during the most recent bidding process held under the rail safety improvement program. To my great surprise and that of the sponsors, the Town of Lac-Mégantic, and the transport minister himself, I believe, this project was not approved under that call for proposals.

Nevertheless, we are talking about a very good project for Lac-Mégantic and its residents. It would give meaning to the tragedy, if that is actually possible one day. I believe that the government is missing a real opportunity to achieve something big.

I would like to talk about the Institut en culture de sécurité industrielle in Lac-Mégantic. This exciting project features a training and simulation centre, as well as a general and public training centre, specifically for rail safety. The centre hopes to be a hub for all things related to the safe transportation of dangerous goods. Its mission is simple: offer innovative products and services that allow for the optimal management of risks associated with the transportation of dangerous goods.

Adjournment Proceedings

Here we have visions and a mission that are completely in line with the Minister of Transport's way of thinking. Ever since he was elected, any time we discuss the Lac-Mégantic situation, the minister keeps repeating that rail safety is not only a priority but his "top priority".

I think the time has come for meaningful action. I know the minister supports the creation of the Institut en culture de sécurité industrielle. However, we are running out of time. Since the deadline for the first phase of the rail safety improvement program has come and gone, it seems that people have to wait nearly a year before they can apply again under that program.

The minister then turned to Canada Economic Development for Quebec Regions for financial assistance. However, the first reaction of Canada Economic Development for Quebec Regions was to wonder why this project was not accepted under the rail safety improvement program.

This is not the time to start playing ping-pong with a project like this. I am sure there is a way for the Town of Lac-Mégantic, Transport Canada and rail safety organizations across the country to work together and create something meaningful and positive that will prevent what happened in Lac-Mégantic in 2013 from ever happening again.

For these reasons, I would like to know if the government is planning to do anything to speed up the search for a solution to this problem. We can handle this sensibly and quickly if both sides show some goodwill.

• (1755)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the comments by my colleague across the way. I would like to thank the member for raising the question regarding the community of Lac-Mégantic, which experienced one of the most tragic moments in Canadian transportation history. Our thoughts continue to be with the friends and families of the victims of that tragedy.

As mentioned by the member of Parliament in his initial question, the Minister of Transport recently launched a statutory review of Canada's Railway Safety Act, a year ahead of schedule. One of the most important things we can do is review our rail safety legislation to ensure that it meets the needs of industry and Canadians. We are pleased that we were able to launch this review earlier than planned, and we look forward to the panel's recommendations.

Moreover, this year, under the rail safety improvement program, we are investing more than \$20 million to fund railway and grade-crossing improvement projects and initiatives to raise awareness of rail safety. The aim is to prevent injuries and fatalities. In total, our government is investing \$55 million, over three years, in the program as an essential component of our commitment to improving rail safety for Canadians.

Furthermore, Transport Canada remains in communication with l'Institut en Culture de Sécurité Industrielle de Mégantic and continues to collaborate with it, notably on files relating to first responder training.

As for the rail bypass project, our government continues to work in collaboration with the municipality and the province on the feasibility study. The work is ongoing, and I am confident that all parties involved will continue to collaborate to ensure the success of this project. The Minister of Transport has personally committed to this file and will remain in close communication with the mayor and the Government of Quebec to that effect.

Let me reiterate that our government is committed to improving rail safety. This is a top priority for the Minister of Transport.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Madam Speaker, I know that rail safety is a priority for the Minister of Transport.

Not so long ago, tens of millions of dollars were announced for projects to improve rail safety. The Institut en culture de sécurité industrielle in Lac-Mégantic needs just a few hundred thousand dollars to get started. Unfortunately, it seems that the funding was denied because we did not tick off the right boxes on the application.

I very much admire the parliamentary secretary for his interventions in the House even though I disagree with him 95% of the time. However, does he personally agree that we should be doing something for Lac-Mégantic? We could agree on something for once.

I hope that the parliamentary secretary will help me persuade the Minister of Transport to act quickly on this file.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I will work with the member in the best way I can on the issue.

At the launch of this year's Rail Safety Week, our government announced 131 new rail safety projects and \$20 million in funding under the rail safety improvement program.

We remain in communication with the municipality of Lac-Mégantic, the Government of Quebec, l'Institut en Culture de Sécurité Industrielle de Mégantic, and other local stakeholders involved in rail safety matters in the rail bypass file.

We are determined to continue to work to improve rail safety across the country. This includes ongoing engagement within Lac-Mégantic.

GOVERNMENT APPOINTMENTS

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Madam Speaker, last week, for the second time in two weeks, I asked the Prime Minister if he would recuse himself from the process of appointing a new ethics commissioner. In fact, I had asked whether he was signalling things to come when the Liberals appointed a former Liberal provincial cabinet minister to be the official languages commissioner. I then asked what was next. Were they simply going to appoint a Liberal to be the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner? The Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner is currently investigating the Prime Minister and the investigation is likely to carry on and not be complete when her term concludes.

Adjournment Proceedings

The answer that I got from the parliamentary secretary for multiculturalism was really to ignore the question, which was about the process of appointing an ethics commissioner. Instead, the parliamentary secretary dwelled on defending the official languages commissioner appointment, which was bizarre, indefensible, and not relevant to the question that I had asked, which was whether or not the Prime Minister was going to appoint a Liberal.

The Prime Minister at least did the correct thing insofar as he went when he recused himself from the process of appointing a new ethics commissioner, but he directed the government House leader to appoint the new ethics commissioner. The government House leader is the same House leader who has stood in the House for months defending the unethical conduct of the Prime Minister, who appoints her. She is the one who, in the House, has taken on the responsibility of defending every bit of unethical conduct by her government and is now in the position of appointing the new ethics commissioner.

The conflict of interest at play here is so obvious to everyone, so obvious to all Canadians, and yet the answer that I received when raising this question was that our two official languages are at the heart of who we are as Canadians, but so is redefining the process by which we select highly qualified Canadians. It is a strange statement when we talk about whether an appointment process is as important as our official languages are, but both are irrelevant as my question was whether or not the government is going to have an actual transparent, fair, and proper process for appointing officers of Parliament.

There are three officers of Parliament whose terms will expire this summer: the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner; the Commissioner of Lobbying, who, by the way, also has an open investigative file into the conduct of cash-for-access fundraisers and Liberal lobbyists who attend and organize them; and the Information Commissioner, whose term expires in July. The Information Commissioner, at the ethics committee, expressed her disappointment over the President of the Treasury Board's failure to keep an election promise and enact any recommendations that have been made to reform access to information.

I ask again tonight, will the government assure Canadians that it will have a proper and actual transparent process to replace the Ethics Commissioner?

• (1800)

Mr. Sean Casey (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member for Calgary Rocky Ridge indicated that when he posed the question, he asked whether the next ethics commissioner would be just another Liberal, because it is a Liberal who has been named as the official languages commissioner. Quite frankly, that was a drive-by smear of a distinguished Canadian in the context of attempting to insult the process that is in place for appointments to this place by Parliament. That drive-by smear was not remarked on nor responded to in question period when he asked it and it will not be today.

[*Translation*]

In February 2016, the Prime Minister announced the introduction of a new approach to Governor in Council appointments, one that is more open, representative of Canadian diversity, and merit-based.

The government is proud of this new approach, which makes the process more rigorous.

[*English*]

That speaks to the process that was in place for the Commissioner of Official Languages and that is in place for all Governor in Council appointments, including the Ethics Commissioner.

This question also allows me the opportunity to defend an outstanding Canadian in Madame Meilleur, the new official languages commissioner. She was appointed following a rigorous and merit-based process. Madame Meilleur clearly emerged as the strongest candidate for this position after this process. This is a process that is a marked departure from the appointments process under the previous government, which brought us Mike Duffy and put Vic Toews on the bench. Remember "He can either stand with us or with the child pornographers"? Yes, I mean that Vic Toews.

This rigorous process for Madame Meilleur also included consultation with the critics and the leaders of both opposition parties. As the Minister of Canadian Heritage stated in the House today, at no point have her qualifications come into question throughout the process. For those qualifications to be insulted in the preamble leading up to the eventual question with respect to the appointments of the Ethics Commissioner, is unbecoming of this place.

During her 13 years as minister responsible for francophone affairs, Madame Meilleur worked to create the position of french language services commissioner and ensure that the position be independent of the legislature. She was the driving force that ensured that Ontario's French-language television station, TFO, was able to operate independently from TVO, its English-language counterpart. In addition, she has fought for increased francophone immigration in Ontario and for a bilingualism policy for the City of Ottawa during her time as a city councillor there.

The government is highly confident that Ms. Meilleur will fulfill the duties of Commissioner of Official Languages with vigour and resolve. The role of the official languages commissioner is of utmost importance, as it ensures compliance with the spirit of the Official Languages Act in our society. We are equally proud of the open, transparent, and merit-based process that is now in place for all of these appointments.

• (1805)

Mr. Pat Kelly: Madam Speaker, it should be pointed out to the member opposite that there was no smear, and in no way did I impugn the reputation of Madame Meilleur. I did criticize the process by which she was appointed, and I was concerned that it will be the process they use to appoint other officers of Parliament, because that process was anything but transparent. It was anything but open.

His statement this evening that opposition leaders were consulted was denied in question period today. Therefore, I hope he is not misleading the House, because this afternoon we heard that in fact the leaders of the opposition parties were not consulted. They were, in fact, simply notified.

Adjournment Proceedings

Mr. Sean Casey: Madam Speaker, I would encourage my friend from Calgary Rocky Ridge to have a look at the letters that were given to the opposition leaders, if they would share them with him. I would also encourage him to speak to his colleague from Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix for the consultation that took place with the critic from his party.

I wish to reiterate that the Government of Canada is proud of the appointment of Madeleine Meilleur as the new Commissioner of Official Languages. To suggest that the only reason she was appointed was that she is a Liberal is absolutely a smear, considering

her stellar record of public service in the promotion and protection of official language communities during the course of her very distinguished career.

[*Translation*]

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

(The House adjourned at 6:09 p.m.)

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