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Speaker: The Honourable Geoff Regan

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Friday, February 9, 2018

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1000)

[*English*]

CANADA ELECTIONS ACT

The House resumed from February 7 consideration of the motion that Bill C-50, An Act to amend the Canada Elections Act (political financing), be read the third time and passed.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise today to speak to Bill C-50, which is important legislation.

I am a little surprised that the Conservative Party has opted to vote in opposition to the legislation, which does not make sense. I listened to them talk at great length, attempting to explain why they were opposed to it.

If they were to read the bill, I think most Canadians would have to question why the Conservatives have made this decision. I hope to maybe explain, at least in part, why I believe the official opposition has decided to vote against it.

The New Democratic Party has taken a little different approach. The New Democrats are reiterating a lot of the their Conservative friends have highlighted. I have often made reference to the unholy alliance between the two parties. They like to work together, fairly closely, and we can hear that at times with their speaking notes. However, the New Democrats have the wisdom to recognize something the Conservatives have not, and that is that this is good legislation and is worth supporting.

What are we asking of the House? The essence of the legislation is that not only do we want the Prime Minister to be more accountable and transparent with respect to who he meets with and who pays for these \$250-a-plate meetings or gatherings, whatever type of reception it might be, but that same principle also apply to cabinet ministers, and I think this is really where the catch is, the Leader of the Opposition, and other leaders.

It is a step forward in government legislation and the types of things that could improve accountability and transparency. It all boils

down to wanting to amend the law so there is a legal obligation for political entities, those leaders, the Prime Minister, and cabinet ministers, to indicate who shows up at these receptions. In my opinion, there is nothing wrong with that. I see that as a strong positive.

We have seen many reforms over the last couple of decades to improve the Canada Elections Act and the Financial Administration Act, and this is yet another piece of legislation to do just that.

One has to question why the Conservatives are in opposition to that. The only thing I have discovered is the current leadership within the Conservative Party seems to believe Canadians do not have any business knowing with whom the Leader of the Opposition is meeting.

It is interesting, because last year there was a fundraising event, and we knew it was a fundraising event, but the Conservatives denied it. It was with the current Leader of the Opposition, the Conservative Party. When we made some initial inquiries in regard to it, we were told that the event never occurred. The Conservatives were formally asked whether there was an event and we were told no.

That puts things at odds with the individuals who actually attended the event. One of those individuals said "No, I did pay". I believe the opposition leader met with realtors and some business leaders, but I do not know the actual price that was paid. It was over \$250, and it might have been \$500, although do not quote me on the price. However, it was a substantial amount of money to meet with the leader. The leader finally had to admit they did have the fundraiser. I do not understand the resistance in telling people this, but there was a great reluctance.

• (1005)

If we read the one published news story on the issue, it is interesting that the leader of the official opposition said, in essence, that he was not the prime minister, that he did not have to report it, that he would keep within the law. He implied that if it were the law, then he would report it. If we connect the dots, one could draw the conclusion that the Conservatives do not want this to be the law, and that is the reason they will vote against it.

Members across the way say that it is somewhat silly or possibly ridiculous, but think about it. The leader of the official opposition said if it were the law, he would report it. We now are introducing the law that would obligate him to report it and the Conservative Party will vote against it.

Government Orders

I do not quite understand how the Conservatives can justify that the leader of the official opposition, the person who wants to be prime minister some day, should not have to share with Canadians who he meets with for these big bucks. Instead of trying to explain or justify that, they are choosing use the line that they are voting against the legislation because of so-called cash for access, as if the Conservatives never did it when they were in government. Some of them across the way say they did not do it.

I can recall when former prime minister Stephen Harper would go to British Columbia for summer barbeques. The good news is that if people attended the barbeque, they could watch the prime minister walk into the big white tent. They could not go into the big white tent unless they paid at least \$1,000, but if they paid that, it would give them two minutes with the prime minister and a photo. It is not like that was just a one-time event. I understand it was almost an annual event and it was very nice of a senator to put on that event. How quickly things have changed.

Do the Conservatives believe that former prime minister Stephen Harper did not raise money for their party, never attended an event where money was charged? I just gave an example of it.

Did Stephen Harper say that these were all the people who were in that big white tent? I will suggest, no. If I am wrong, please tell us who was in the white tent with the prime minister, who paid that extra money to have the ear of the prime minister.

We know that whether one is a leader or a prime minister, leaders of political entities have a responsibility to assist their respective parties in raising money. Is it too much to ask that the individuals they meet with, who are paying over \$250, at some point become public knowledge? I would suggest not.

This government has said no. The Prime Minister and the cabinet ministers have now been following the rules in this legislation. The Conservative Party still does not want to follow it. It reminds me of another situation, and my friends will recall this one.

● (1010)

I remember when the current Prime Minister was the leader of the Liberal Party, sitting back where the New Democrats are sitting today. We all remember those days. Personally, I am glad those days are over, and the biggest beneficiary of that has been Canada's middle class. I remember when he stood in the House and said that he believed in proactive disclosure. He asked for the unanimous consent of the House to implement "proactive disclosure" in regard to members of Parliament. I remember all the objections and the noes, especially coming from the then official opposition the New Democratic Party. However, those members were not alone at all. The Conservatives also objected to it. It was not like we just tried it the one time; we tried it on several occasions.

I believe the Prime Minister set into work good deeds that ultimately ensured there would be more transparency and accountability coming out of the House. That is what this legislation would do that.

I will go back to the proactive disclosure for MPs and what happened. We decided that even though it was not the law, we took actions and we imposed it upon ourselves, and that is what is happening with the Prime Minister and cabinet ministers today. It did

not take that long for the Conservative Party back then to recognize it was offside, kind of out of touch with Canadians. I give the Conservatives credit. They recognized it, jumped on board and complied. My New Democratic friends went kicking and screaming. It ultimately took an opposition day where they were shamed into supporting proactive disclosure.

Today the New Democrats are recognizing that this is good legislation so they are supporting it. People will notice that even though they are supporting the legislation, they are still somewhat critical of the government but they recognize the value of good legislation, unlike my Conservative friends across the way. After the current Prime Minister convinced them that listening to Canadians was a good thing to do, they came on board with the proactive disclosure for MPs. However, now on this issue, the Conservatives do not seem to want to listen to Canadians.

I always thought we would not do any worse than Stephen Harper with respect to leadership, but on this issue, the Conservatives do not recognize something that even Stephen Harper recognized, which was being more transparent and accountable was what Canadians expected. That is why I do not quite understand their position on Bill C-50. The good news is that it is not too late. It took the Conservatives a little while to come to their senses on proactive disclosure for MPs. I am an optimistic person. I believe the glass is half full. I would hope my friends across the way will actually see the merit of passing the legislation.

I know some Conservatives have argued in their presentations that we do not need the law to tell us what we should be doing.

An hon. member: Correct.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, one member across the way has said "correct". That is not true; they do need the law.

Just prior to the House getting under way, I was hoping to find a news article. I wish I had it here because I am sure my friends would have been quite impressed by it. Due to the fine work done by Patrick, I had that quote but I do not have it with me right now. However, let me capture the essence of the quote.

● (1015)

The quote is from the current leader of the official opposition. One kind of has to chuckle when reading it. If members want it, I can provide the actual quote. The current Conservative leader admitted that he is a little different from the Prime Minister, but that is okay and he will follow the law. However, it is not the law today, so he does not have to abide by it. He feels that he does not have to share that information. In the article, he said that if it were the law, he would follow it and comply.

The question I have for the backbenchers of the Conservative Party is whether they believe in accountability and transparency, as the Liberal members of the House do. If they believe in accountability and transparency and improving the legislation, they should vote in favour of the bill. Some members are laughing about that.

Government Orders

Conservatives have talked a lot about the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner lately. Do they know what the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner had to say about the legislation? In essence, she said it is good legislation and that it would move us forward. I suggest that if my Conservative friends were to canvass on this particular issue, they would find that Canadians, as a whole, would support this legislation, because it is time that we have it.

I applaud the Minister of Democratic Institutions for taking the initiative in a relatively short time span and bringing forward legislation that I believe would ensure more accountability and transparency. These are important to be put in place as we continue to evolve our election laws and the way campaigns are financed. For me personally, some of the reforms over the years, in particular, getting rid of corporation and union contributions to individuals, have been strong and positive. It has changed the way many Canadians look at politicians. They do not perceive us as having been bought by interest groups.

In one of my earlier comments, I talked about how important finances are. There is no question about it. I would argue the best democracy in the world is right here in Canada. There is always room for improvement, and that is why I am glad to see this piece of legislation. However, on the financial, in essence, I believe Canada leads the way, in many ways, in the world. At the end of the day, one candidate in Winnipeg North would probably spend—I am not too sure of the actual dollar amount—somewhere around \$80,000 to \$100,000, and there could be four or five candidates. Where would they get that money from and how important is it that they get the money necessary for a full campaign?

The reason I raise that, to finish my debate on a personal note, is not to overestimate the importance of money, but rather, to emphasize how important our volunteers are. I can receive a donation, for example, of up to \$1,500, but the real value of my volunteers far exceeds the value of a \$1,500 donation. I do not believe we give enough credit to volunteers of all political stripes. Whether they are Green, Liberal, New Democrat, or Conservative, the efforts that our volunteers put into our campaigns, both at the local and national levels, are vastly underestimated.

• (1020)

From my colleagues and all members of the House, I would like to express appreciation to those individuals. They deserve just as much credit as anyone who would give any sort of cash donation. Having said that, donations are always appreciated too.

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his speech. It is great on a Friday morning to get me all fired up like that, so I really appreciate it.

One of the things he talked about was the need for this particular law, and that it brings clarity and things like that. What is interesting about that is there is something called the spirit of the law and then there are the words of the law. On the Conservatives' side, we understand the spirit of making sure campaign financing is not tied to a particular decision. When we are in opposition, as well as the many backbench MPs in the Liberal and NDP parties, we do not have any decision-making abilities in this place. We have the ability to vote on particular issues. However, when one is in cabinet, when

one is the Prime Minister, one makes significant decisions every day that do not necessarily meet the scrutiny of this particular place. That is where we really need to ensure the financing is not being drawn in to influence a particular decision. We understand that on the Conservatives' side. Apparently, the Liberals need a law to lay that out for them.

Will the member not recognize there is a spirit and intent that we all understand?

• (1025)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I believe the members, whether this particular individual or others, underestimate how influential the leader of an official opposition really is. I would underline that the leader of the official opposition hopes someday to become the Prime Minister. To say there is no interest in knowing who the leader is meeting with at these big-dollar events is just wrong. I believe that at the end of the day Canadians have the right to know. It could formulate many of the questions posed by the opposition and the way in which they might deal with specific issues.

I am very much aware of the influence the leader has in opposition, and I have seen that, especially with Stephen Harper and that whole glass bubble thing. The member is not really recognizing the type of importance that leaders of all political parties carry in our democratic process. To try to say that Canadians do not need to know who their financial backers are is wrong. I really believe leaders of political parties have a responsibility, and that is what this legislation is doing. It is putting that into law.

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I think we would do well to remember why we are having this debate. After this last election in 2015, all Canadians will remember the tawdry spectacle of the Prime Minister and Liberal cabinet ministers having events held for them in corporate boardrooms and law firms, where people were paying \$1,500 to get special access to the Prime Minister and cabinet ministers. That is why we are here today.

This is the Liberals' tepid and weak response to that situation. We could drive a truck through the loopholes in this bill. Basically, it does not change cash for access. It enshrines cash for access. Now what someone has to do is just advertise the cash for access event in advance, but the loophole is that it only applies to events where it costs more than \$200 to attend. Just charge \$199 to attend and then hit them up for \$1,000 once they are there, and there is no need to publish the names of anybody who is there.

At one time the Liberal government of Jean Chrétien, basically after the sponsorgate scandal, where it was shovelling millions of taxpayers' dollars to friends in the Liberal Party, had to bring in electoral finance rules. Those were good. That is where it banned union donations and corporate donations. At that time, it also boldly allowed public financing of elections with the per vote subsidy. The Harper government got rid of that.

Why does my hon. colleague not take a bold step and get rid of the private financing problem, so that we get rid of this tawdry spectacle of politicians having to beg people for money, and bring back the per vote subsidy that at one time the Liberals brought in? Why will the current government not have the—

Government Orders

The Deputy Speaker: Order. We are getting on with time. The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, as I indicated earlier, I appreciate the support that the New Democrats are giving to the legislation. Even though the member across the way just criticized the legislation and virtually said it was not all that good, I recognize that they are voting in favour of it. I suspect the reason why they are voting in favour of it is that, much like proactive disclosure, they understand that this is the type of legislation that Canadians would get behind and would expect all members of Parliament from all political entities to support.

As democracy continues to evolve, I believe in having it enshrined in law that ministers, the Prime Minister, the leader of the New Democrats, and the leader of the official opposition all have a responsibility to ensure that who it is they are meeting with goes public when these individuals are paying in excess of \$200 to go to a reception or have dinner with any one of those individuals.

● (1030)

Ms. Anita Vandenbeld (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am glad my hon. colleague mentioned former prime minister Stephen Harper who, to this day, has never revealed the top 10 donors to his first leadership campaign in 2002. That was before the Liberals brought in the most significant political party financing legislation ever. It was the first time that corporations and unions could not donate, the first time there were spending limits, and the first time there were transparency requirements. That was opposed by the former Conservative Party as well. Former prime minister Stephen Harper, with the National Citizens Coalition, took the Government of Canada to court to strike down the rules that did not allow lobbyists and other third-party groups to spend as much as they wanted to influence an election. Now we have the official opposition opposing even this legislation.

Could my colleague let us know which party has always brought the most significant changes for transparency and accountability on political party financing?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague and friend for her great question because it highlights the difference between the Conservatives and the Liberals inside the House. The Conservatives tend to want to resist any sort of change where there is more accountability and transparency with respect to election financing laws. Historically, what we have seen is that, whether it was Jean Chrétien or our current Prime Minister, Liberals want to put in place what we believe is positive legislation that ensures more accountability and transparency.

My colleague made reference to former prime minister Stephen Harper. I can recall that there was a great deal of money that was raised. We never did find out who the top 10 contributors were. I would ultimately argue that opposition leaders and leaders of political entities have a responsibility to be accountable and more transparent with Canadians. This will do that, along with incorporating the Prime Minister and cabinet ministers.

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I feel like I am Bill Murray in *Groundhog Day*, except instead of waking up every day in Pennsylvania, I wake up and it is the member for Winnipeg North speaking.

Of the hundreds of cash for access events that the current government has held, one of my favourites was the one that was nicknamed “hash for access”, where registered lobbyists for the marijuana industry were allowed in to personally lobby the parliamentary secretary for justice, who is in charge of marijuana legalization. They bragged that the \$150 they paid to him was well worth it because they could not get in to see him on his free time.

This legislation does nothing to bar such events from happening again in the future, either because of the \$200 or the fact that parliamentary secretaries can be lobbied. How can the member say that this is a decent bill that will help clear up some of these cash for access scandals that the Liberals seem to live on?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, it is interesting that my colleague and friend would say that. He somewhat gives the impression that if it included parliamentary secretaries, then the Conservatives would be voting in favour of the legislation. I do not know if that is in fact the case.

What we need to recognize is that with every opportunity the government has had to ensure more transparency and accountability, the government has taken actions in that direction. Today, we are debating a piece of legislation that deals with the Prime Minister of Canada, cabinet ministers, and leaders of political parties. I suspect we will continue to look at ways to ensure even more accountability and transparency in the future, which could possibly go beyond that and maybe even include all members of Parliament.

● (1035)

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government is proposing to further regulate political fundraisers by requiring leaders and ministers to file a bunch of reports every time they hold one. To be clear, the names of donors and the amounts they give are already published. The bill would simply require more reports on where and when these donors attend gatherings.

Before we judge the merits of the proposal, let us go back to first principles and ask why restrictions on political fundraising exist at all. There is only one reason we restrict those donations. It is to prevent people from turning money into power. Political power is zero sum. There is only so much of it to go around. If a donor gets more, everyone else has less.

Why would donors be willing to pay for political power in the first place? The answer is the return on investment. Large-scale donors almost invariably want something in return for the money they invest in politics. Usually they want a grant, an interest-free loan, a contract, or a regulation or protective tariff to stop their competitors. They believe that the donation will help them get the government's assistance, and they calculate that the advantage gained is vastly bigger than the donation necessary to get it.

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As an example, just yesterday we learned that the largest corporate donor to the Ontario Liberal Party gave the party \$480,000, in exchange for which it got \$160 million in government handouts. What a return on an investment. The company got three hundred times what it paid the party, smashing all stock market investing records set by Warren Buffett and John Pierpont Morgan.

Monied interests that donate are not, therefore, giving, at least in many cases. They are buying. They expect something in return. Will a bill that requires the publication of events they attend, events for which their donations are already reported and made public, prevent that from happening? Of course not. We are seeing that right now.

Monied interests have found other ways than just donations to purchase influence: paid lobbyists; massive, unregulated third-party advertising campaigns, in which tens of millions of dollars were invested in helping this government get elected in the last election; and gifts to the Prime Minister in the form of paid vacations or exorbitant speaking fees by organizations that had vested interests in how the then-leader of the Liberal third party would vote in the House of Commons.

If these restrictions on donations have not thus far been successful in getting money out of politics, at stopping people from converting their dollars into power, then how can we put an end to this tawdry practice? The answer is that we need to get government out of the economy. Government has become such a dominant part of the economy that those who wish to make money need the favour of government decision-makers to do it, so they invest in political influence to get that favour.

Nobel prize winning economist James Buchanan called it public choice theory. He wrote:

However, when governmental machinery directly uses almost one-third of the national product, when interest groups clearly recognize the "profits" to be made through political action, and when a substantial proportion of all legislation exerts measurably differential effects on the separate groups of the population, an economic theory can be of great help in pointing toward some means through which these conflicting interest may be ultimately reconciled.

His public choice theory has been described as political theory without the romance.

According to William Shughart, public choice theory "transfers the rational actor model of economic theory to the realm of politics." Where people act rationally in a market economy, investing in order to get a return, Dr. Buchanan found that government-run economies have the exact same kind of calculated trade-offs: people investing in politics in order to get rich.

• (1040)

Socialists often decry corporate profiteers who make money in the private sector. As a solution, they believe in replacing the private sector with ever bigger government. However, when government replaces private business, what happens to these profiteers? Do these rapacious, capitalist vultures transform into selfless doves? When socialism replaces the free market, does it simultaneously remove all greed from human DNA? Do people stop wanting to make money? Of course not. In fact, the only thing that changes is the way they make money.

The way one makes money in a government economy is by winning the favour of the political decision-makers who allocate the resources. Instead of selling things people agree to buy, one buys the politicians who control the money. If all the money is in the great vault of the state, profiteers work at buying or renting the keys to that vault. They donate to politicians who give them subsidies. They offer luxurious vacations to prime ministers in exchange for grants to their foundations. They hire lobbyists to convince governments to shut down their competitors with more regulation and tariffs.

As Buchanan wrote:

The individual who seeks short-run pleasures through his consumption of "luxury" items sold in the market is precisely the same individual who will seek partisan advantage through political action.

In the book *Welfare for the well-to-do*, economist Gordon Tullock put it this way: "Today the individual who works hard and thinks carefully in order to make money in the market will also work hard and think carefully in order to use the government to increase his wealth. Thus, we should anticipate that effort and ingenuity would be put into using the government for gain, and if we look at the real world, we do indeed see such activities."

The larger government becomes, the more we can expect profit-seekers to turn their money into power and to turn that money back into yet more money.

We see the evidence. In 2014, the last full year of the Conservative government, when government spending was on the decline, lobbyists registered 14,000 interactions with designated public office holders. Last year, there were 23,000 lobbyist interactions with designated public office holders, which is a 79% increase in just three years.

Why is it that businesses, unions, and others are spending so much more on lobbyists? The answer is that there is so much more money in the government to be had. Businesses, to see a return on investment, believe that if they invest in a lobbyist they can get more of that government money. The two fastest growing sectors in our economy are now government and lobbyists, which are two sectors that grow hand in hand.

There has been a payoff. Bombardier invested in lobbyists and got \$400 million in interest-free loans from the government. Private equity funds and investment bankers that have invested in lobbyists secured a \$15-billion infrastructure bank to protect their investments in megaprojects. Some tech companies have invested in lobbyists, and they have been able to secure a brand new billion-dollar corporate welfare fund that will create so-called superclusters. Money, of course, will go to the best lobbied-for firms.

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Big government leads to more lobbying elsewhere as well. Strategas Research Partners produced a graph showing the correlation between U.S. government spending as a share of GDP and the amount corporations have spent on lobbying in Washington. In 2000, federal spending in the U.S. was about 19% of GDP, and there was about \$2 billion of lobbying. By 2009, government spending had grown to 25% of GDP, and lobbying had nearly doubled, in inflation-adjusted terms, to \$4 billion. More money in the government in Washington means more money spent on lobbyists to get that money in Washington.

When government decides who gets what, business buys a larger share of government. Who wins when that happens? Well, of course, it is those with money. They can hire lobbyists, promise future jobs to politicians, make donations, and schmooze with officials. The working class, by contrast, can afford to do none of these things. They are too busy trying to keep their heads above water, raise their children, and pay their bills to have the means to accumulate and leverage political influence.

● (1045)

Great big government brings economic oligarchs. It concentrates wealth in the state and in the hands of those most able to control the state: a privileged class of modern-day aristocrats.

If we want monied interests to stop pouring money into politics, we must remove the economic power of politicians to reward them for doing so, and that is done by reinstating the free market, a free market in which business makes money by pleasing customers, rather than a government-run economy in which business makes money by pleasing politicians; a free market economy in which people get ahead by having the best product, rather than a government-run economy in which people get ahead by having the best lobbyists; a free market economy in which people put their minds to work investing in products and services people would voluntarily buy with their own money, rather than one in which we put our best minds to work winning the favour of powerful politicians with the keys to the vault of the state; a free market economy based on a meritocracy, not a government-run economy based on an aristocracy.

If the government really wants to put an end to the excesses of money in politics, it must have the humility to surrender control of large parts of the economy over which it has no business being involved.

Mr. Francis Drouin (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I can assure my hon. colleague that people at the Manning convention a few doors down would love to hear that speech.

I will get back to the heart of the reason we are doing this. It is to bring transparency to election financing. We have heard the Conservatives say time and time again this week that we should not have to relay to the law to provide us with moral values, yet we find that we are co-operating with the spirit of the law, even though it is still not the law.

We are wondering when exactly the Conservative Party is going to get in line and finally publish the names of those who attend their fundraisers.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, we already publish the names of all the people who attend our fundraisers. That has happened since 2006, when the previous Conservative government introduced the Federal Accountability Act requiring full transparency in donations. It was when the Conservative Party banned corporate and union donations and required such public reporting.

The problem is that no matter how many rules we create, the Liberals and other big government parties continue to find ways around them. If corporate donations and union donations are banned, they just set up third-party groups to spend millions of dollars to elect Liberals, as happened in the last election.

If direct gifts to a party or to a politician are banned, the Prime Minister calls it a speaking fee. Those interest groups that want to have his ear and control his direction pay him exorbitant sums of money that no one would realistically pay to hear him speak.

When we restrict the ability to donate to a political party, influential players simply exert influence on the Prime Minister by taking him on luxurious vacations that are worth tens, if not hundreds, of thousands of dollars.

There are always going to be ways monied interests exert their power over government. What I am proposing in my speech is that we ought to reduce the power of government so that those monied interests devote themselves to pleasing customers and not politicians.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, during the 2015 election campaign, the Prime Minister said, “There should be no preferential access to government or appearance of preferential access, accorded to individuals or organizations because they have made financial contributions to politicians and political parties.”

This is the rule the current Prime Minister set out for himself and for his cabinet. He said that there should be no preferential access to government, or even the appearance of preferential access, based on donations. However, this legislation would do nothing to effect that. Only the names of those who donate to political parties would be published, and the bill would change the timing of the publication of those names. Therefore, pay to play would continue, and cash for access would continue. This would just speed up when we tell people how the government was bought and sold. We would inform the public online more quickly how preferential access was given.

Could my colleague explain how Bill C-50 would do anything to help implement the Prime Minister's own promise to Canadians that no preferential access to government or the appearance of preferential access would be given based on financial contributions?

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• (1050)

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, it would do nothing. It would require that politicians file another report to reveal information that is already necessarily revealed. Donors are already public. However, there are multiple ways people give donations.

The Aga Khan gave tens if not hundreds of thousands of dollars of donations to the personal well-being and luxury of the Prime Minister while he was simultaneously seeking a \$15-million grant for his foundation. In other jurisdictions, decision-makers in the government receiving that kind of luxury benefit has led to resignations, police investigations, and even charges. With time, I can give many examples of politicians around the world whose careers have been ended by doing much less.

The point I am making here is that this is a government that has rendered itself open and susceptible to all kinds of gift receiving and favouritism from those who are seeking something from the government. The fact that we have a sitting Prime Minister who would think it appropriate to receive tens if not hundreds of thousands of dollars of free luxury from someone who had personally asked him for 15 million dollars' worth of government money is an astonishing fact, indeed.

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, one of the things my hon. colleague mentioned in his speech was the arrogance of the government to think that it can control every aspect of the economy. I was wondering if he could elaborate on that point a little more.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, one of the false allegations levelled at parties on the left is that they are against people getting rich. In fact, they are not against people getting rich. They work very hard to make themselves very rich. We have a millionaire Prime Minister and a gazillionaire finance minister.

The Liberals are not against rich people. They just have a different idea of how people get rich. They believe that people should get rich off the government through corporate subsidies, through complicated loan-guaranteed schemes, through inflated electrical contracts for so-called green wind and solar energy, etc. These policies have made a small number of people spectacularly rich, but when one is getting rich off the government, one is getting rich by making everyone else poorer.

In a free market economy, one can get ahead only by selling people things they actually want to buy with their own money. They are, by definition, better off, or they would not be spending their own money to buy these things. When a teenage high school student who makes his money mowing lawns goes to an Apple store to buy an iPad, he may have a net worth of \$1,000. He is negotiating with a nearly trillion-dollar enterprise, yet in that one moment that high school student has just as much power as the biggest company the world has ever known, because it cannot get his money unless it gives him something that is worth more to him than what he has to part with to get it. That is the genius of the free market. Everybody must necessarily win in every single transaction for it to occur.

If the government wants to democratize our economy, it will reinstate the free market system and put an end to the excessive controls of the government and the elites that the Liberals have instilled since they took office.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Salaberry—Suroît, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague, and I would like to ask him a question.

The Liberals are trying to seem as though they are more transparent. They want to show that they are more ethical and moral. However, they are proposing a maximum fine of \$1,000 in the bill. Now, we know that the Liberals' extremely wealthy friends who were invited to their fundraisers were paying much more than \$1,000. They were paying \$1,500. Consequently, the fine provided for in the bill still allows the Liberals to make money.

What is more, the bill does not give the Chief Electoral Officer investigative powers, even though that was requested. There is thus very little opportunity to really shed any light on not-so-ethical and extremely questionable behaviour.

I would like to know what my colleague thinks about that.

• (1055)

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, we already have very strict rules governing donations to political parties and candidates. I do not feel we need to give Elections Canada officials more powers. They have lots of powers already.

The combination of money and power in politics is a problem because the government is now so big that it controls who gets what. Of course interest groups are going to invest in political power to grow their own personal wealth. If we want to reduce the amount of money in politics, we have to reduce state control of the economy.

The Deputy Speaker: Before I recognize the hon. member for Salaberry—Suroît on resuming debate, I must inform her that I will probably have to interrupt her three minutes from now for statements by members.

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Salaberry—Suroît, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is no accident that today we are once again debating the Liberals' Bill C-50.

Several scandals have put the spotlight on the Liberals' outrageous and questionable fundraising activities. They introduced Bill C-50 to improve their image. After breaking the electoral reform promise they made before, during, and after the 2015 campaign, they introduced this bill to cover up the fact that they had broken their promise.

The Liberals dangled this promise before a generation of young people, my generation, saying that our electoral system was obviously not very representative and that it did not necessarily reflect how Canadians voted. People believed this promise. The NDP believed it. At the end of the day, we were too naive. We were thinking that, for once, something constructive would be done.

Statements by Members

Tens of thousands of Canadians testified and were consulted as the committee travelled across Canada, gathering ideas and suggestions from citizens. Eighty percent of Canadians said that they were in favour of a system with a proportional component. Furthermore, almost 90% of the experts who appeared before the electoral reform committee were also in favour of a proportional system for the next election.

About two weeks ago, the Prime Minister told the CBC that he was not convinced. When he put an end to the electoral reform process one year ago, everyone was devastated. What more do we need to do if the Prime Minister cannot recognize what is democratic, even though 80% of citizens and 90% of experts are on the same page?

At some point, the people stop believing the politicians, whom they mandated to represent the public. The Prime Minister himself repeated some 60 times that he would do what it took to ensure the 2015 election was the last under the first past the post system. He is now outright rejecting this and telling us that the current system works in his favour and that he will leave it as is, despite all the work done on this file.

The committee travelled across the country at great expense. All that work was done for nothing because, in the end, the Prime Minister did what he wanted and decided that the views expressed at all those consultations by all the experts and by all Canadians were meaningless.

• (1100)

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Salaberry—Suroît will have 16 minutes and 30 seconds remaining when the House resumes debate on this motion.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*Translation*]

PYEONGCHANG OLYMPIC GAMES

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Pyeongchang Olympic Games officially got under way today. The Olympic spirit is about fostering healthy competition among athletes representing all nations around the globe. At the previous Winter Olympics in Sochi, Quebec athletes won 36% of Canada's medals, putting Quebec in 11th place in the medal rankings, ahead of over 70 other nations. That is something to be proud of. Given that Canada recognizes Quebec as a nation, there is no question that Quebec should be allowed to have its own national teams, just like the other 206 participating sovereign nations recognized by the International Olympic Committee. With the utmost respect for the Olympic spirit, the Bloc wants to wish all Quebec athletes, all Canadian athletes, and all international athletes great success.

Three cheers for Quebec and our athletes.

* * *

TRANS CANADA TRAIL

Mr. David de Burgh Graham (Laurentides—Labelle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I recently had the pleasure of celebrating the 100% connection of Quebec's section of the Trans Canada Trail. Le P'tit

Train du Nord is the section of the trail that crosses the riding of Laurentides—Labelle. It is a roughly 200-km linear park and a source of pride for everyone in my region. Thanks to the Government of Canada's financial contribution to maintaining and improving this essential infrastructure, tens of thousands of locals and tourists enjoy direct access to the largest recreational pathway in the world.

The P'tit train du Nord, its scenery, mountains, rivers, and farms showcase the history of development in the Laurentides region. Today, this section of the Trans Canada Trail is used by hikers, cyclists, cross-country skiers, and snowmobilers, and is another reason why the Laurentides—Labelle region shines in Quebec, Canada, and the entire world.

* * *

[*English*]

CANADA SUMMER JOBS PROGRAM

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, university students are concerned with the Prime Minister's assumption that he has his finger on the heartbeat of what Canadians value, and angered that he demands they forgo their charter rights and place his values ahead of their own or lose the opportunity to receive 2018 Canada summer jobs funding.

One university student contacted me to say that she is very disappointed in the government's using students for its own political agenda. She is capable of determining her personal values and where she wants to work without government interference.

More than any one ideology, Canadians value democracy, where freedom of religion and freedom of individual thought are protected by the Charter of Rights and Freedoms from the overreach of the Liberal government, or any government in power.

This domestic social engineering tactic harms what makes Canada the most sought-after country to call home, by reducing diversity, stifling free speech, and affirming the false accusation "if you don't agree with me, you hate me."

This partisan values test must be removed. As Canadians, we know what we value, and it is our individual freedoms.

* * *

GORD ANDERSON

Mr. Ken Hardie (Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to note the loss of a notable person in our Fleetwood community, Gord Anderson, who lost a tough fight with cancer on December 22.

Gord had only recently become president of the Fleetwood Community Association, but that was after 30 years of teamwork with the late Rick Hart, and the passion they had to mould Fleetwood into Surrey's pre-eminent town centre. Together, Gord and Rick were a formidable team, and the creation of Francis Park, a vibrant centre of our community, is a testament to their achievements.

Gord's passion for the community started with his kids' sports, which was the catalyst that turned his success as a developer into a drive to make a difference. Gord's roots and attachments in the community were deep. We share his loss with his family, but we also celebrate his family's ongoing commitment to service.

Mr. Speaker, please join me in a salute to Gord and to his daughter, Bree-Anna Berman, who has taken up her dad's legacy and vision as the new president of the Fleetwood Community Association.

* * *

BOB PURDY

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last week Vancouver Islanders said goodbye to one of our best, Bob Purdy, also known as “The Paddler”.

Bob dedicated his life to promoting active living and environmental awareness through his non-profit organization, Paddle for the Planet, and he was the architect behind World Paddle for the Planet Day.

Some of his feats to raise awareness were truly amazing, including paddling the full 135-kilometre length of Okanagan Lake in 2012, and his over 2,100 consecutive days of paddling from 2011 to 2017.

Along with the Canadian Coast Guard, the good people of Tofino said goodbye to Bob with a proper waterman's send-off and a rally at Mackenzie Beach to support his wife.

I encourage everyone to share #gobecauseyoucan and to seek out the award-winning documentary *The Paddler*, which beautifully showcases what Bob stood for and how he inspired those around him.

From the bottom of my heart, I thank Bob. His legacy will continue to change the world, one paddle at a time.

* * *

• (1105)

HUGHES AMYS LLP

Mr. James Maloney (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honour one of Canada's leading law firms as it celebrates its centenary. Founded in 1918 by Frank Hughes and Jack Agar, and joined by Jack Amys in 1930, Hughes Amys has grown to become a leading litigation firm in Canada.

Right from the beginning, Hughes Amys lawyers have been making their mark. Frank Hughes was the first practising lawyer in Canada to be appointed directly to the Supreme Court of Canada. Since that time, over a dozen Hughes Amys lawyers have been appointed as judges to the bench at all levels. Today, 37 lawyers serve in Hughes Amys's Toronto and Hamilton offices, and I am proud to point out that over half of the team is made up of highly successful women. I am also deeply proud that I have been affiliated with this firm for over 24 years.

Hughes Amys is a well-respected firm in the industry. *Best Lawyers*, one of the most valued and respected peer review

Statements by Members

publications, lists several Hughes Amys lawyers as tops in their field.

I congratulate Hughes Amys on this momentous occasion. Here is to another 100 years.

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EDMONTON HERO

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honour a local hero from Edmonton, Mr. Raymond Pierzchajlo, whom I had the honour to meet on Holocaust Memorial Day.

In 1941, Raymond sacrificed his freedom to help his brother escape from the Gestapo. He was sent to Auschwitz concentration camp where he was known as prisoner 12632. After four years, he became one of the longest-surviving prisoners in Auschwitz and Birkenau. Freed by U.S. troops on the Buchenwald death march, he was down to just 90 pounds.

He came to Alberta with his wife in 1949 and started his long service to his community. His contributions and honours received are numerous, including the Pro Memoria Medal from the Republic of Poland and the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal.

Despite all the horrors he endured, he harbours no hatred in his heart, and he told me that he is in fact a lucky man who never lost his faith in God. He serves as a lesson for what it means to live honourably and find strength in the darkest of places.

I thank Mr. Pierzchajlo for his service to Alberta and for showing that where there is faith, there is hope.

* * *

[Translation]

ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF THE PULP AND PAPER INDUSTRY

Mr. William Amos (Pontiac, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this week, the Quebec forestry minister, Luc Blanchette, and I had the opportunity to participate in the opening panel for PaperWeek 2018, the annual conference of the pulp and paper industry.

[English]

As members know, forestry runs in the blood of the Pontiac and Gatineau valleys, covering our landscape and interrupted only by farmers' fields and logging towns such as Maniwaki, Fort-Coulonge, Bois-Franc, Low, Portage-du-Fort, and so many others.

With government support, Canada's forest bioeconomy is evolving new industries, investing in research, developing products and markets, and creating economic opportunities for indigenous and rural communities. Today, trees are transformed into bioplastics, jet fuel, and food additives, proving just how innovative the forest sector can be.

[Translation]

I am proud of our forest heritage, which shaped our country and the Pontiac. It is an industry that is constantly reinventing itself and innovating to ensure its sustainability.

Statements by Members

[English]

2018 WINTER OLYMPIC GAMES

Mr. Francis Drouin (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, swoosh to the left, swoosh to the right, Canada is going to fight, fight, fight.

I rise today to wish Canadian Olympians from my riding the best of luck at the 2018 Winter Olympic Games in Pyeongchang.

[Translation]

Good luck to Valérie Grenier, Geneviève Lacasse, Derek Roy, and Vincent De Haitre. Over the coming weeks, Canadians will watch our athletes compete against other athletes from around the world. Team Canada will wear the maple leaf with pride, as it has for the past 110 years.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the parents and communities who supported our Olympic athletes. Community support is vital for our Olympic athletes, who work so hard and thrive on competition. The Olympic Games are an opportunity for all countries to meet together to celebrate competition, friendship, and fairness through sports.

Valérie, Geneviève, Derek, and Vincent, we are all cheering for you.

[English]

Go, Canada, go.

* * *

TRADE

Mr. Mel Arnold (North Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC): Mr. Speaker, trade seems to be a real challenge for the Prime Minister.

First, it was softwood lumber trade. In 2016, we were promised a framework within 100 days. Now, nearly two years later, the PM's framework is nothing more than broken toothpicks. Then there was NAFTA, where he conceded to a rewrite even before being asked. Who knows what he was trading on the Caribbean vacation. What did we get in return? We got a \$200,000 tab paid by Canadian taxpayers, not such a great deal.

Now there is a trade war breaking out between two friendly provinces in the west and the Prime Minister fails to act like a national leader in the national interest. Instead, he flies to California to celebrate sunny days while we learn that 88,000 Canadian jobs were lost in January.

There is a trade trend with the Prime Minister, and it is not a good one. Can we finally trade the Prime Minister off before he delivers another trade disaster?

* * *

●(1110)

VILLAGE OF ORONO

Ms. Kim Rudd (Northumberland—Peterborough South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize a community in my riding that has been dealt some difficult blows of late, but I want to acknowledge its amazing spirit in the face of adversity.

When the Village of Orono learned, through no fault of its own, that it may be losing some key services, for example, its only bank and LCBO, people came together as a community just two nights ago. Over 100 members of this tight-knit community gathered, not to blame, not to complain, but to come up with solutions in an encouraging show of collective spirit. They realize that they want to move the village forward by looking to the future, rather than the past. They formed an action committee to help shape a dynamic plan going forward.

Rural communities like Orono face particular difficulties, but it is so inspiring when community members come together to chart their own destinies. I applaud their efforts and look forward to supporting the Village of Orono in its actions moving forward.

* * *

EARLY LEARNING AND CHILD CARE

Mr. Wayne Long (Saint John—Rothesay, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one of the most effective ways to combat the intergenerational cycle of poverty is through significant investments in early learning and child care. It is something I advocated for when I ran for office and something I continue to fight for every day in my riding and here in Ottawa.

I am proud to have contributed to HUMA's report on poverty reduction, "Breaking the Cycle", which recommended substantial investments in early learning. I was also thrilled to stand beside Premier Brian Gallant when he announced the \$30-million bilateral child care and early learning agreement between this government and the Province of New Brunswick this past summer. This substantial investment in early learning and child care will be transformative for families in my riding who are struggling to make ends meet and give their children better futures.

I am proud to stand with my government and that of Premier Gallant to deliver meaningful programs that will change and save lives in Saint John—Rothesay and across the country.

* * *

HOMELESSNESS

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as a member of Parliament, I recognize the importance of the awareness of homelessness. It is not always visible, but it happens every day.

Next week, I will be joining Tim Smart, Mike Kerkvliet, Sean Dyke, and Joe Preston to raise awareness for the Elgin-St. Thomas United Way by spending a night sleeping in my car. It is going to be a long, cold night, but I know that one night in my car does not compare to what some have to experience each and every day. The name of the event is, "Sleepless in our City", and I am very proud to be part of it.

Statements by Members

Having a roof over our heads is a foundation for every person. Most of us are lucky, but many are not so fortunate. Hearing the stories of these people and trying to understand what they go through is difficult, but necessary. We should remember the next time we pass someone on the sidewalk that he or she may not have a place to call home. Let us work together as Canadians to ensure that every single person has a roof over their heads and create a foundational approach so no one has to go sleepless in the city.

* * *

[Translation]

VALENTINES FOR VETS

Mrs. Sherry Romanado (Longueuil—Charles-LeMoynes, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, every year, young Canadians make thousands of Valentine's Day cards as part of the Valentines for Vets program.

[English]

Thanks to the coordinating efforts of the Greenfield Park Lions Club and the artistic talents of the students at Greenfield Park Primary International School, over 60 veterans in Longueuil—Charles-LeMoynes will be receiving beautifully handmade cards for Valentine's Day this year.

[Translation]

I had a chance to read cards made for our veterans, including one by Gabriella, who wrote, "For someone special who made our world a better place. I hope you will always be loved, honoured, and cherished."

[English]

There is one from Madison, who wrote, "I sincerely thank you for the dedication to our country. Your sacrifice in the face of great danger and the bravery that you showed will echo in the generations to come."

I am so proud of these students for making Valentine's Day special for those who have served.

* * *

●(1115)

MISSING AND MURDERED INDIGENOUS WOMEN AND GIRLS

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, families of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls will gather in Vancouver East and lead the 28th Women's Memorial March in honour of loved ones lost.

Since the 1970s, over 900 indigenous women and girls have gone missing from the Downtown Eastside or have been killed. For decades, community and family members have been working day and night to get justice for their loved ones.

Today, I want to acknowledge my constituent, Lorelei Williams. As a family member, she turned her grief to action and founded Butterfly in Spirits, a dance group to empower indigenous women and girls. Lorelei won the Samara Everyday Political Citizen award for her tireless advocacy and her front-line work.

From April 4 to 8, survivors and family members can share their testimonies with commissioners from the national inquiry in Vancouver. All of Canada needs to listen. We need to believe women who bring us their truths. We need justice for the women and their families. Justice means no more stolen sisters.

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TRANS MOUNTAIN PIPELINE

Mr. Martin Shields (Bow River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada needs the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion now. Oil is being sold at up to 50% discount to the United States because we do not have anywhere else to sell it. The U.S. sells it back to Canada through New Brunswick refineries at the full market price. It is like building a car in Ontario for \$30,000 and the only market is the U.S. The U.S. takes it for \$15,000 and sells it back to us for \$30,000. It is a ridiculous situation.

By some estimates, selling oil at a discount means the equivalent of one new school a day and one new hospital a week being built in the U.S. instead of Canada. We simply need to expand our pipeline capacity and the Trans Mountain expansion is a good start. It has passed environmental reviews and regulatory hurdles. Now the B.C. government is putting Canadian jobs and prosperity at risk. The government needs to show leadership and get the Trans Mountain expansion project built now.

* * *

[Translation]

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF WOMEN AND GIRLS IN SCIENCE

Mr. Angelo Iacono (Alfred-Pellan, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I would like to salute all women and girls in science. February 11 is an international day designated just for them.

These women and girls are stepping up and daring to excel in a field that, even in 2018, remains male dominated. That is why I salute them. They inspire me, and they inspire all girls who wish to pursue the sciences.

I tell girls that their rightful place is the one they create for themselves, and that their ability to create knows no bounds.

[English]

The sky is not the limit. Ask our Governor General.

They should push the limits, always go further, and know they can accomplish anything with perseverance and determination.

Mr. Speaker, through you, I say to them: I believe in you.

*Oral Questions***ORAL QUESTIONS***[English]***NATURAL RESOURCES**

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister is missing in action while the Alberta-B.C. dispute keeps escalating, and Canadians are paying the price. The Trans Mountain expansion is in the national interest because it will create tens of thousands of jobs, add billions to the economy, and help fund important social programs. However, all of it is at risk because the Prime Minister is on a vanity tour instead of doing his job to champion this federally approved pipeline.

What exactly are the Liberals going to do to get this pipeline built?

Ms. Kim Rudd (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said yesterday, the decision we took on the Trans Mountain expansion was the right decision, based on facts and evidence and what is in the national interest. Last week, the Prime Minister indeed was in Alberta and B. C. defending this important project.

We look forward to working with every province and territory to ensure a strong future for Canadians, but the facts and evidence do not change. This project will diversify our export markets, be built with improved environmental safety, and ensure a strong future for all Canadians. We will not allow any province to impinge the federal jurisdiction over national interests.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is just all talk from them. The natural resources minister claims he will not accept any unusual or unnecessary delays, but construction should have started in November. Every day is a delay worth millions of dollars. Every day is a delay for thousands of jobs. The Liberals know full well all the tools available to get the Trans Mountain expansion built.

If blatant stalling tactics, a full-blown interprovincial trade war, and more than a year without shovels in the ground is not an unusual or unnecessary delay, what is?

• (1120)

Ms. Kim Rudd (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as we said, we approved the Trans Mountain expansion project. It was the right decision and we stand by that decision. Just last week, the Prime Minister was in Alberta and B.C. defending that decision. The pipeline will create thousands of good-paying jobs for Canadians, middle-class jobs that will help grow our economy and get our exports to market.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals should actually do something about it. Kinder Morgan says that the Trans Mountain delays are not normal or insignificant, and everything is on hold. The attempts to stop this project will just keep coming. The Liberals need to stop repeating the same empty lines like that. Clearly, federal approval from these Liberals means absolutely nothing.

The Prime Minister keeps saying that this pipeline is going to get built. Can the minister confirm on what date construction will start?

Ms. Kim Rudd (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me be clear. Any decision by the B.C. government to limit the flow of bitumen would

be outside the province's jurisdiction. We approved a federally regulated pipeline. We stand by that decision. The pipeline will create tens of thousands of good-paying jobs across the country, it will help grow our economy, and it will help get our oil off the west coast and into expanded markets. We stand by that decision.

[Translation]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Trans Mountain project is a disaster that is only getting worse. Every day that goes by is one too many. Millions of dollars in investments and, more importantly, millions of dollars in revenue for Canada are being lost. Two provinces are embroiled in a dispute. The role of the Prime Minister of Canada is to show real leadership. The role of the Prime Minister of Canada is to take the bull by the horns and make things work. All he said yesterday is that this will work itself out.

Is there anyone in this government who can tell us when, on what exact date, this project will proceed?

[English]

Ms. Kim Rudd (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said a moment ago, we made the right decision on the Trans Mountain expansion project. That project will create tens of thousands of good-paying jobs for Canadians across the country, it will get our export product to other international markets, and any decision that any province would make, the B.C. government particularly, to limit the flow of bitumen would be outside the province's jurisdiction. We stand by our decision.

[Translation]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there is not even the faintest hint of the timeline. The reason is simple. We all know that the Prime Minister of Canada does not like Canadian oil. That is the problem. When President Obama said no to Keystone XL, the Prime Minister said that he understood. When energy east shut down its project for all of Canada, the Prime Minister said that it was too bad. In this case, he is standing on the sidelines. He is not getting directly involved.

[English]

Worse than that, a year ago in Alberta, he said that it's time to "phase them out".

[Translation]

He said it was time to shut off Canadian oil. That makes no sense.

When will the Prime Minister act in the interests of all Canadians?

Oral Questions

[English]

Ms. Kim Rudd (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we will take no lessons from the party opposite with respect to energy projects. We have done more to support the Canadian energy sector in the last two years than the former Harper government did in 10 years.

As I said a moment ago, we approved a nationally regulated project. The project will create tens of thousands of good-paying jobs across the country. We stand by our decision.

* * *

[Translation]

TAXATION

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brousseau (Berthier—Maskinongé, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister met with the CEOs of Amazon and eBay yesterday. It is no secret that these web giants want much higher limits on the duty-free exemption for goods purchased online.

The president of the Conseil québécois du commerce de détail has said that a huge increase in that exemption will be utterly catastrophic for Canadian small businesses that are already having to compete with Amazon and eBay.

Does the government plan to increase that limit, which is what the CEOs of those web giants want?

Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage (Multiculturalism), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has been very clear on this. We made a promise and we plan to keep it. We recognize that, in the longer term, we need to develop a comprehensive solution for taxing digital platforms as a whole. We are not going to take a piecemeal approach.

● (1125)

[English]

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are well aware of the many unreasonable demands being made by the Trump administration at the NAFTA table. We now know that an astronomical increase in the duty-free exemption for U. S. exports is one of the items on Trump's wish list. This means one set of tax rules for tech giants and real damage to Canadian retailers.

My question is simple. Will the Liberals stand up for Canadian businesses or will they cave in to Donald Trump's threatening demands?

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are committed to ensuring that Canada's tax system is fair and supports the objective of an economy that works for everyone. In that vein, Finance Canada regularly assesses the tax system to ensure that it is fair, efficient, and fiscally responsible. Our tax fairness measures are focused on looking at our tax system to ensure it better supports the middle class, including increasing taxes on the wealthiest Canadians so that we can cut them for the middle class.

* * *

MARIJUANA

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, speaking of unfairness, the Liberals' medical cannabis tax is

misconceived, damaging to public health, and unfair. Patients already pay sales tax on their medical cannabis, which is not eligible for reimbursement under most insurance plans. Now the current government wants to add an excise tax. Therefore, patients will be forced to spend hundreds or thousands of dollars each month for their medicine or choose a riskier option, like an opioid, because it is more affordable. That is perverse.

With budget 2018 upon us, will the Liberals listen to patients and scrap their medical cannabis tax?

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to providing reasonable access to cannabis for medical purposes while protecting the health and safety of Canadians. Health Canada is proposing to make a few targeted improvements to the regulations to create consistency in the rules between the medical and non-medical systems, which are needed to improve patient access and to reduce the risk of abuse to the system.

As recommended by the task force, existing systems for providing access to cannabis for medical purposes would continue to exist under the proposed cannabis act.

[Translation]

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brousseau (Berthier—Maskinongé, NDP): Mr. Speaker, although there is still a lot of snow outside today, summer is only a few months away. The government is still being very evasive about exactly when marijuana will be legalized. We think it is completely unfair that thousands of Canadians continue to be saddled with criminal records for simple possession.

Will the government confirm for us and reassure Canadians that, after legalization, it will grant amnesties to the thousands of Canadians with criminal records for simple possession?

[English]

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member has pointed out, this is a major transformational change that is taking place in Canadian law and that must proceed in an orderly fashion. The issue with respect to outstanding criminal records is one that we are examining in the context of an overall pardon review. No decisions at this point have been taken. However, that review is ongoing, and I take her point as a very strong representation.

* * *

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are on the verge of seeing yet another essential western Canada project face failure thanks to the lack of leadership by the current Prime Minister. The Trans Mountain pipeline would create thousands of jobs and add billions of dollars to our economy. We lost jobs when energy east walked away as a result of the Prime Minister's deliberate regulatory game playing.

Oral Questions

Pipelines do not build themselves. When will he take action and ensure Trans Mountain moves forward?

Ms. Kim Rudd (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, indeed, we have taken action, as opposed to the 10 years of inaction by the former Conservative government. We have approved pipelines. The Trans Mountain expansion pipeline will create tens of thousands of good-paying jobs across the country. It will get our resources to market in a sustainable way.

We stand by our decision on the federally regulated pipeline, and look forward to the next question.

Mr. Chris Warkentin (Grande Prairie—Mackenzie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is going to take more than wishful thinking to get Trans Mountain built. The Prime Minister's inaction has escalated this trade dispute between Alberta and British Columbia, costing jobs in both provinces. This project will not move forward unless the Prime Minister personally intervenes and makes it happen.

My question is very simple. On what date will the Prime Minister guarantee that all legal impediments will be removed to allow construction to begin?

• (1130)

Ms. Kim Rudd (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have another comment to make, other than what the hon. member has put forward. The suggestion that we have not moved forward on pipelines is completely false. He may have heard me say before, many of these projects are in Alberta: the expanded export capacity for the Alberta Clipper, the Nova Gas pipeline, the Line 3 replacement project, and again, the Trans Mountain expansion pipeline. We do support the Keystone XL pipeline. I could go on and on.

Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, natural resources contribute significantly to our prosperity, yet the Liberal government is doing everything it can to stop mines and pipelines from being built. Yesterday, the government tabled legislation that will put even more obstacles in the way of these projects, with more uncertainty and less transparency than ever before. Meanwhile, investment is fleeing.

The minister said no surprises and no drama. Now she can add no development. When will the Prime Minister stand up and promote Canada's resource industry?

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am delighted that the Prime Minister announced yesterday, with Salesforce, a \$2 billion investment in Canada.

In terms of environmental assessments, we know that in the 21st century if we want projects to go ahead, we need to protect the environment, and then they will go ahead. Under the previous government, they gutted environmental assessments. They reversed protections on fish and fish habitat.

Yesterday, I was pleased to announce that we had delivered on our promise to Canadians that we would protect our environment and we would ensure that good projects go ahead.

Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals love to talk a big game, but then they always fail to deliver. The Kinder

Morgan pipeline is a safe and environmentally responsible way to move oil to market, but again, the Prime Minister pretends to support the project and then refuses to be its champion.

As the trade war escalates between B.C. and Alberta, the Prime Minister is in the U.S., hobnobbing with big wigs and taking selfies with his billionaire friends. When will the Prime Minister finally take action, stop promoting his own interests, and become Canada's champion?

Ms. Kim Rudd (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have done more in two years to support the Canadian energy sector than the former Conservative government did in 10.

Just a reminder for the member opposite, any decision by the B.C. government to limit the flow of bitumen through the pipeline will be outside the province's jurisdiction. We approved a federally regulated project that will create tens of thousands of good-paying jobs across Canada. We stand by that decision.

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[Translation]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Minister of Environment introduced a bill on the environment and sustainable development. Twenty-eight months ago this Liberal government was elected by making all kinds of false promises to environmental groups.

The bill introduced yesterday was just window dressing, and the minister retains full decision-making power. There are deadlines, but the minister can do what she wants. She can ignore those deadlines. We need to properly develop and protect our resources.

Why is the Minister of Environment not introducing a plan that balances sustainable development with economic development?

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is quite rich for the opposition party to talk about the politics of environmental assessments. It was the former government that did not make science-based decisions, which is how we lost Canadians' trust and why the projects stalled.

Yesterday, I was very proud to keep the promise we made to Canadians. We can both protect the environment and move forward with good projects.

*Oral Questions**[English]***NATURAL RESOURCES**

Mr. Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals claim they want to get pipelines built quickly to support a strong economy, but clearly they did not read their own legislation.

The recent bill proposes the creation of new regulatory burdens, which, when combined with a federal carbon tax, will impede Canada's global competitiveness without enhancing environmental protection: more regulations, more wait times, and reduced transparency. On top of all of this, 88,000 jobs were lost last month in Canada.

When will the Prime Minister finally stand up for jobs and economic growth?

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I wish the party opposite would actually get into the 21st century. In the 21st century, the environment and the economy go together. Smart businesses know this. That is how we get projects going ahead. That is how we bring people together. That is how we create good jobs for the middle class. I wish they would get on board with the program.

* * *

●(1135)

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals are quietly going ahead with the Conservatives' plan to shut the door for permanent residency for caregivers, meaning if their two-year work requirement is not completed prior to November 29, 2019, they are out of luck.

There is often abuse in the program against caregivers, sometimes forcing them to end their work before the contract is completed. That means some will not be able to complete the 24-month work requirement. Does the minister think that is fair, or will he take action to ensure that caregivers are not penalized? Does he not agree that if people are good enough to work, they are good enough to stay?

[Translation]

Mr. Serge Cormier (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to point out that family caregivers provide very valuable services to Canadian families. Let us be clear. As the minister reiterated, the government will continue to let family caregivers apply for permanent residency.

We are now studying current programs in order to improve them. As mentioned several times, our government has reduced the wait time for family caregivers from seven years, as was the case under the former government, to less than 12 months. We are determined to ensure that these family caregivers can help our Canadian families.

[English]

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, that is not what is says on the website.

The chair of the Vancouver School Board is ringing the alarm bell on the fact that the federal government has consistently reduced the funding for the settlement workers in schools program. There has been a 20% funding cut at a time when refugee and immigrant families are increasing, forcing the school boards to cut essential positions and programs vital to the success of students and families.

The government claims it wants refugees and immigrant families to succeed. Will the government put its money where its mouth is, reverse the cuts, and ensure that there is stable funding for the SWIS program?

[Translation]

Mr. Serge Cormier (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, over the past two years, our government has taken a number of measures to improve the immigration system.

I just mentioned the family caregiver and wait-time measures, but we have also worked on offering services to all the hard-working organizations across the country that help us make sure refugees and other people who come to this country have access to the services they need to succeed and contribute to our economy.

I assure the NDP and the member opposite that the government will continue to work very hard to make the necessary resources available so that people can succeed in our society and contribute to our economy.

* * *

ETHICS

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister's actions and lack of judgment require that we review the Conflict of Interest Act. The saga of the family trip to a private island will redefine the set of criteria and the limits of this act.

Will the Prime Minister agree to give the new Ethics Commissioner free rein in carrying out his duties so as to restore the credibility of the office of Prime Minister of Canada? Also, when will he reimburse Canadians?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have said many times, we respect the work of the commissioner and the commissioner's office.

To answer the member's questions, the former commissioner acknowledged that the costs were incurred as part of the role of the Prime Minister. As with all former prime ministers, no matter where the Prime Minister goes or when, there are security-related costs.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister is refusing to reimburse taxpayers for his vacation.

Oral Questions

This week, all of his MPs clearly supported his decision. That is an insult to Canadians. His leader is refusing to answer questions and just keeps repeating that he accepts responsibility for the report and that his travel expenses were for security costs that all prime ministers are entitled to. That is not true. No prime minister should ever take advantage of the position and spend honest working people's money.

When will the Prime Minister reimburse taxpayers? That is what accepting responsibility really means.

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have said many times, immediately after the commissioner's report was tabled, the Prime Minister accepted responsibility and we accepted the findings. As I said, we respect senior officials and the work they do. In her report, the former commissioner acknowledged that these expenses were incurred as part of the role of the Prime Minister. We respect her work.

• (1140)

[*English*]

Mr. Dane Lloyd (Sturgeon River—Parkland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister broke the law not once but four times. He says that he has taken responsibility, but his words are meaningless. Canadians are looking for action. He claims that this was a family vacation, yet he brought along his political buddies. That is not my idea of a family vacation.

His illegal trip cost taxpayers \$32,000 for jets and over \$1,700 to wine and dine his political buddies.

Will the Prime Minister do the right thing and pay the money back?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have said on numerous occasions, the former commissioner, in her report, acknowledged that these costs were incurred as part of the role of the Prime Minister, and this was the case for past prime ministers. Security agencies make recommendations. We take their expertise and we accept their recommendations.

We respect the work of the office of the commissioner of ethics, and we will continue to work with that office.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the report on the Prime Minister found that the Prime Minister had violated four sections of the Ethics and Conflict of Interest Act. The report also found that the Prime Minister took an illegal vacation and billed Canadians taxpayers \$200,000.

The entire Liberal caucus voted against the Prime Minister being held accountable for his actions. What this means is that it is now an open buffet for Liberal entitlement and corruption.

Why can the Prime Minister not just respect hard-working Canadians and pay back that \$200,000?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, to directly respond to the member's question, the former commissioner has acknowledged that these

costs are incurred as part of the role of the Prime Minister, as was the case for former prime ministers.

As I have also said, it was the Conservatives who demanded that an investigation take place. Now that the investigation has concluded and the report has been released they refuse to accept its conclusions.

We on this side respect the work of officers of Parliament. We accept its findings.

* * *

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Gabriola Island opposes new freighter anchorages proposed off our shores for Wyoming coal exports to China. There is zero local benefit. Our chamber of commerce, local governments, and fishermen all say bulk anchorages threaten the community and the sensitive ecology of our coast.

The Liberals promised that there would be no projects without social licence. Promised reports and consultation are missing. Now that habitat protection has been restored to the Fisheries Act, it reveals that this review was faulty.

Will the minister listen to Gabriolans and stop these bulk anchorages now?

Mr. Terry Beech (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is pleased to be delivering on our promise to restore lost protections and incorporate modern safeguards into the Fisheries Act. These proposed amendments will restore lost protections by returning to comprehensive protections against harming fish and fish habitats and strengthening the role of indigenous peoples in project reviews, monitoring, and policy.

Our government will also invest more than \$280 million to support the restoration of lost protections to fish and incorporate modern safeguards. We have consulted broadly to ensure that changes to the act focus on those areas that matter the most to Canadians.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the new Navigable Waters Protection Act has created a bizarre situation where all waters are equal but some are more equal than others. In my riding of South Okanagan—West Kootenay, Okanagan Lake is fully protected, but other lakes, such as Skaha, Vaseux and Osoyoos, Christina, and Slokan, which used to be protected pre-Harper, are not being re-listed in the Liberals legislation.

It is absurd. Canadians will have to argue on a case-by-case basis to have their waters fully protected.

Why will the Liberals not fully protect all our lakes and rivers in the new act like they promised?

Oral Questions

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as mandated by the Prime Minister, our government is committed to protecting the environment, fish, and waterways, respecting indigenous rights, rebuilding the public trust, and strengthening our economy.

In addition, a new, more inclusive approach to the schedule would provide a greater level of oversight for navigable waters that are most important to Canadians and to indigenous peoples, including eligible heritage rivers, and our longest wild and free-flowing rivers.

Over the next few months, Transport Canada will be engaging with Canadians on this new process.

* * *

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Mr. Sean Fraser (Central Nova, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada's fisheries and marine ecosystem hold economic, cultural, and social significance for many Canadians, including so many living on the coast back home in Nova Scotia.

In 2012, the previous government cut the protection of fish and their habitat, leaving significant gaps in protection for vulnerable fish species.

Will the parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans inform the House as to how the recently introduced Fisheries Act will restore lost protections, enshrine modern safeguards, and ensure a sustainable marine ecosystem and healthy fishery for future generations of Canadians?

• (1145)

Mr. Terry Beech (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Central Nova, all members of the fisheries committee, and all Canadians who participated.

We consulted broadly, and we know that Canadians are proud of us for restoring protections to the Fisheries Act. We are protecting all fish and fish habitat. We are providing increased transparency and certainty around major projects. We are protecting middle-class jobs and coastal economies. We have eliminated the damage caused by the previous government. We are investing more than \$280 million to ensure our marine environment thrives for the benefit of future generations.

* * *

[*Translation*]

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have asked the Prime Minister on several occasions about the promise he made to our veterans during the last election campaign. Instead of answering the question, he lets other members respond with platitudes. Meanwhile, our veterans, who sacrificed their health for their fellow Canadians, feel let down and abandoned.

Will the Prime Minister show that he cares and tell the House today whether he will finally honour his promise and stop taking our veterans to court?

The Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence.

Mrs. Sherry Romanado (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are committed to the health and well-being of our veterans and their families. The changes to the new veterans charter fit with our promise of a pension-for-life option. Our new lifetime pension option is a monthly non-taxable benefit for life that recognizes pain and suffering, offers additional compensation to those facing a difficult recovery, and provides income replacement up to 90% of a soldier's pre-release salary. We are ready to work with our veterans and we appreciate what they do.

[*English*]

Mr. Robert Kitchen (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we know that the Prime Minister has already broken his campaign promise to stop fighting veterans' groups in court. As if that was not bad enough, he then had the audacity to look a wounded veteran in the eye and tell him that veterans were asking for more than his government could afford to give.

How can the Prime Minister justify spending taxpayer dollars on his personal vacations, when he cannot even support the veterans who have sacrificed so much for him to have that privilege in the first place?

Mrs. Sherry Romanado (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the health and safety of our veterans is a priority. That is why we have committed to a promised pension for life option, a plan designed to help veterans live a full and productive life post-service.

Our new pension for life is payable monthly, it recognizes pain and suffering, it is tax free, and it provides an income replacement supplement at 90% of a veteran's pre-release salary.

The Conservatives had 10 years to make the changes the veterans were asking for, and they did nothing. They closed offices, cut budgets, and ignored the voices of our veterans. We will not.

* * *

HEALTH

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, farmers, ranchers and agribusinesses will be directly impacted by Canada's new food guide. Experts, including physicians, are concerned that the proposed changes to the Canada food guide are based on ideology rather than on good science.

Why are the Liberals refusing to hear from farmers and producers, in both the health and agriculture committees? Why did all the Liberal members of the agriculture committee turn their backs Wednesday on the very ones they were supposed to serve?

Oral Questions

When will someone on the other side finally stand up for our farmers?

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to protecting the health and safety of Canadians, and protecting an environment that makes the healthy choice the easier choice.

For over 70 years, Canada's food guide has been Canada's most trusted source of information on healthy eating. As part of the healthy eating strategy, work to update Canada's food guide is well under way. We are engaging with Canadians, experts, and stakeholders.

Health Canada is committed to using the best available evidence in making the decision. I look forward to making an announcement this afternoon on our healthy eating strategy.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, no farmers were involved in this reform. This week, the all-party agriculture caucus, led by the Liberal member for Tobique—Mactaquac, met with Dr. Samis. Many members of the House attended that meeting to hear what he had to say. He is a well-respected specialist, a cardiac surgeon, who clearly demonstrated that Canada's new food guide is based on ideology rather than science. Unfortunately, on Wednesday, the Liberal members of the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food refused to listen to what farmers and producers had to say.

Why are the Liberals, who claim to be all about science, afraid to hear what farmers and producers have to say?

• (1150)

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to protecting the health of Canadians and to supporting a health framework based on healthy choices. For over 70 years, Canada's Food Guide has been Canada's most trusted source of information on healthy eating.

Canada's Food Guide is being updated as part of the healthy eating strategy, and we are working with Canadians, experts, and all stakeholders. Health Canada is committed to making decisions based on the best data available.

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[English]

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in the election the Liberals said they believe the Government of Canada has a sacred obligation to Canada's veterans. In fact, they voted in favour of an NDP motion to the same effect. The Liberal platform says:

Veterans and their families have earned our respect and gratitude. It is time our government lived up to its sacred obligation to them. Our plan...will ensure that no veteran has to fight the government for the support and compensation they have earned.

I have a simple question for the Liberals. Does their government still believe that the Government of Canada has a "sacred obligation" to Canada's veterans?

Mrs. Sherry Romanado (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am so glad to get up today to talk about the things we are doing to help our veterans and their families. Let me run through a few examples of some of the things we have done in the pension for life.

For example, a retired naval supply technician with 12 years of service and a 40% disability will receive nearly \$5,000 a month in pain and suffering benefits and income replacement benefits. Should that person wish to go back to school, he or she would also be entitled to an additional \$80,000 to help cover the cost of tuition. That person will also have access to career transition services and help in finding meaningful work in civilian life.

Veterans have been asking for change for years. Over the last two years, we have delivered, and we will continue to deliver to support our veterans and their families.

* * *

[Translation]

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Salaberry—Suroît, NDP): Mr. Speaker, students' associations, professors, and NGOs all support the Assembly of First Nations' recommendation for better investment in post-secondary education for indigenous students.

Between 2004 and 2014, the population of indigenous youth increased by 30%. It makes no sense that the government is maintaining a 2% cap on the post-secondary student support program.

When will the Liberals honour their promise and provide adequate funding for post-secondary education for the first nations?

[English]

Hon. Jane Philpott (Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to respond to this important question and to correct the record. There is no 2% cap. Let us be clear about that.

We have made investments in education in the order of \$2.6 billion so far. We are currently reviewing all programs related to post-secondary education, along with our partners, first nations, Inuit, and Métis. We look forward to doing even more to advance opportunities for post-secondary education.

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FOREIGN INVESTMENT

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada's infrastructure security should be a top priority for the government, yet despite concerns from security professionals, it is allowing a state-owned Chinese takeover of Aecon.

Will the Minister of Public Safety do the best thing for Canada's national security and commit to a full section 25 national security review?

Oral Questions

Mr. David Lametti (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as a government we try to encourage foreign investment because that makes such a big difference with respect to Canadian jobs. Every single such investment of a certain magnitude will be subject to the Investment Canada Act, as this investment is. It will therefore go through a rigorous review process. It is a multi-step process that will include input from our security agencies.

We have never compromised national security, and we never will.

* * *

[Translation]

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this morning we learned in *La Presse* that the Minister of Public Services and Procurement took the time to visit the Irving shipyard and met with Irving executives on a number of occasions. However, her office systematically refused requests to meet with people from Davie and to attend the unveiling of the ship *Asterix*.

Does she have some kind of problem with Quebec? Is this government, known for creating an \$8-million skating rink slated for a two-month run, afraid that a company like Davie will make others in Canada look bad?

Mr. Steven MacKinnon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Public Services and Procurement is very committed to ensuring that our navy and Canadian Coast Guard have the ships they need to do their job. That is why the minister has actively engaged with every shipyard in Canada, including Davie. As the hon. member knows, we are currently in talks with Davie shipyard.

* * *

• (1155)

[English]

HEALTH

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal government pledged to support home and palliative care in budget 2016. Unfortunately, we heard at health committee that it has done almost nothing to implement that promise. It is going to take more than wishful thinking to roll out palliative care for Canadians. I have recommended that the government invest in hospice infrastructure, the training of care providers, and home care transfers to the provinces, but it has not done anything.

When will the government show some leadership and take action to fulfill its promise?

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know that the majority of Canadians want to stay independent and receive the care they need within their homes. Quality in palliative care is critical to making this happen.

In addition to the Canada health transfer, our government is providing \$6 billion in federal funding directly to provinces and territories to better support home care, including palliative care. Our government was pleased to support Bill C-277, and looks forward to

working collaboratively with provinces, territories, and stakeholders as we move forward. Also, I am in the final stages of completing some bilateral agreements with several of the provinces and we look forward to working again with them.

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SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Ms. Jean Yip (Scarborough—Agincourt, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Science was recently in Toronto to meet with leading artificial intelligence researchers to talk about Canadian AI leadership. We can harness that work to provide benefits for Canadians. In the last year, we have seen internationally leading companies investing in new AI research labs in cities across Canada, including Toronto, Montreal, and Edmonton.

Could the Parliamentary Secretary for Science explain how our government is supporting this important sector and how these international partnerships will help Canada remain a world leader in AI research and innovation?

Ms. Kate Young (Parliamentary Secretary for Science, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Scarborough—Agincourt for her hard work promoting Canada's AI strategy.

Our government is committed to supporting research and innovation to grow our economy and improve the lives of Canadians. We are building on Canada's international leadership in artificial intelligence by investing \$125 million in a pan-Canadian strategy that is helping attract international investment, recruit and retain world-leading talent in Canada, and create new well-paying jobs for Canadians.

Centred around Canada's leading scientists who are working with industry partners and universities, our approach will help ensure all Canadians benefit from the exciting opportunities of this innovative sector.

* * *

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have been counting and it has been 25 months since the minister gutted the First Nations Financial Transparency Act. Band members continue to be forced to take their leadership to court to get access to basic financial information. The Liberals met for a year with the AFN, a year. Their so-called new fiscal framework does nothing to improve accountability for the vast majority of first nations.

When will the minister stop ignoring band members like Charmaine Stick, Harrison Thunderchild, and so many more, and actually come up with a plan?

Oral Questions

Hon. Jane Philpott (Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very delighted to answer this question. In fact, it gives me an opportunity to talk about a new fiscal relationship, a fiscal relationship that is based on the recognition of rights, that has a relationship with first nations, Inuit, and Métis people that is respectful. In fact, we are doing work through the Assembly of First Nations and through other groups to make sure that our new policies will be respectful, will help to build capacity for first nations, and will have reporting that is done in a respectful way to the appropriate people.

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EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Mr. Ron McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, because of climate change, weather-related natural disasters are becoming more severe, more frequent, and more expensive. At the same time as we take action to put a price on carbon and reduce greenhouse gas emissions, it is critical that we help communities become more resilient in the face of increased risks of flood, fire, and natural disasters.

Would the Minister of Public Safety tell us what the government is doing to help communities in B.C. become better prepared to deal with environmental challenges?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last week, we partnered with the Province of British Columbia to announce over \$10 million in funding for 30 projects under the national disaster mitigation program. These include flood mitigation infrastructure, flood mapping, and risk assessments to help communities prepare for the risks. We will continue working to help reduce the impacts of severe weather events, because prevention is always better, and always cheaper, than rebuilding afterward.

* * *

● (1200)

PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there are over one million Canadians with disabilities who have jobs and contribute to our economy, and 300,000 of them have severe disabilities. However, Stats Canada reports that tens of thousands of people with disabilities are effectively banned from working, because clawbacks and taxes make them poorer when they do.

My opportunity act would impose one simple rule that governments must respect: that workers with disabilities must always be able to gain more from wages than they lose to clawbacks and taxes. Does the government support that principle?

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, ensuring that people with disabilities and indeed all Canadians get the opportunity to succeed is a priority of our government. This is an important conversation, and I thank the member for raising it. We can always do better when it comes to championing disabled workers and ensuring that they get the benefits they deserve. Our government is committed to taking a holistic approach to ensure greater accessibility and opportunities for Canadians with disabilities in their communities and workplaces.

[Translation]

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals claim to champion the interests of francophones outside Quebec, but for decades they have been turning a blind eye to assimilation rates that grow higher with every census. The new president of the Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne has called for concrete action before March 31. He is asking for a minimum of \$575 million.

Will the government finally wake up? It is time to stop putting us to sleep with consultations and take action. Will he respond to the FCFA's demands before March 31?

Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage (Multiculturalism), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have heard everything that the FCFA has to say, and we are in the process of preparing an action plan, which we are going to implement. We will always stand up for our two official languages. For example, in the interim, we reinstated the Mobilité francophone immigration program. We appointed bilingual judges to the Supreme Court, and we reinstated the court challenges program. We have also reinstated post-secondary education in French at the military college in Saint-Jean. We are defending our linguistic communities, and we will always stand up for them.

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INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Simon Marcell (Mirabel, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on Wednesday, the House was unanimous in stating that there must be no breach in supply management as part of the new trans-Pacific partnership. No breach means no access. This motion just increased the government's negotiating power. They should be thanking me.

Has the government informed the 10 other countries of the House's unanimous will?

[English]

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the CPTPP gives farmers and ranchers across the country a great opportunity, and of course it would put dollars in their pockets. This government has supported, and will continue to support, the supply management system. It is the party that fought to put the system in place, and it is the government that will continue to defend it.

Routine Proceedings

[Translation]

TAXATION

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it must be exhausting to have Liberal ministers at odds with one another. On the one hand, the Minister of Revenue says that she is working very, very, very hard to combat tax havens while, on the other hand, the Minister of Finance continues to legalize new tax havens. With the addition of Grenada as well as Antigua and Barbuda, Canada is about to have 26 tax havens, which make it legal not to pay taxes.

Mr. Speaker, can the Minister of Revenue convince her finance colleague not to make these two new tax havens legal?

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government is firmly committed to combatting tax evasion and aggressive tax avoidance. That is why in our last two budgets we invested nearly \$1 billion in doing just that. I can say that the Canada Revenue Agency is now able to assess the risk of all large multinationals each year. Every year the agency reviews every transaction over \$10,000 in four regions that are deemed high-risk. The first two are the Isle of Man and Guernsey.

Tax cheats can no longer hide.

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, apparently the answer is no. As we all know, Grenada is a very special tax haven. Shell companies pay no tax, file no tax returns, and issue no annual reports.

What kind of information is the government hoping to get from Grenada? What the Minister of Finance really wants is more tax havens where nobody has to pay any tax. That is exactly what the government's explanatory memorandum says, and the same goes for the memo about Antigua and Barbuda.

Will the Minister of Finance do the right thing and not legalize these two tax havens?

• (1205)

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me be clear: fighting tax evasion and tax avoidance is a priority for our government. We are working closely with our international partners because this is a global problem with no simple solution, contrary to what my colleagues opposite seem to think.

We adhere to all provisions of the international standard for automatic exchange of information with OECD partners. Starting this year, we will have access to even more information supplied by our partners.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

PETITIONS

TROPICAL DISEASES

Mr. Raj Saini (Kitchener Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition signed by dozens of Canadian scientists, health researchers, and members of civil society who work in the little discussed field of neglected tropical diseases. These petitioners

are calling on the Government of Canada to join the global movement under way since 2012 to eliminate and control NTDs by signing the London Declaration on Neglected Tropical Diseases. The petitioners call on the Government of Canada to take a leadership role in reaching the 2020 control and elimination goals outlined in the declaration, thereby significantly improving the lives of millions of people worldwide.

CANADA SUMMER JOBS PROGRAM

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition signed by residents of the riding of Avalon, Newfoundland, regarding the current government's proposed attestation requiring Canada summer jobs program applicants to have the same views as the government, even though they are in contravention of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The petitioners call on the Prime Minister to defend the right of freedom of conscience, thought, and belief and to withdraw the attestation requirement for applicants to the Canada summer jobs program, due today.

ABANDONED VESSELS

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Mr. Speaker, to protect our coast and fill a big hole in federal leadership that has existed for decades, petitioners call on the government to deal with the long-standing problem of abandoned vessels, and in particular, to legislate improving vessel registration; to put a fee on vessel registration to deal with the cost of vessel disposal, to get the cost off the backs of taxpayers; and to pilot a vessel turn-in program. These are all elements of my bill, Bill C-352, which was blocked by the government. They are now being raised in testimony at the transport committee by repeated witnesses. It is very good reinforcement for the voices here from Prince Rupert, White Rock, Surrey, Delta, Abbotsford, Bella Coola, and Williams Lake, B.C.

PHYSICIAN-ASSISTED DYING

Mr. Brad Trost (Saskatoon—University, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a petition from people across Saskatchewan and Alberta who are troubled by discrimination against Christians. They call on the House to protect the conscience rights of doctors and nurses who refuse to participate in euthanasia, and they all call for a review of future legislation so that the constitutional rights of Christians are not violated.

HEALTH

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to present a petition from a constituent in my riding, along with 590 signatories, calling on the government to include registered respiratory therapists on the list of approved transnational visa medical and allied professionals. Due to labour shortages for respiratory therapists in both Canada and United States, both countries would benefit from the movement of skilled workers across our borders.

Speaker's Ruling

●(1210)

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise to table two petitions.

The first petition is signed by close to 700 individuals. The petitioners note that the outland spousal sponsorship process takes more than a year, even up to three years, while the application is stuck in security screening, despite the absence of a criminal record. The petitioners note that often CBSA is the area where the holdup is occurring and that there are no time limits on how long CBSA can delay an application. The petitioners are therefore calling on the government to give priority to outland spousal sponsorship cases in CBSA; to define a six-month time frame for security screening; and, if the security screening is taking more than six months, to, together with Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, issue a dual-intent visitor visa or super visa for the spouses.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is signed by dozens of young Canadians. They are calling on the government to take meaningful steps to support the future of young Canadians by fulfilling Canada's obligations under the Paris agreement by adopting a detailed climate action strategy that includes science-based targets for greenhouse gas reductions, with a plan to meet them, including, but not limited to, implementing comprehensive and steadily rising national carbon pricing beyond 2022 that rises to \$150 per tonne by 2030, and eliminating fossil fuel subsidies and redirecting those investments to renewable energy systems, energy efficiency, low-carbon transportation, and job training.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

REQUEST FOR EMERGENCY DEBATE

TRANS MOUNTAIN PIPELINE

The Deputy Speaker: The Chair has received notice of a request for an emergency debate from the hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the recent dispute between two provinces, British Columbia and Alberta, threatens the development of a project that is agreed, by many in the House of Commons, and indeed, all across Canada, to be of vital national interest, including by the current government.

The construction of new energy infrastructure is critical for economic growth and job creation, not just at the provincial level but at the national level. Materials, manufacturing, logistics, and labour

are all supported through the construction of these projects that are truly nation building.

[Translation]

The independent, scientific, evidence-based decision-making process that was used for the Trans Mountain exploration project clearly indicates that the pipeline can be expanded safely and securely. That means action is needed, not quarrels.

[English]

This dispute is making it harder to provide the regulatory certainty, predictability, and clarity that will ensure the viability of major projects like Trans Mountain now and well into the future. That is why the crisis we face as we stand here today is so urgent.

The Trans Mountain pipeline project is under serious threat as the dispute between British Columbia and Alberta continues to escalate. The situation threatens the jobs of thousands of Canadians across the country. There has been, so far, a complete lack of federal leadership to resolve this situation. That cannot continue.

[Translation]

We believe that the House of Commons needs to come together to discuss every possible solution the federal government could propose to end this crisis.

[English]

We are here in the House of Commons to find a solution to this roadblock. The Prime Minister is very good at words. He is making a lot of statements. However, this project was approved back in the fall, and to date, no action has been taken.

This emergency debate is vital today, because every day that goes by jeopardizes this project, and indeed, every energy project, as the Liberal government continues to add new hurdles and new barriers to development.

I understand that we have supply days next week, but as I mentioned, I hope you will find that this particular situation is very urgent and does meet the test in the Standing Orders.

SPEAKER'S RULING

The Deputy Speaker: I thank the hon. Leader of the Opposition for bringing this to the attention of the House. However, I am not persuaded that it actually meets the requirements of the Standing Orders, and the authorities and conventions that are set out, at this time. As the hon. Leader of the Opposition mentioned, there are other opportunities to bring this kind of matter before the House, and I urge him to look at those possibilities. Again, I thank him for raising the issue in the House for its consideration.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

•(1215)

[*Translation*]

CANADA ELECTIONS ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-50, An Act to amend the Canada Elections Act (political financing), be read the third time and passed.

The Deputy Speaker: When the House last took up the debate on the motion, the hon. member for Salaberry—Suroît had sixteen and a half minutes remaining in her speech.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Salaberry—Suroît.

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Salaberry—Suroît, NDP): Mr. Speaker, since we are still talking about Bill C-50, let us all agree on why we are here.

We are talking about this bill, the main goal of which is to restore the Liberals' reputation, which was tarnished by certain ministers and the Prime Minister. We are not talking about the Prime Minister's vacation to the Aga Khan's island. He was severely chastised by the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner recently for that. We are talking about political party financing.

As we all know, politics and the exercise of democracy requires funding. Funding is needed to run an election campaign. In order to raise that money, some members of the Liberal government sold privileged access. At what price? It seems that the maximum amount that can be donated to a federal party is \$1,500.

In May 2016, the Prime Minister went to the home of a wealthy businessman, where 32 guests paid \$1,500 each for exclusive access to the leader of the government.

We also learned that the Prime Minister was present at receptions hosted by the wealthiest people and business people at \$1,500 a plate, in order to meet people interested in the infrastructure bank. There were also Chinese nationals hoping to buy Canadian telecommunication companies in B.C. Other people had interests in cannabis, for example. All of these very influential people with a lot of money managed to land a private evening with the Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister cannot deny it. This has been made public, so Canadians would know, which put him in an awkward position, much like the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Justice.

If that does not constitute selling access to ministers or the Prime Minister, I do not know what does.

In October 2016, as I said, it was the Minister of Finance who was hosting a cocktail party at \$1,500 a plate with wealthy people from Bay Street. The Minister of Finance is supposed to be an arbiter and show fairness to all Canadians, since he regulates Canada's financial sector. However, he had no problem taking money from some of the world's wealthiest people.

The activities of the Minister of Justice have also been the subject of much discussion. What exactly is the problem? How is the Minister of Justice in conflict? Certain lawyers hoping for judgeships attended the Minister of Justice's fundraising events, which were

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held not in her riding, but in various places across the country. Since the minister is the one who approves judicial appointments, there is clearly a conflict of interest there.

Certainly political parties need to hold fundraisers to generate revenue and to have a platform for candidates' ideas during election campaigns. The problem is the lack of transparency with respect to who attends, what they talk about, and access to ministers.

“Open and Accountable Government” states the following:

There should be no preferential access to government, or appearance of preferential access, accorded to individuals or organizations because they have made financial contributions...

That is exactly what we are talking about today.

Let me be clear. Very few of our constituents, such as the people of Salaberry-Suroît, can afford to spend \$1,500 to attend a private event. When someone is prepared to do so, they obviously expect something in return. In the case at hand, it is the possibility of becoming known to a minister or getting one's name into an address book, which could help get an idea or a project off the ground. It goes without saying that there is always the possibility of putting a word in or making a recommendation to the right person.

The only way to make these events less secretive is to make them more transparent. To that end, we have to allow the media to publicly report on the goings on at these events and to name who was present. One might think that that is the goal of Bill C-50. However, as my colleague from Skeena—Bulkley Valley said, the Liberals invented the Laurier Club loophole.

•(1220)

In some cases, specifically during party conventions, people might donate the maximum amount of \$1,500 to the Liberal Party, but the names and addresses of those donors do not have to be made public. Under Bill C-50, every donation of \$200 or more will have to be recorded in a report sent within 30 days to Elections Canada, which could publish that report on the Internet. Again under Bill C-50, any fundraising activity that involves ministers, the Prime Minister, and party presidents has to be announced five days in advance, a measure we applaud. In fact, that is why we support this bill. However, that does not stop people from avoiding disclosure by buying a \$1,500 ticket under the pretext of attending a Liberal Party convention, for example.

This is just another bill that allows the Liberals to have it both ways. They claim to want to improve transparency, but with a bit of game-playing and an open back door they can continue to provide Liberal Party donors with a bit of discretion to ensure that they do not have to disclose their names and addresses, except in a final report at the end of the year. They also get to keep organizing questionable events providing special access to the Prime Minister and ministers.

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Is that loophole fair? Should it be removed? The NDP thinks so. We made this recommendation in committee and the Liberals rejected it outright. Every time we make a recommendation in committee, the Liberals take great delight in rejecting it. Why? If the recommendation improves a bill, if it improves transparency, if they are looking to be accountable to the public, and to be fairer, more equitable, and more ethical, why do they refuse to prohibit privileged access at conventions? No one knows. We suspect that the Liberals are not opposed to that revenue stream.

We are also asking that the Chief Electoral Officer be given investigative powers to ensure that political financing during elections is fair and equitable and that he has the public's trust. Once again, the Liberals rejected the NDP's recommendation out of hand. The NDP has made many recommendations in committee, but the Liberals have ignored them, even though that is part of the democratic process. What is the point of having committees if we cannot make sensible recommendations based on the advice of experts and common sense and if the Liberal majority, which refuses to listen to reason or to be open to other ideas, always prevails? What is the point of hearing from one witness after another, if in the end the government does not listen to any of their suggestions?

The Liberals are the champions of excessive consultation. They are doing the same thing to farmers. The Liberals keep saying that they want to know what to do to protect supply management and maintain family farms in Canada. They keep telling farmers that they are going to consult them and listen to them and that farmers are important, but when it comes right down to it, the Liberals are using farmers as a bargaining chip.

Getting back to the matter at hand and Bill C-50, it is the same thing. Once again, fair, sensible, and significant recommendations that would make Bill C-50 more than just a charade will not be acted upon because, unfortunately, the Liberals rejected them.

Bill C-50 still allows parties to hold fundraisers and makes it even harder to fight corruption. This is an opportunity to strengthen our democracy and prove to all Canadians that their elected representatives live up to moral and ethical standards, but that is not where the Liberals are going with this.

• (1225)

Clearly, the bill does not go far enough. There is an effort to be more transparent, but it still allows cash for access events to be held. Those kinds of events, which we oppose, have been making headlines for the past six months. They will stay in the headlines because certain parties will maintain this practice, as the Liberal Party is doing now.

I want to reiterate that this was a Liberal promise in 2015. This is a betrayal of the people who voted for the Prime Minister, who then decided to give up on the electoral reform that Canadians, especially young Canadians, so desperately want.

We are trying to get young people more involved in politics, not just as candidates, but more interested in political activities, in the debates, in social issues. We want young people to know what is going on, to propose ideas, and to become engaged.

There was one idea that really united young people, gave them hope, and might have won them over, but in the end, they were told

“never mind”; the old system was too advantageous for the Liberals, and our young people were robbed of that hope.

What effect will that have? Youth voter turnout has declined by 30% over the past 30 years and no one seems to mind. The Liberals do not seem to think it is important to remedy the situation. They are in power. They have a majority. That means that they are going to continue to dash the hopes of these young people who believed them. These young people will be told to have faith because there may still be some authentic people who keep their promises and bring integrity to politics. Nevertheless, with every broken promise, it becomes harder and harder to show people that there can still be honest politicians worthy of our trust.

Electoral reform was not just a simple election promise. It was a commitment made by the Prime Minister to everyone. Again, we are nowhere near it. The Prime Minister has done a complete about-face and left people with their shattered dreams of a better world.

It is 2018 and there is nothing left of the promise that brought the Prime Minister to power. He made people believe that legislators could not agree. However, as I mentioned, 90% of the people did agree. The Conservative Party, the NDP, the Bloc Québécois, the Green Party, everyone agreed that there was a need for electoral reform and that proportional representation had to be part of the next system. That was not enough for the Liberals.

Clearly, a mixed member proportional system resonated with MPs, Canadians, and experts alike. It would have given a voice to every Canadian.

For all these reasons, I find that Bill C-50 is poorly thought out. It does provide some additional transparency, but there is so much more to be done. The Liberals could have gone further. We hope that they will listen to reason and will be open to the NDP's recommendations and those of the other parties and the experts.

Under the bill, any party that does not follow the rules would be fined \$1,000. However, according to a former chief electoral officer, this fine would not deter parties from breaking the law. If donors can donate up to \$1,500, the parties are still making money and still manage to fill their coffers. It is not hard for them to pay a \$1,000 fine. That is ridiculous.

• (1230)

This really is a smokescreen. The Liberals are trying to restore their public image, but this is mostly fluff.

I think the Liberals should go back to the drawing board, improve this bill, and make it genuinely ethical and moral.

[*English*]

Mrs. Celina Caesar-Chavannes (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member seemed to focus quite a bit on the Liberals. This particular piece of legislation is focusing on all parties, making sure that we have openness and transparency across parties in terms of fundraising.

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Could the member share her thoughts on the legislation requiring political leaders, in particular, to have increased openness and transparency as related to their fundraising activities?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question. It is true that this bill affects all members of the House, including the Prime Minister, ministers, and party leaders.

However, if she agrees that we need to improve transparency, then why not give the Chief Electoral Officer investigative powers? Why is the Liberal Party continuing to allow members of the club to participate in convention events and give the maximum amount without having to disclose their name and address? That is allowed. In committee, we asked the Liberals to eliminate that loophole, but they refused. Are they really in favour of greater transparency if they continue to allow such privileged access to ministers and the Prime Minister at Laurier Club events, for example?

If the member really believes what she just said, then the answer should be no. However, the Liberals have said to leave that alone and not to give the Chief Electoral Officer investigative powers. What does that mean? It means that the Liberals can happily and shamelessly continue to hold this type of event.

I do not understand where the Liberals are going with this, unless their goal is to continue to be able to make money by giving the wealthy privileged access. Meanwhile, other people also have problems, but they have a hard time accessing services at the Canada Revenue Agency. Some people have problems related to the guaranteed income supplement, but it is very difficult for them to reach someone from the CRA on the phone. These people do not have \$1,500 to donate so that they can talk to someone who can help them. However, members of the Laurier Club have all kinds of money. They pay money to meet with ministers, the Prime Ministers, or party leaders because they can do so on the pretext of participating in a party convention. Is that ethical, fair, just, and transparent? Not at all.

[*English*]

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to hear my New Democratic colleague's views in this area. We all hear that our constituents, voters, Canadians want to see themselves reflected in the government, both in the seats that are here but also reflected in the outcomes of public consultations and public participation. I know that very active youth activists, especially, feel deeply betrayed by the government abandoning its promise, repeated 1,500 times, that it would make every vote count. It had broad public support, and the parliamentary committee made a lot of strong recommendations that the government totally ignored.

Bill C-50, for one, feels like a distraction from that broken promise on true democratic reform. As well, the Liberal government ignored the previous committee study, in the previous Parliament, that could have informed this work, and then also ignored the amendments that the NDP made at committee. It just did not even give them consideration.

How do these betrayals affect public support for the political process and for the democratic process? What is lost when those promises are broken?

● (1235)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach: Mr. Speaker, my colleague is absolutely right. Experts, young people, and Canadians in general see it as a betrayal, and it is making people even more cynical. I do not know how people can be even more cynical than they already are. Voter participation is already extremely low.

Why did the Liberals not keep that promise? The Liberals must have said it about 1,500 times before, during, and after the campaign: the 2015 election was supposed to be the last to use the first-past-the-post system. People have been calling for electoral reform for years. Scientific studies of the past 30 years have shown that our voting system needs to change if we want people to feel more engaged and involved, if we want them to feel that the system is fair, their vote counts, and their views will be heard and represented in the House of Commons.

They say that the Prime Minister earned the trust of young people. To do so, he repeated this election promise over and over, and then last year he turned his back on them. In a recent interview he did with the CBC at the Library of Parliament, he said that he had no plans for electoral reform, but that if people wanted to talk about a preferential system, he would be interested. Wow. Is that the electoral reform he had in mind a year or two ago? That is really not what Canadians expected from him.

The government spent money on consultations across Canada and created an all-party committee to consult the public and experts. In the end, 80% of Canadians were in favour of a system with a proportional component, and 90% of experts agreed that this was the direction we should take. The Prime Minister ultimately decided that this was not convincing enough.

What facts and studies is he looking at if 90% of experts and 80% of Canadians is not enough? Is he truly respecting Canadians' wishes? Is he truly representing the public? I do not think so. This means that he will decide, no matter what he hears. He used his veto. How democratic. Canadians are losing hope and losing confidence. This affects all of us as members of Parliament. It affects everyone who wants to get into politics. It is very sad.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her very pertinent remarks.

Last year, I sat on the Special Committee on Electoral Reform that travelled across Canada. I was one of the members who went to Canada's Far North. That is one of the great things I have done in the past two and a half years. No matter what happens, I am happy to have gone to Whitehorse and Yellowknife.

It is remarkable. We achieved unanimity among the opposition parties. Members of the Conservative Party, the NDP, the Green Party and the Bloc Québécois all wanted a referendum on electoral reform. It is important to point this out. We totally trusted Canadians to decide whether or not to move forward.

The Prime Minister realized that he was no longer in the driver's seat and decided to change his mind.

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I would like my colleague to comment on the fact that unanimity was reached by the opposition parties because we were willing to let the people decide in a referendum.

• (1240)

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach: Mr. Speaker, my colleague is absolutely right. When do we ever see all the opposition parties in the House of Commons agree on how to give a voice to Canadians? We can count on one hand the number of times the opposition parties have all agreed to give the public the opportunity to have a say.

The opposition parties represent 60% of public opinion because the Liberals were elected with only 40% of the vote, even though they have the majority in the House of Commons. That means that the Prime Minister deliberately chose to ignore 60% of Canadians when he changed course and said that he was no longer interested and that 90% of experts in committee did not manage to convince him.

The Liberals are washing their hands of all the work that was done in committee from coast to coast. They decided to conduct an informal online poll to see if people were still interested. However, nowhere were people directly asked whether the system should be reformed or which system they preferred. There were no clear questions. Everything was vague, but the Liberals boast about being responsible, ethical, and democratic in this process.

I do not understand. There is an immense gap between the Liberals' perception and the actual outcome of the consultations, like those conducted by my colleague from Louis-Saint-Laurent, I think, who just asked the question.

[*English*]

Mr. John Nater (Perth—Wellington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is always a pleasure to rise in the House. It is particularly an honour to rise on a Friday afternoon, when so many of my friends and colleagues have joined us in the House today to listen to my speech. It is always a great honour to have so many people tuning in.

It reminds me a bit of when I was a lecturer at King's University College at the Western University when so many people would turn up for my lectures on Canadian public administration. They were always hanging on every word, until I had to wake them up, and then realized they may not have been paying as much attention as I had thought.

However, it is a pleasure to speak today to Bill C-50. As a member of the procedure and House affairs committee, I am well-acquainted with the legislation, having heard from a number of witnesses and participated in the examination of this bill.

Bill C-50 is really about legitimizing the Liberal cash for access events. So often the Liberals try to tell Canadians that they are different, that they are not like those Liberals of the past anymore. The days of the sponsorship scandal and the Gomery commission, that is not them anymore. Those days are gone. The days of being entitled to their entitlements, those days are gone, as this is a different Liberal Party. The Prime Minister told Canadians, hand over heart, that the Liberal Party was different.

The Prime Minister, when he came to office, told Canadians:

There should be no preferential access to government, or appearance of preferential access, accorded to individuals or organizations because they have made financial contributions to politicians and political parties

However, shortly after the government was elected, that is exactly what happened. We saw a string of cash for access events. High-profile Liberal politicians hosted events where donors gave significant amounts of money to the Liberal Party. In exchange, these donors got private one-on-one access with senior Liberal ministers, senior Liberals ministers who many of those donors could potentially have business with the government and could potentially have business with these same ministers. Most Canadians know this is wrong. Most Canadians know that this is not an appropriate way for ministers of the crown, those who serve our country to operate. However, with the Liberals, old habits die hard.

We should not be too surprised when the Liberals formed government that these types of cash for access events would happen. After all, the Liberals learned from the best. The Ottawa Liberals learned from their Ontario counterparts. The Ottawa Liberals learned from Kathleen Wynne, Dalton McGuinty, and their great success with fundraising through cash for access events.

I want to quote from a *Globe and Mail* article of July 6, 2016. The title is, "An inside look at cash-for-access Ontario Liberal fundraisers". The article reads:

On the evening of March 2, 2015, Premier Kathleen Wynne gathered with eight guests who paid \$10,000 each for exclusive face-time. Three months earlier, 22 donors spent \$5,000 apiece to be entertained by Finance Minister Charles Sousa. Days later, eight people shelled out \$5,000 each to attend a reception with then-energy minister Bob Chiarelli.

These were just three of more than 150 intimate cash-for-access fundraisers the Ontario Liberal Party held in Ms. Wynne's first three years in power. At the events, contributors paid thousands of dollars each to bend the ears of the Premier and members of her cabinet privately, typically over cocktails and dinner at five-star hotels or high-end restaurants.

Therefore, the Ottawa Liberals had a great road map from their friends in Ontario.

What happened once the Liberals formed government? They quickly started implementing cash for access events.

Chinese billionaires have been attending Liberal fundraisers, even though they are not allowed to donate because they are not Canadian citizens. One of these individuals, Zhang Bin, who is also a Communist Party apparatchik, attended a May 19, 2016, fundraiser at the Toronto home of Chinese Business Chamber of Canada chairperson Benson Wong, according to the report in *The Globe and Mail*. A few weeks later, Mr. Zhang and a business partner donated \$200,000 to the Pierre Elliott Trudeau Foundation, and \$50,000 to build a statue of the current Prime Minister's father.

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•(1245)

On November 7, 2016, B.C. multi-millionaire Miaofei Pan hosted a fundraiser at his West Vancouver mansion. At this event, which was of course a pay-to-play event, Chinese investment, seniors care, and real estate developments were certainly topics of discussion. This event took place while the federal government was reviewing a \$1 billion bid by China's Anbang Insurance Group to buy one of British Columbia's largest retirement and nursing home chains.

In Toronto, another example of cash for access was an event with the justice minister that had a \$1,500 paycheque. This was again an event with a minister who could potentially be having dealings with these same donors.

When the Liberal Party promised real change, this was certainly not what Canadians were expecting. Canadians know this is wrong. Canadians know this type of cash for access event is not right. In fact, a 2016 Nanos Research survey showed that more than six in 10 Canadians disapprove of this type of event. They disapprove of political parties holding fundraising events in which access is sold to Canadians.

One has to wonder why the Liberals are so eager to raise money through cash for access events. One reason is that they are failing to raise money through other means. Time and again we see the Conservative Party raising more than the Liberal Party. Why does the Conservative Party raise more than the Liberals? It does so because of hard-working Canadians who feel the Conservative Party reflects their views. It does so because the Conservatives have a leader who is committed to Canadians, average Canadians, and not selling access, as our friends across the way have been doing since the beginning of their time in office.

Let us go back to what this bill is trying to do. It is trying to legitimize what the Liberals have been doing. Rather than simply stopping cash for access, they would rather print new rules just to legitimize what they are doing. However, they did not have to. They already have rules in place in their mandate letters and in the "Open and Accountable Government" document.

I will quote from the Minister of Democratic Institutions' mandate letter, but the words are reflected in all the mandate letters of ministers. The Prime Minister wrote the following to his Minister of Democratic Institutions:

...you must uphold the highest standards of honesty and impartiality, and both the performance of your official duties and the arrangement of your private affairs should bear the closest public scrutiny. This is an obligation that is not fully discharged by simply acting within the law.

The Prime Minister's own letter to his ministers clearly dictates that simply following the letter of the law is not enough. They have to appear to be fully above board. This was not happening with the Liberals' cash for access fundraisers, so they brought in this piece of legislation to try to legitimize them.

The Liberal government introduced its "Open and Accountable Government" document with great fanfare. This would be the road map for a new era of transparency for these Liberals. The opening clearly states, "Open and Accountable Government sets out core principles regarding the roles and responsibilities of Ministers in Canada's system of responsible parliamentary government."

What are some of those requirements? What are some of those issues ministers and parliamentary secretaries ought to follow? Annex B, "Fundraising and Dealing with Lobbyists: Best Practices for Ministers and Parliamentary Secretaries", states:

Ministers and Parliamentary Secretaries must avoid conflict of interest, the appearance of conflict of interest and situations that have the potential to involve conflicts of interest.

The best practices the Prime Minister lays out were not followed by his Liberals. They were not followed by his ministers, who felt the need to raise \$1,500 from donors who could have direct dealings with not only the government as whole but also with its individual departments. Under "General Principles" in annex B, it states:

Ministers and Parliamentary Secretaries must ensure that political fundraising activities or considerations do not affect, or appear to affect, the exercise of their official duties or the access of individuals or organizations to government.

•(1250)

It is not only following the letter of the law. It is the appearance. It is ensuring that all actions are above board and are able to have the closest degree of scrutiny to ensure that those who serve as ministers of the crown, those who serve our country in high office, are not tainted by even the appearance of conflict of interest.

I am reminded of a former minister in the Harper Conservative government. Once she became aware that there was a potential that those who lobbied and who worked with her department could be attending a fundraiser hosted by her riding association, that event was cancelled and all funds raised were immediately returned. Then we fast-forward to this government. Not only is the money not being returned, but the Liberals are doubling down on these events and they have introduced Bill C-50 to do so.

This bill has had great fanfare from pretty much only the Liberal Party. In testimony before the committee, almost all witnesses were very lukewarm in their excitement about this piece of legislation. They were very lukewarm in their response to an underwhelming bill being brought forward. It could be because this bill really does not do much at all.

In fact, the media knows this. Despite the advertising of these events, the way the media is actually treated at the events is far from ideal.

Let me read from an article in *The Hill Times* from June 21, 2017:

A Hill journalist is calling into question the Liberal Party's promise to make its fundraising events more open and transparent, after party staff restricted media access at a June 19 Ottawa event for the party's top donors.

Sure, the media can know about the events. They can even show up, as long as they stay in the corner and do not talk to anyone. The report goes on to state:

Reporters were ushered into one room for an RCMP sweep prior to speeches. They were told they were not allowed to mingle, but could talk to guests registering and entering the event in the foyer of the museum.

Government Orders

Even a Liberal Party candidate expressed concern about how the Liberals were treating journalists:

Allan Thompson, a journalism professor at Carleton University who ran for the Liberals in the riding of Huron–Bruce, Ont. during the 2015 election and attended Monday's event, said in an interview afterward that he had sympathy for the reporters who weren't allowed to mingle, especially because of his background as a former Hill reporter with The Toronto Star.

It is one thing to try to legitimize cash for access. It is another thing to blatantly use this as a ploy to keep the media away and to ensure that this is actually not opening up transparency at all, unlike the former Conservative government, which, on taking office in 2006, introduced Bill C-2, the strongest measures of accountability and transparency in our country. It was a bill that banned corporate and union donations, and put hard caps on the amount of money that could be donated to political parties. Unfortunately, the good work that was begun by the Conservative Party is now being used by the Liberals to initiate and to continue their cash for access events.

Of course, there are certain exceptions and exemptions to this bill. One such exemption is what I like to call the Laurier Club loophole. Yes, donor appreciation events are included under this legislation, except for when they occur at a party convention. A perfect example of this is the Liberal Party convention happening later this year. The Liberal Party's own website boasts about the benefits of being a Laurier Club member, which include invitations to "Laurier Club events across the country, hearing from leading voices on our Liberal team" and the "opportunity to meet a strong network of business and community leaders who share your commitment to Liberal values".

●(1255)

The Liberal Party is selling access through its Laurier Club. In fact, earlier this week, the chief of staff to the Minister of National Defence sent a tweet that said, "if there was a time to join Laurier Club, now is the time", of course, referring in advance to the Laurier Club event that would be held at the Liberal convention later this year. It is cash for access, but simply another way of doing it.

I find it interesting that when this legislation was tabled, we heard from certain witnesses in committee, and one of them was Canada's acting Chief Electoral Officer. It was interesting because the acting Chief Electoral Officer had a number of suggested amendments to this piece of legislation. Why should the Chief Electoral Officer have to encourage a committee to introduce amendments? Could it be that the Liberal government did not actually consult the Chief Electoral Officer before introducing this piece of legislation, and instead, had to rely on the committee to review to take into account some of his recommendations?

Let us talk about penalties in this act. Clause 11 of the bill states:

Section 500 of the Act is amended by adding the following after subsection (1):
Punishment — strict liability offences

(1.1) Every person who is guilty of an offence under section 497.01 is liable on summary conviction to a fine of not more than \$1,000.

That is one aspect of it. The other aspect is found in proposed section 384.4, which refers to the return of contributions. I find it interesting with these Liberals that if, in this situation, an event is held that does not comply with the new rules they are putting in place, the money has to be repaid, but what about an all-expense paid trip to the Aga Khan's private island? What about a trip in which the Ethics Commissioner found that the Prime Minister had

violated the ethics laws on four separate occasions? What about that situation?

No, these Liberals feel there is no need to repay money in that situation. There is no need for the Prime Minister to pay back \$200,000-plus that was expensed to Canadian taxpayers for an illegal and ethically challenged trip that the Prime Minister himself took. No, the Prime Minister does not feel the need to pay that back, because what is good for the goose is not good for the gander. This behaviour, by an elected member of the House, let alone the Prime Minister of this country, is unacceptable.

The bill is clear in what it intends to do. It intends to do nothing more than legitimize the cash for access schemes of the Liberal Party of Canada. Old habits die hard and with these Liberals, it is the same old Liberal Party.

●(1300)

Mr. Andy Fillmore (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague across the way for his work not only on this today but in the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, where we often get to work very productively.

The member opined on whether the government had engaged or consulted with the acting Chief Electoral Officer. I would like to read a quote that the acting CEO shared with the committee and Liberals when we did, in fact, consult with him. He stated:

There is also an important exception for party conventions, including leadership conventions.... The convention itself is exempted, but if there's a fundraiser that meets all the conditions within the convention, then that is caught by the new rules. Again, this reflects a concern to achieve a proper balance and I think it is wise.

Everyone who attends the convention in the first place will pay a fee and then that will be recorded because that is a political contribution. That is why he believes the correct balance has been struck by exempting events within the convention. I wonder if the member would care to characterize the weight or validity of the acting CEO's remark in this regard.

Mr. John Nater: Mr. Speaker, in almost any piece of legislation, there will be exemptions and exceptions, and important exemptions and exceptions under the law, but just because there are exceptions and exemptions does not mean it is open season for the Liberal Party to exploit those exemptions and exceptions. That is exactly what is being done by the Liberal Party. It is using every loophole, every exemption, every exception in the book to continue with its cash for access exercises.

Government Orders

It is using its pay-to-play fundraising to sell access to senior members with only one caveat, “Don't worry, we will report it.” It is already being reported. Any contribution over \$200 is reported. That information is already there. The Liberal Party is using this piece of legislation to legitimize what it is doing when it is selling access to its senior ministers. It is wrong, and Canadians know it is wrong.

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Perth—Wellington for his speech on Bill C-50, which is a bill, as he described, that arose because of the problem around the Liberal cash for access fundraisers.

I wonder if the member could comment on what the average Canadian might want the government to do to fix this problem. If we asked a reasonable person on the street, would they feel a whole lot better about these things if they had been invited? Would they feel a whole lot better if they found out a month from now who was there rather than a year from now? These people cannot afford \$1,500 to get this access.

Should the government make it illegal to have cash for access fundraisers? I wonder if the member could elaborate on that.

Mr. John Nater: Mr. Speaker, the member is right. What does the average Canadian think about the practices of the current Liberal government?

Most Canadians cannot afford a \$1,500 donation to the Liberal Party, let alone a \$200 donation. There should not be any preferential access to decision-makers because of how much one donates to the Liberal Party. In fact, as I mentioned earlier, the Open and Accountable Government document that the Liberal Party proclaimed with great fanfare clearly prohibits any preferential access, yet the Liberals have ignored it.

The average Canadian wants to see better from their decision-makers. The average Canadian wants to know that their members of Parliament, that their ministers of the crown, are not being unduly influenced by large donations to the Liberal Party of Canada simply for access to their ministers to bend their ears. Most Canadians cannot afford that opportunity, and neither should the wealthy few.

• (1305)

Mr. Francis Drouin (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that my colleague enjoys comparing the Liberal record with the Conservative record. I appreciate the Conservative Party's newfound vision of respecting taxpayers' dollars and asking that it be paid back. However, I recall that, a few years ago, the Conservatives seemed to be on fishing trips often, and the former national defence minister, Peter MacKay, took a helicopter illegally. I do not recall him signing a cheque to the Government of Canada, but that is beside the fact.

There is one thing that the Liberals do not do. We do not appoint senators to help gratify our party coffers. I will read this quote. It says, “It soon became clear that Stephen Harper had not chosen Mike Duffy merely to speechify in the Red Chamber.” He was known to go across the country on the taxpayers' dime and fundraise for the Conservative Party. No senators currently are doing any fundraising in the chamber for the Liberal Party. I am not sure if it is quite the same thing for the Conservatives.

The member mentioned Bill C-2 and the Federal Accountability Act. We would take that one step further and ask party leaders and those obtaining the nomination to immediately publish the list of names of those who attended a fundraiser. To this date, the Conservative Party has chosen not to do that. We have proactively done this, yet the Conservative Party refuses to do that unless it becomes law.

I am just wondering where the transparency is in the Conservative Party.

Mr. John Nater: Mr. Speaker, the member wants to talk about appointments, so I will talk about appointments. I will talk about Madeleine Meilleur.

I had the great pleasure of sitting on the official languages committee when Madeleine Meilleur was appointed as official languages commissioner for Canada. This is a woman who paid \$5,000 in donations to the Liberal Party. She directly contributed to the Prime Minister's own leadership campaign. Only weeks before she was officially nominated, she was a card-carrying member of the Liberal Party of Canada. She was told she was being appointed before the official opposition and the third party were even consulted.

This is the nomination process that the current Liberal government undertook for nominating an officer of this place. She was a partisan Liberal donor and an individual who, just a year prior, was a sitting Liberal cabinet minister. This is the type of appointment we are seeing from the Liberal Party, an unfair appointment and reward for being a long-time Liberal donor and a long-time Liberal.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, indeed, the Liberals have some nerve talking about partisan appointments, when they themselves decided to give someone such an appointment because she could not be appointed to the Senate. She probably was angry and upset, so they gave her a consolation prize. That appointment was supposedly non-partisan. It was despicable.

My colleague mentioned the sponsorship scandal. I would like to hear his thoughts on the Liberal sponsorship scandal that happened 10 years ago and on the dangers that could play out over the next few years with respect to the legal sale of marijuana. We know there are dozens and dozens of influential, well-entrenched Liberals who have their tentacles in everything.

Mr. John Nater: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague, the hon. member for Louis-Saint-Laurent, for his excellent question. Indeed, I have serious concerns regarding the Liberal Party's ideas about marijuana.

[*English*]

I am very concerned about the direction in which the Liberal Party is going with the marijuana proposals. The member for Louis-Saint-Laurent is absolutely right. Is this going to be another proposal, another way in which Liberal Party members and past ministers are getting rich off the legalization of marijuana? It is a worthy question and the Liberals owe Canadians a response to that.

• (1310)

The Deputy Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

Private Members' Business

Some hon. members: Question.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

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

And five or more members having risen:

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 45 the recorded division stands deferred until Monday, February 12, at the ordinary hour of daily adjournment.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if you seek it, I think you would likely find unanimous consent for the following. I move:

That, notwithstanding any Standing Order or usual practice of the House, that the recorded division on third reading of Bill C-50, an act to amend the Canada Elections Act, be further deferred until the expiry of the time provided for oral questions on Tuesday, February 13, 2018.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader have the unanimous consent of the House to propose this motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Deputy 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)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I suspect you would likely find unanimous support to see the clock at 1:30 p.m. so that we could begin private members' hour.

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: The House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's Order Paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[*Translation*]

PREVENTION OF RADICALIZATION THROUGH FOREIGN FUNDING ACT

The House resumed from November 29, 2017, consideration of the motion that Bill C-371, An Act respecting the prevention of

radicalization through foreign funding and making related amendments to the Income Tax Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Francis Drouin (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to take part in this debate. As we continue to read Bill C-371, I would like to say that I support the purpose of the bill and the ideas that inspired it.

Curbing or preventing the flow of money that supports terrorism is one of the government's key concerns. Bill C-371 seeks to prevent the flow into Canada of foreign funds donated by sources who have been associated with radicalization. During our last debate, several hon. members pointed out that there was some overlap in the bill that conflicts with mechanisms that are already in place in Canada.

The bill also has significant flaws that would be hard to overcome. For example, under Bill C-371 some charitable organizations might be unduly penalized. This would prevent religious, cultural, or educational institutions in Canada from accepting money or goods from sources affiliated with the countries on the list, including senior officials, family members, or partners. Accepting donations from these individuals would become a crime.

The problem is that there would be no list of individuals barred from donating. Charities would have to do thorough background checks on everyone who offers them a cheque, and could face criminal penalties if they fail to do so. The due diligence required would be excessively complex and would require investigative capacity well beyond that available to most charities. Furthermore, the government would probably not be able to enforce the prohibitions in the bill because they are too vague and general. For example, people associated with the countries on the list would not be on the list.

Moreover, the bill is incompatible with government policies on radicalization that leads to violence. The fact is that existing laws and initiatives already fulfill the stated purpose of this bill. I would like to point out that the government is already taking concrete, effective measures to fight terrorism and radicalization leading to violence in Canada. Canada has a robust set of tools to protect Canadians and registered charities from the risk of terrorism and its deplorable acts. One of those tools is the terrorist listing regime in the Criminal Code.

As soon as an entity is added to that list, banks and financial institutions can freeze its assets. In fact, being added to the list can also lead to the criminalization of all support activities to help stop potential sympathizers in Canada from providing any financial assistance to terrorist groups. The Proceeds of Crime (Money Laundering) and Terrorist Financing Act resulted in the creation of the Financial Transactions and Reports Analysis Centre of Canada, or FINTRAC, which oversees the financial system and gathers information to support investigations into terrorist financing.

FINTRAC is also supposed to hand over to the Canada Revenue Agency any financial information it has regarding charitable organizations suspected of being linked to terrorist financing. In addition, the State Immunity Act includes a list of foreign countries that support terrorism. The act makes it possible for victims of terrorism to seek justice from the countries on the list.

Private Members' Business

Bill C-371 states that anti-terrorism efforts should include charities. Once again, we already have effective mechanisms to do so. The Canada Revenue Agency already monitors registered charities to ensure that they remain focused on their stated charitable goals. Under the current rules, any charity using its resources to support terrorist activities, radicalization to violence, or incitement to hatred would be denied registered charity status or could have this status revoked.

The government also has measures in place to denounce and combat religious persecution, torture, and other human rights violations.

● (1315)

For example, some provisions of the new Justice for Victims of Corrupt Foreign Officials Act make it possible to freeze the assets of those responsible for serious human rights violations.

There are apparently several measures already in place that can achieve the objectives of Bill C-371 without making legitimate charitable organizations liable to penalties. Consequently, despite the bill's good intentions, I cannot support it because of the overlaps and shortcomings in the bill.

Of course we all want to fight terrorism and extremism. That is why, for example, the government established the Canada Centre for Community Engagement and Prevention of Violence to fight the radicalization of young Canadians. In budget 2016, the government allocated funding of \$35 million over five years for the work of the Canadian centre. The centre provides national leadership to support local efforts. It makes all the difference.

Communities across the country receive assistance through effective, innovative programs to combat radicalization leading to violence. This assistance often brings together law enforcement authorities, communities, and service providers. Furthermore, our security and intelligence agencies also have access to a series of prevention measures to help them monitor and intercept threats, maintain a no-fly list, refuse or revoke a passport, maintain public order, and lay criminal charges if there is sufficient evidence.

The government also introduced Bill C-59, which will increase accountability and effectiveness in Canada's national security framework. This bill was introduced in response to Canada's largest-ever national security consultation.

I know that all hon. members are united in the resolve to combat extremism, prevent terrorist violence, and bring perpetrators of such acts to justice. Unfortunately, Bill C-371 will not be an effective tool to help us achieve this common goal. I am sorry that I cannot support it, but I look forward to working with the member for Parry Sound—Muskoka and all hon. members to ensure that Canadians are as safe as possible and can live free from all forms of extremism and violence.

● (1320)

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech. However, there is something that I need to tell him. Right now, the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security is studying Bill C-59. As part of that study, we noticed that there is a gap in Bill C-59, and that could be filled by Bill C-371, which was

introduced by my colleague from Parry Sound—Muskoka. It would be nice if my colleague were listening to me, but that is fine.

Today, I am pleased to rise in the House to support my colleague's bill, Bill C-371. I think it is an essential tool for combatting terrorism in Canada. As proposed, the bill would give the government the ability to establish, based on the recommendations of the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, a list of foreign states, individuals, and entities that suppress religious freedom, sentence individuals to punishment based on their religious beliefs, and engage in or support activities that promote radicalization.

This bill deals with what is known as the covert means by which money is paid to Canadian organizations and institutions that support radicalization. It would make it possible to prevent an individual, entity, or foreign state that supports, promotes, or is associated with radicalization from funding an institution through donations or gifts.

This bill is very important because the Liberals prove to us almost every day that they do not fully understand the very clear danger we are facing.

For example, all Canadians in every region of the country heard the Prime Minister say that the Islamic State jihadis can have an extraordinarily powerful voice in Canada.

It is incredible that a prime minister would make such a comment. Not only is it absurd, but it is completely irresponsible.

Many of these people have returned to Canada with terrorist training, which is based on hatred for everything that is contrary to their views. These terrorists have committed unthinkable acts of violence. They have shot homosexuals, raped women and young girls, and killed Christians, Jews, and members of other faiths.

Today, the Prime Minister not only believes that these animals can be integrated into our society, but that they can be a powerful voice. Does the Prime Minister mean that they are a powerful voice for radicalization? Does he perhaps mean that they are a powerful voice for turning back the clock on women's rights? Is the Prime Minister aware of the real danger that these people represent? Does the Prime Minister keep an eye on the news about terrorist attacks in other countries? I am not so sure.

Another example is that the Prime Minister reached a settlement agreement with a terrorist, but he is dragging our veterans, those who fought to protect Canadians, through the courts. Clearly, the Prime Minister lacks judgment. He does not have his priorities straight.

Bill C-371 is important because we know that there have been relatively few charges, prosecutions, or convictions of people who have taken part in or provided material support to the jihadi movement.

Private Members' Business

We are concerned about the failure to prosecute when it comes to terrorist financing.

We learned that between 2009 and 2014, the Financial Transactions and Reports Analysis Centre of Canada identified 683 cases of terrorist financing, and that no legal action was taken under the relevant sections of the Criminal Code. The terrorist threat to the security of Canada has increased significantly.

In recent decades, a number of Canadians have been convicted in court for planning multi-target, mass-casualty strikes in this country. Threats have been forthcoming from Canadians who have joined terrorists hostile to Canada and its allies. We know that more than 80 Canadians have returned to Canada after participating with Islamist fundamentalist groups. Many of these people return with terrorist training, combat experience and may therefore pose a security risk to Canada. There have been relatively few charges, prosecutions, or convictions for participating in or providing material support to the jihadist movement.

Similarly, with the exception of the 2010 conviction of Prapaharan Thambithurai, who was charged with raising money for the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, there have been no charges in the area of supporting listed terrorist entities like the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, Hamas, Hezbollah, or the Islamic Relief Fund for the Needy and Afflicted.

Calgary imam Syed Soharwardy, as well as other witnesses, advised the Standing Senate Committee on National Security and Defence that extremist jihadist ideology is being spread at schools and universities in Canada, often under the guise of academic freedom and away from the eyes of CSIS.

• (1325)

The person who told us that is an imam. Specifically, he said this:

The money comes in different ways, in secret ways. Money comes through institutions. There are two organizations in Canada. Basically they are U.S. organizations that are operating in Canada. One is called AlMaghrib Institute, the other is called AlKauthar Institute. Both work in universities, not in mosques. Both give lectures. Both organize seminars. They are the ones who brainwash these young kids in lectures.

That is what the Calgary imam told the Standing Senate Committee on National Security and Defence. I did not make that up. When Shahina Siddiqui of the Islamic Social Services Association appeared before the same committee in 2015, she said this:

I can tell you that my own organization was offered \$3 million. We refused, even though I had not a penny in my account at that time, when I started the organization, because this is a Canadian organization, and we don't need funding from anywhere else.

The same thing with our mosques in Manitoba. We were offered money from Libya when we made our first mosque. We refused it.

Did some mosques accept money from overseas because it was legal to do so? If we want to curtail that practice, we have to make it illegal, not just for Muslims but for all groups. One person said no. M. Siddiqui from Islamic Social Services said that he refused money. He was offered \$3 million from Libya. He knew it was irregular. There was nothing stopping him from accepting that money. That is what is meant by secret ways. That money could have come in through the back door and, if these people were not honest, they could have had that money. There is no way to control that.

Richard Fadden, former director of CSIS and national security advisor to former prime minister Harper and to the current Prime Minister during the first few months of his mandate, confirmed that there are concerns about foreign financing of Canadian religious and quasi-religious institutions. The danger is real. This bill would serve as another tool to counter those who hate our society. As I said earlier, Bill C-59 is a massive, 140-page document that includes a lot of things. However, ever since the committee started hearing from witnesses, we have seen that this bill is flawed. I mentioned to my colleagues that Bill C-371 would address the gaps in Bill C-59. Despite the government's claims, I think that passing this bill would be very appropriate.

[English]

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to Bill C-371, the prevention of radicalization through foreign funding act, introduced by my colleague from Parry Sound—Muskoka.

Organized criminal and terrorist networks are constantly evolving to find new ways to finance their crimes. New opportunities for criminal networks to exploit things like funding chains and programs offered through non-governmental organizations are constantly surfacing and it is our job as legislators not only to recognize this pattern but to shut them down. Today I would like to talk about some of the gaps in our current law and what it means for Canadians and why I think this bill is a step in the right direction.

There are numerous scenarios that currently allow terrorist organizations to infiltrate Canadian networks. These are often wealthy foreign influencers who funnel funds from their propaganda machines into Canadian charities and institutions. Imam Syed Soharwardy told the Standing Senate Committee on National Security and Defence that this problem has been largely ignored, stating:

The money comes in different ways, in secret ways. Money comes through institutions. There are two organizations in Canada. Basically they are U.S. organizations that are operating in Canada. One is called AlMaghrib Institute, the other is called AlKauthar Institute. Both work in universities, not in mosques. Both give lectures. Both organize seminars. They are the ones who brainwash these young kids in lectures.

These are not amateur actors. They know where to find impressionable kids and how to pull them in using complex programs for recruitment through Canadian institutions like those based in education and faith. Richard Fadden, national security adviser to our ex-PM, and a former director of CSIS, explained that a major difficulty for managing this crisis in oversight is that money is coming from individuals and NGOs and not just foreign governments, which makes it more difficult to track. We know that between 2009 and 2014, the Financial Transactions and Reports Analysis Centre of Canada identified 683 terrorist financing incidences, and yet we have not prosecuted any of these. Listed entities noted as operating are the Tamil Tigers, Hamas, and Hezbollah. A colleague on the Liberal side stated that there is no real need for improvement right now. However, there has not been a single charge in the 683 incidences of money coming in to terrorist organizations. It is clear the government does not take this issue seriously.

What happens when the funding network goes unchallenged or unchecked, and what does it mean for radicalization? Groups like Hamas, Hezbollah, al Qaeda, and Daesh have developed complex campaigns that seek out gullible audiences around the world, and any funding that these organizations get, whether through criminal activity or collusion with foreign governments, goes toward growing their network, enhancing their capabilities, and spreading their message to indoctrinate people beyond their borders.

Let us be clear here. Canada has been directly threatened by terrorist groups. Calls to action from these groups for domestic fighters have been made. These groups have a vested interest in using the funds they make and collect abroad for international recruitment because their existence goes as far as their message will carry it. Daesh alone has the participation of over 100 Canadians so far that we know of, and with the advancement of digital communication and the increasing use of the Internet, that number will continue to grow. A *National Post* story cited in the Senate committee report stated that it takes about 30 seconds to create a Twitter account and connect to somebody in Syria and then Facebook's algorithm suggests similar sites and friends with the same interests. These connections are used to establish contacts, create shell organizations, and nurture relationships with newly radicalized groups. Because this funding is being funnelled into existing local institutions, they can recruit en masse, making it a much more lucrative investment for time and resources.

This bill seeks to apply a framework that stops this from happening by setting out a schedule of foreign states and, by extension, for individuals and entities that suppress religious freedom, impose punishments for religious beliefs, or have engaged in or facilitated activities that promote radicalization. As an added protection, there is a built-in review and appeal process that ensures accountability and transparency throughout the process of assessment. This spurs a further need with regard to foreign funding and especially why we are not doing more to enhance transparency and accountability in funding that Canada looks after and puts toward incoming and outgoing funds from Canada.

• (1330)

The most glaring example right now was the Liberals' decision to return funding to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency, an organization that is known to be infiltrated and used by Hamas.

Private Members' Business

UNRWA, while operating as a non-governmental organization, has provided facilities directly to terrorist organizations that commit crimes against children, women, and the population as a whole. It even allows Hamas to build tunnels underneath schools for launching rockets at Israel. I have to ask why this is right. Why are Canadian taxpayers funding an organization that is contributing to violence against innocent people?

Let us talk about the main source of illicit funding coming into Canada and across the world: Saudi Arabia.

The following is from a Robert Fife article on the Saudis. It reports on a task force report on terrorist financing by the Council on Foreign Relations, which included former White House counter-terrorist czar Richard Clarke and David Cohen, the CIA's former director of operations.

...Saudi Arabia is funding radical Islamic extremism in...Canada, where the Saudis have contributed millions of dollars to a mysterious...centre in Toronto....

"Saudi Arabia funds the global propagation of Wahabism, a brand of Islam that, in some instances, supports militancy by encouraging divisiveness and violent acts against Muslims and non-Muslims," the report said.

"This massive spending is helping to create the next generation of terrorists and therefore constitutes a paramount strategic threat to the United States" [and other neighbouring countries].

Saudi Arabia has spent hundreds of millions of dollars...around the world, including in Canada.

The article goes on to cite an official Saudi report that stated that the Saudis have donated millions in Canada, including for the Salaheddin centre, which runs "a mosque and private elementary school where the Khadr family and other...radicals linked to [Al Qaeda] belong, and where the organization's website preaches against Jews and Christians."

Here is a delightful statement from that website, which is funded with help from the Saudis:

Why do we hate the Jews? We hate them for the sake of our Lord, we hate them for the sake of Allaah because they slandered Allaah and they killed and slandered His Prophets.

Here we have Saudi funding coming into Canada promoting hate.

I want to chat more about the Saudis for a moment. Saudi attacks in Yemen have led to over 4,000 civilian casualties, hitting homes, hospitals, and schools as well as civilian factories, warehouses, and other protected sites. Its forces have admitted using banned cluster munitions.

Saudi law allows flogging, stoning, executions, and brutal jail time for supporting demonstrations or for merely harming the reputation of the kingdom. Women must obtain permission from a male guardian to marry, divorce, travel, get a job, or have elective surgery or any other health care treatment.

Private Members' Business

Here we have Saudi groups poisoning minds in Canada and around the world, and the response from the Liberal government is to happily bring in blood oil on the east coast of Canada at the same time it shuns Alberta oil by killing off energy east.

More than 122,000 oil workers have been without jobs in Alberta since the price of oil collapsed, and Alberta's unemployment rate sits at a 22-year high, yet here we are knocking on Saudi Arabia's door for access to a resource we have plenty of at home.

Why are we pouring funds into countries that act in direct violation of rights we strive to uphold and that commit violence and discriminatory practices against women, minority groups, the LGBT community, and all demographic groups the Liberal government claims to support? I suppose saying that we are promoting human rights is easier than actually promoting them, yet here we are.

We need to preserve the integrity of our local institutions, such as our churches, our mosques, and our schools, and ensure that they and the people who rely on them are protected. We need to cut off this funding at the head. We know it is happening. We know who is doing it. We are not doing anything to stop it.

The bill is an essential way for governments to ensure that radical groups are not able to use local and domestic institutions as a means of growing their networks and committing atrocities around the world.

We need to ensure accountability and fiscal transparency in the foreign funding coming into Canadian schools and places of worship.

I thank my hon. colleague for bringing this private member's bill forward, and I will proudly support it.

● (1335)

[*Translation*]

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

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

And five or more members having risen:

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 93, the recorded division stands deferred until Wednesday, February 14, immediately before the time provided for private members' business.

It being 1:34 p.m., the House stands adjourned until next Monday, at 11 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 1:40 p.m.)

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