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(HANSARD)

Tuesday, February 7, 2017

Speaker: The Honourable Geoff Regan

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, February 7, 2017

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1000)

[*English*]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Hon. Andrew Leslie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs (Canada-U.S. Relations), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Minister of Foreign Affairs and pursuant to Standing Order 32(2), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the treaty entitled “Strategic Partnership Agreement between Canada, of the One Part, and the European Union and its Member States, of the Other Part”, done at Brussels on October 30, 2016. An explanatory memorandum is included with this treaty.

* * *

[*Translation*]

RIGHT TO KNOW ACT

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-336, An Act regarding the right to know when products contain toxic substances.

He said: Mr. Speaker, Canadians have the right to know if the everyday products they buy for themselves, their families, and their homes could harm their health or the environment. That is why I am introducing the right to know act.

[*English*]

Protection begins with knowledge, and this is why I am tabling a bill that should provide consumers with the right to access that information, the right to know act. This bill would require that all products, especially foods, household cleaners, and cosmetics, carry clearly marked labels specifying their toxic contents.

Environmental Defence and others support the objectives of this bill. I hope that all members of Parliament will support this important legislation.

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

PETITIONS

SMALL BUSINESS

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition signed by campers who stayed at the Elm River RV Park in Glenholme, Nova Scotia, located in the riding of Cumberland—Colchester. The petitioners call on the government to ensure that campgrounds with fewer than five full-time employees continue to be recognized and taxed as small businesses.

FOOD WASTE

Mr. Wayne Stetski (Kootenay—Columbia, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to present a petition on behalf of my constituents from Revelstoke, who really are leaders in preventing food waste. This petition asks that we declare October 20 of each year to be national food waste awareness day; determine solutions to food waste through a national awareness campaign; make it easier for businesses to donate unsold food products; and reduce the environmental impact of producing food that is not consumed by encouraging more sustainable food production methods.

• (1005)

THE ENVIRONMENT

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

The first is from residents of the Lower Mainland of British Columbia, pointing to the very significant risk of tankers carrying bitumen mixed with diluent. It is a substance that science says cannot be cleaned up. The petitioners call for a permanent tanker ban on not just the northern coast of B.C. but the whole west coast of B.C.

INSECTICIDES

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition relates to the ongoing threat to pollinators, particularly from neonicotinoid insecticides. The petitioners are from Victoria, B.C., and a large number are from the Montreal area.

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present two petitions from my constituents in Victoria this morning.

Government Orders

The first calls on the government to meet the target set more than four decades ago and increase Canada's official development assistance to 0.7% of GDP over the next three years.

GOVERNMENT PRIORITIES

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition calls on the government to acknowledge the security challenges posed by climate change and poverty and to shift spending away from military defence and toward environmental and social priorities, including poverty elimination and greenhouse gas reduction.

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QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if Questions No. 648, 706, and 735, originally tabled on January 30, 2017, could be made orders for returns, these returns would be tabled immediately.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Text]

Question No. 648—**Mr. Bob Saroya:**

With regard to appointments to federal boards, agencies, and associations since November 4, 2015, for each appointment: what is the name, province, and position of the appointee?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 706—**Mr. Bob Zimmer:**

With regard to materials prepared for Ministers since May 4, 2016: for every briefing document, memorandum or docket prepared, what is (i) the date, (ii) the title or subject matter, (iii) the department's internal tracking number, (iv) the recipient?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 735—**Mr. Tom Lukiwski:**

With regard to government expenditures on travel by non-public servants (Financial Object Code 026), broken down by department and agency, since November 4, 2015: (a) what is the total amount spent; (b) what is the total amount spent which was approved by a Minister or exempt staff member; (c) what are the details of each expenditure related to (b), including the (i) date, (ii) travellers, (iii) origin, (iv) destination, (v) total cost of trip, (vi) itemized breakdown of costs; and (d) what are the details of each individual expenditure made by the either the Privy Council Office or Prime Minister's Office, including (i) date, (ii) traveller, (iii) origin, (iv) destination, (v) total cost of trip, (vi) itemized breakdown of costs?

(Return tabled)

[English]

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

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

The Speaker: The Chair would like to take a moment to provide some information to the House regarding the management of private members' business.

[Translation]

As members know, after the order of precedence is replenished, the Chair reviews the new items so as to alert the House to bills which at first glance appear to infringe on the financial prerogative of the Crown. This allows members the opportunity to intervene in a timely fashion to present their views about the need for those bills to be accompanied by a royal recommendation.

[English]

Accordingly, following the December 6, 2016, replenishment of the order of precedence with 15 new items, I wish to inform the House that there are two bills that give the Chair some concern as to the spending provisions they contemplate.

They are Bill C-322, an act to amend the Railway Safety Act with respect to road crossings, standing in the name of the member for Laurier—Sainte-Marie; and Bill C-308, an act to provide for the incorporation of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation and to make consequential amendments to other acts, standing in the name of the member for Saskatoon—University.

I encourage hon. members who would like to make arguments regarding the need for royal recommendations to accompany these bills, or any of the other bills now on the order of precedence, to do so at an early opportunity.

[Translation]

I thank honourable members for their attention.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[Translation]

STATISTICS ACT

The House resumed from January 30 consideration of the motion that Bill C-36, An Act to amend the Statistics Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as an economist by training, it is my pleasure to speak to Bill C-36, which deals with amendments to the Statistics Act and of course pertains to the operations of Statistics Canada.

This House will recall that, when the Conservatives were in power, the decision to eliminate the long-form census provoked quite a public outcry, which came from nearly every sector of civil society. The scientific community was particularly vocal, including social scientists and economists in general.

Eliminating the long-form census created problems with respect to the analysis of demographic data. Even though the long-form census is being restored, the disruption means that, ultimately, vital information will not be available to study societal changes.

Just as we had done during the election campaign, the Liberals also promised to bring back the long-form census. We have to credit them for that. They have done so, and we must thank them for that, at least. The scientific community is also very grateful.

Government Orders

However, this bill is not about the long-form census as such. According to the Liberal government, this bill seeks to strengthen the independence of Statistics Canada, and make changes and modernize it. We will not oppose the measures that are included in the bill. They are good. Unfortunately, they do only half of what was promised during the election campaign. Hon. members will certainly remember that during the election campaign the Liberal Party promised to give Statistics Canada full independence.

When the then Conservative government cancelled the long-form census, the chief statistician resigned in protest of this interference. In September, many Canadians were surprised to see his successor, Wayne Smith, also resign, this time over the Liberal government's decision to force Statistics Canada to use Shared Services Canada's information technology services.

The government did not waver despite the fact that for three months there were intense discussions between the government, Shared Services, and Statistics Canada. During those discussions, Statistics Canada clearly demonstrated that being forced to use the agency's IT services would compromise not only its independence, but also the efficiency of data collection.

Although the bill makes public the cabinet decisions or ministerial orders that the statistician is opposed to and removes the possibility of imprisonment for those who refuse to fill out the mandatory survey, it still falls short. It does not make Statistics Canada independent, particularly when it comes to the process for selecting the chief statistician. In that regard, I would like to point out the work that has been done by my colleague from Windsor West, who introduced a bill to address that issue.

The bill also does not make it mandatory to complete the long-form census; does not make it possible to modernize the Statistics Act so that information can be better disseminated to the public; and does not, as I mentioned, do anything to prevent the interference of Shared Services Canada, which compromises Statistics Canada's independence and is the reason why Wayne Smith resigned.

In September 2016, *La Presse* published an interview with the chief statistician, which clearly demonstrates the importance of this issue. The article states that:

In a June report [so three months before the chief statistician resigned] obtained by the Canadian Press under the Access to Information Act, the [National Statistics] Council wrote that the Liberals' intent to have Statistics Canada find new ways of collecting, analyzing, and disseminating data was inconsistent with their insistence that the federal agency use the new centralized platform...

On one hand, the Liberal government is asking Statistics Canada to do a better job of collecting the data it needs to better inform the public, as well as the federal and provincial governments, on what measures ought to be taken. On the other hand, the Liberal government is trying to force Statistics Canada to use the Shared Services Canada computer system, which will prevent Statistics Canada from doing what the government asked it to do in the first place.

• (1010)

[English]

If there is one element that needs to be included in Bill C-36, it is independence and the ability of Statistics Canada to make its own decisions, because it knows best what it actually needs, in terms of

data collection, to report and to inform the population better, and not only the population, but all levels of government.

Did the government actually listen to the chief statistician? Of course not. That is why he resigned.

We have, at this point, a process to replace him. He was actually replaced by his assistant, but to fully replace him, we have a process that still involves the government, so it is still not independent and autonomous. This means, by extension, that the process remains politicized.

• (1015)

[Translation]

Given all the upheaval that Statistics Canada has gone through since 2011 or 2012, the government should have addressed directly the serious promise it made during the election campaign. It was to make Statistics Canada fully and not just partly independent, give it a few more powers, and provide direction for the rest.

The Liberals promised to make Statistics Canada fully independent. Bill C-36 does not do that and the government has not yet indicated that it is willing to do it after this bill is passed.

I would like the various Liberal members to tell us, in their speeches, what the government intends to do with Statistics Canada. This is a fundamental issue that affects the fabric of our society.

[English]

As I said before, I would like to commend the member for Windsor West, who has presented a bill that would address the issue of the selection of the chief statistician at Statistics Canada. The reason he did so is that he felt there was reluctance by the government to abandon some of the powers it currently has over a service that is traditionally viewed as independent and whose services are critical for the elaboration and analysis of the policies government puts forth. It is also of use to provincial and municipal governments, because they need to have information on the composition of their societies and the evolution of their societies and communities.

The member for Windsor West saw this very important element that was, once again, promised by the Liberals. He felt that the government was not going in that direction.

I have the feeling that other members on this side of the House will actually do the exact same thing on other commitments regarding Statistics Canada, and general commitments made by the government, on which it does not seem to be willing to deliver.

[Translation]

The issue of the long-form census received a lot more public attention, but the independence of Statistics Canada is also deemed important by scientific communities.

I believe that this type of half measure brought forward by the government not only fuels the cynicism of Canadians, but also the cynicism of the people whose work relies on these government organizations.

[English]

Statistics Canada has gone through all the decisions.

Government Orders

[Translation]

Considering all the turmoil that Statistics Canada has been through, we would have expected the government to address this issue immediately, but it refuses to do so.

We will be voting in favour of this bill at second reading. In committee, of course, we will try to ensure that the commitments dealing with Statistics Canada that the Liberals made during the election campaign are included in the bill. That would be an improvement and, in that sense, we could help the government meet the commitments it made during the election campaign.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what we have seen in Bill C-36 is a positive piece of legislation that would reinforce Statistics Canada's independence. It takes a number of initiatives, such as assigning to the chief statistician authorities for decisions on several things: statistical procedures; methods and professional standards employed for the production of statistics; the content of statistical releases and publications; the timing, methods, and dissemination of the statistics compiled; and the operations and staff of Statistics Canada.

This government has recognized the important role Statistics Canada plays in Canada. We understand the importance of science and statistical information, not only for the national government but for all levels of government, along with many non-profit organizations and the private sector, that use and rely on Statistics Canada. In fact, this party and this government have been very supportive of Statistics Canada and its independence. It is something that we recognize is administered through excellent civil servants.

I would ask the member if the professional standards we have seen at Statistics Canada over the years have elevated it to being second to no other data collection agency, not only here in Canada but abroad. Would the member not agree?

• (1020)

[Translation]

Mr. Guy Caron: Mr. Speaker, I have acknowledged that this is a step forward. That is why we will be voting in favour of the bill at second reading. My speech was more about the fact that this is only a half measure compared to what the Liberal Party promised.

[English]

If I look at the Liberal platform from the last election, on page 37, it says, "We will make Statistics Canada fully independent".

Fully independent also means ensuring that the process of selecting the chief statistician is actually an independent process. It also means that if there are some problems, such as the intrusion of Shared Services Canada into the ways of collecting data within the system Statistics Canada deems essential for its work, the government will actually not go in that direction. Neither of those measures is in the bill. Shared Services Canada is of primary concern, especially since StatsCan is saying that it will impede its ability to do its work currently.

If the Liberals really wanted to respect the independence of Statistics Canada, as they promised, they would have listened to the

chief statistician. They did not, and he had to resign in protest. That is why Bill C-36 is a step forward. That is why we will vote for it at second reading, but it is far from fulfilling the commitment made during the election.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank and congratulate my colleague on his very accurate speech. I would like to broaden the debate, because I think it is pretty serious when the head of Statistics Canada has to resign under the Liberal government to protest the constraints that are still there. It is just like under the Harper government.

This is just one more in a long line of broken Liberal promises. They were supposed to restore home mail delivery for those who had lost it. They were supposed to change our electoral system. That promise was also broken. They were supposed to make Statistics Canada independent. That promise is also being broken. I ask my colleague, what does this say about the new Liberal government?

Mr. Guy Caron: Mr. Speaker, they break promises. It is as simple as that.

My colleague is right. If we look at the election campaign and the big promises such as democratic reform, promises that everyone knew about, such as being against Bill C-51 and pledging to amend it, which, as far as I know, has not yet been brought up in the House, it sure seems as though the government is coasting on the fact that the difference between it and the Conservatives is that it is not Conservative. Considering everything the Conservatives did in the 41st Parliament and the fact that the Liberals seem to be sticking to that playbook, we have reason to be worried. People will figure it out sooner or later.

This government is basically following in its predecessor's footsteps. It says those measures are progressive. It signed a free trade agreement that the Conservatives negotiated with Europe, which is fine, apparently, because it is supposedly a progressive agreement. The government is on board with the Conservatives' climate change targets, which it says are progressive targets. One of these days, the illusion will shatter and people will see what is really going on.

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to Bill C-36, an act to amend the Statistics Act.

First, I would like to thank my hon. colleague, the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, for working so hard on drafting this very important bill. The main objective of this bill is to strengthen the independence of Statistics Canada. The bill strikes the right balance between strengthening the agency's independence and ensuring that the statistical information it produces continues to be of the highest quality.

Government Orders

Statistics play an essential role in democratic societies. They serve governments, businesses, non-profit organizations, the research community, and the public. Statistics provide Canadians with information about our society, economy, and environment. They help various stakeholders identify the challenges and opportunities we face as a society, design and implement policies and actions, and hold our governments to account. There is widespread agreement internationally that national statistical offices must have a high degree of independence from political intervention.

Decisions on statistical matters must be based strictly on professional considerations. That is how statistical agencies can preserve the integrity, impartiality, and quality of their data. This independence is essential if Canadians are to have confidence in official statistics.

•(1025)

[*English*]

That said, the quality of statistical data must be balanced with other important considerations, including the fact that statistical information must be relevant.

As the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, I have the important privilege of implementing measures that have a major impact on the lives of our families. That includes finding efficient and inclusive ways to support early learning and child care, supporting the development of affordable housing, and helping the most vulnerable citizens in our society exit poverty and live better. To meet these responsibilities, my department and I require data that is accurate, reliable, accessible, impartial, timely, and relevant. High-quality data is critical for making informed decisions about all the programs and services that affect the daily lives of our citizens. Therefore, our government made a commitment to decision-making that is informed by sound evidence. That is why our government moved quickly last year to reinstate the mandatory long-form census in time for the 2016 census of our population.

The decision made by the previous government to replace the 2011 mandatory long-form census with a voluntary survey compromised the quality of information that is essential to responsible public policy-making. In my earlier life, I had, unfortunately, the opportunity to see the bad impact of that in the lives and work of many of my colleagues. As a result, Statistics Canada was unable to release accurate and detailed census information about some communities, particularly in rural areas of our country.

The government's decision to replace the mandatory long-form census with a voluntary questionnaire also highlighted vulnerabilities in the Statistics Act, which we will now solve.

[*Translation*]

In particular, the legislation allowed the previous government to make decisions on a statistical matter in an arbitrary and non-transparent way. Bill C-36 will ensure that our government can continue to make decisions on behalf of all Canadians that are evidence-based. The bill will also ensure that Statistics Canada can continue to deliver high-quality, reliable and relevant information.

There are three ways in which Bill C-36 strikes the right balance between strengthening the independence of Statistics Canada and safeguarding the relevance of the information it produces.

First, the bill formally assigns to the chief statistician the authority to make decisions about the methods and operations of Statistics Canada. This will limit the potential for political intervention in the data-gathering methods and other technical matters directly related to the operations of Statistics Canada.

The bill also recognizes the overall responsibility of the minister and the Government for ensuring that the statistical system remains relevant and responsive to Canadians.

For example, if the minister decides it is in the national interest to issue directives related to the data-gathering methods and other statistical operations of Statistics Canada, he or she can make a recommendation through the Governor in Council.

Any directives issued by the Governor in Council would be tabled in both Houses of Parliament to ensure full transparency and accountability.

•(1030)

[*English*]

Second, Bill C-36 would strengthen the independence of the chief statistician. Under the current Statistics Act, the chief statistician holds office at the pleasure of the government without set terms. He or she can be removed at any time without explanation by the Governor in Council. Bill C-36 would amend the act so that the chief statistician would hold office on good behaviour. He or she would be appointed to the position for a renewable term of not more than five years. That means the Governor in Council could only dismiss a chief statistician for cause. In addition, the chief statistician would be appointed through an open, transparent, and merit-based selection process, as should be the case. This process would be in line with the government's new approach to Governor in Council appointments.

Third, the bill calls for the creation of a new Canadian statistics advisory council. This group would advise both the minister and the chief statistician on the overall quality of the statistical system. That includes providing recommendations to ensure the continued development, accuracy, accessibility, and timeliness of the information produced by Statistics Canada. In the interests of openness and transparency, the advisory council would publish an annual report on the state of the national statistical system.

[*Translation*]

Taken together, these three amendments to the Statistics Act will strengthen the independence of Statistics Canada. They will increase the transparency and accountability of this important agency. They will also ensure that statistical information produced on behalf of all Canadians continues to be reliable and relevant.

Government Orders

The bill contains three other amendments to the Statistics Act that I would like to note. First, there is general consensus that imprisonment is a disproportionate penalty for Canadians who refuse to provide information for mandatory surveys. The bill removes this penalty from the act. Fines will remain to ensure compliance with certain provisions of the act.

Second, the bill removes the requirement for consent to transfer census records to Library and Archives Canada after 92 years, beginning with the 2021 census of population. This change responds to the needs of historians and genealogists who require this important data for research purposes.

Finally, the bill amends the Statistics Act to modernize some of the language in the act. These language changes reflect technological advances in data-gathering methods. That includes the use of electronic surveys in place of paper questionnaires.

Taken together, the amendments safeguard the independence of Statistics Canada and enable it to continue to produce high-quality information, while ensuring that the agency we are so proud of is better aligned with international standards.

[English]

Ms. Dianne L. Watts (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the overview of the bill.

As the private information is made public after 92 years, what provisions are in place for the privacy of the family and the spouses in terms of releasing private information to the general public?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Mr. Speaker, this is an important question. As we all know, in an open and transparent society and democracy, particularly an open and transparent agency as is the case of Statistics Canada, there are serious rules to follow to protect the privacy of families and Canadians. All appropriate rules will be followed by Statistics Canada to protect the integrity of such information.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I generally favour Bill C-36, but I would like to see more independence for Statistics Canada, and I am concerned about the sharing of data with Shared Services Canada.

I have a specific proposal and I hope it is not inappropriate. We know there is an opening for chief statistician and we also know that one of the bravest people who ever served this country in its civil service is the former director at Statistics Canada, Dr. Munir Sheikh. It may be unorthodox, but I would urge the minister to request cabinet to find a way to replace our chief statistician with someone who deserves our thanks and is entirely trustworthy to every Canadian. That person would be Munir Sheikh.

•(1035)

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Mr. Speaker, I had the privilege in my earlier life to see how committed the earlier chief statistician was to collecting appropriate information and making that information serve the interests of Canadians. We all regret what took place in the past. We look forward to working with future chief statisticians in the context of this new law to make sure that Statistics Canada, in the manner that was just mentioned, makes its work even more supportive of growing our society, growing our economy, and

making our democratic system as valuable as it can be to all Canadians.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech. I would like to ask him a question that ordinary Canadians are wondering about.

If the two chief statisticians resigned because of issues related to independence and interference, why is the government choosing to work with Shared Services Canada? I imagine it will save some money, but how can the government justify that decision?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Mr. Speaker, again, I thank my colleagues, especially my colleague from Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, for the question.

Obviously this relates to the previous question about the confidentiality and security of the information produced and used by the government, particularly by Statistics Canada. The bill responds to some of these concerns by ensuring that Shared Services Canada works together with Statistics Canada so that in an open and democratic society like ours, information is accessible and used to serve Canadians, and that the confidentiality and security of Canadians are guaranteed by these mechanisms of intra-governmental and inter-organizational collaboration.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the minister could provide some thoughts with regard to how important Statistics Canada is for allowing good sound policy decisions to be made. I am not just talking about at the national level. Statistics Canada provides so much valuable information that assists, for example, our local municipal governments to set up community profiles. It assists the provinces and Ottawa in working through issues such as equalization payments and all sorts of transfers, and even assists non-profit organizations and the private sector. There is a great dependency on Stats Canada. Generally speaking, Stats Canada as a whole has done an overwhelmingly positive job, and that is a reflection on the civil servants who provide the information we need in order to move forward.

[Translation]

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Mr. Speaker, I will build on what my colleague just said, by reiterating that in my former life, I had the privilege on many occasions to hear high praise for Statistics Canada from international experts and national statistics agencies around the world.

Government Orders

We can be proud of Statistics Canada, not just for what it does in Canada, but also for its reputation beyond our borders. The agency has a reputation for its independence, quality, and professionalism. It supports our communities and municipalities, especially the smaller ones, which have limited means for investigation and research. It supports our community organizations that work so hard to support community development. It also supports the relationships between the different levels of government. The Canadian government needs sound and reliable data if it is to work effectively with the other governments.

We can be proud of Statistics Canada for all these reasons, but especially for the quality and rigour of its work and the reputation it has afforded us around the world.

• (1040)

[English]

Mr. Arnold Chan (Scarborough—Agincourt, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first of all, I want to use this opportunity to give a shout-out to a former colleague in this place, the former member for Kingston and the Islands, Ted Hsu, who led the charge in the previous Parliament to drive the government to reinstate the long-form census. One of the arguments he made at the time was on the critical importance of collecting data in the interest of all Canadians and the broad national public interest.

I have been listening to the concerns raised on the other side, particularly from the official opposition as they relate to the issue of privacy, which gets to my question about why this bill purports to work with Shared Services Canada to share data between agencies. Does the minister have a reason that this is taking place? For example, with respect to the collecting of income data from the Canada Revenue Agency, is there a particular reason that we would adopt that particular methodology in the interest of collecting better information?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his obvious understanding of the importance of good data in our society.

In the government context where there can be dozens or perhaps hundreds of different systems across institutions and organizations, protecting the privacy and security of information gathered on Canadians is a serious challenge. Shared Services Canada has been created, and to be fair and transparent, I think it had been created by the previous government for that purpose, to try to increase the ability of the government to protect the sensitivity of all of those pieces of information that need to circulate across departments.

Not only is it a difficult challenge, but it is also a very important challenge to do exactly what my colleague has mentioned, which is to ensure that departments can work together, and even outside of the government, while protecting the safety and security of important data on our families and communities.

Mr. Phil McColeman (Brantford—Brant, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to stand today to speak to these changes as proposed in Bill C-36 to the Statistics Canada Act.

There is no doubt that in our society we rely on information. All sectors of business rely on good data, good information to guide

their decisions, and on this side of the aisle, we have always stressed the importance of that good work that Statistics Canada does.

However, the private lives of Canadians should never be put in jeopardy. It is a concern of ours that some of the changes as suggested, if not amended, to this piece of legislation could strike an improper balance between the privacy of Canadians and what Canadians feel is their private information being infringed upon and what the government uses that data for.

This is a redesign and a re-engineering of how statistics would be gathered in an effort to make them more independent, make the chief statistician more independent, but it also has to come back to what is balancing the rights of Canadians while good data is collected.

I will give examples of some of the intrusive questions that we have heard from Canadians that some have said just go beyond, perhaps, questions they are comfortable answering. That would be, “How many bathrooms do you have in your home? When do you leave for work, and when do you arrive at work?” and other questions that delve into their personal lives on the basis that somehow this data would be useful to the government for the purposes of disseminating that information for good policy-making and for good decision-making.

It is proposed in the changes to give the chief statistician total control over those questions with no ministerial control or accountability by the minister. What this means in the new set-up, in the new engineered or redesigned way of collecting data and the supervision and the management of collecting data, is that the chief statistician would, on his or her own, be able to make those decisions, not have to vet them through the minister or through the ministry or through Parliament, where we would decide perhaps on certain, larger issues, whether they are appropriate or not appropriate.

What happens when a Canadian down the road decides that, although it is mandatory to complete it, it is too intrusive into his or her personal life? How do they ask the questions? To whom do they ask the questions to find out more about why this question is being asked? It will not come back to the minister. It will not come through the regular channels of parliamentary procedure as currently exist. It will be the chief statistician having the lone decision-making and not having to be accountable to this place for the decisions on those questions.

The other issue that has been mentioned this morning already is the storage of data. The chief statistician could decide, having been given sole authority to create this independence as put forward, where this data could be stored. We talked about the importance of where it is being stored today and maintaining that integrity, but at any point in time, the chief statistician could decide to deliver that data to a third party for storage.

Government Orders

In fact, we saw the most recent resignation, I believe his name was Wayne Smith, over this very issue. Former chief statistician Wayne Smith resigned over the push to use Shared Services Canada to store the information. Unfortunately his concerns, which were made clear to the Liberal government, were not looked upon and it took his resignation before they would listen. We are talking again about security of Canadians, and this should be the top priority of any government.

Let us talk about the overriding governance portion of the changes that are being made and why we have concerns with that on this side. What is happening is that the governance body, the overseeing body, is changing to the Canadian statistics advisory council, a new name, from the National Statistics Council.

● (1045)

The key concern here is, this was put in place in 1985 by the Mulroney government as an oversight body with 13 members, representing all provinces and territories, while the new one, as proposed in this legislation, reduces that to 10 members. Why is that a concern? It is because we cannot understand why the government would want to change from representation of all provinces and territories, in terms of their input into the data that is collected. What is the reason for eliminating three spots? That means three areas of the country would not be represented.

Here is an example. If Atlantic Canada, by chance, does not have an appointee to that board, it could miss out on specific data being included and received by Statistics Canada that is specific to Atlantic Canada, because the oversight board would see all of the information being asked for as it is done. The 13-person national board that currently exists, the National Statistics Council, has representation from all parts of the country. It has worked well, frankly, since 1985. It strikes the right balance. It decides what is working and what is not working. This is a body that is working very effectively, representing all parts of the country, yet we see it would change to a smaller number.

The other concern is it perhaps could become another place for patronage appointments. It could be speculated that the 10 who would be appointed would be political appointments. They could well be people who perhaps have knowledge and background in the area of statistics, but perhaps not, because it may be someone who is looking for a board appointment, who is favourable to this government, who could be put on that board. Therefore, it brings up questions, as we have seen being asked in the House most recently, about access for fundraising. Could it be Liberal supporters who go to events and pay \$1,500 and hang out with Chinese billionaires? Could it be other people who have worked through the years on the Liberal front who are put on the board? This is a big concern.

Of course, if it was left as it is, as we think it possibly should be, and some of our amendments may deal with this going forward, then it is working, it is working well, and representing the complete country.

It begs the question, why would the government want to redesign it so that all Canadians are not represented? It could be said on this front that this shows incredible disrespect for the provinces and territories. Instead of revising the mandate of the current statistics

council and keeping it in full provincial and territorial representation, as it currently provides, the Liberals have chosen to construct a new council to eliminate the feedback from three provinces or territories.

The redesign of the board to create independence brings up other concerns of promises made by the government, which as we have seen lately have basically been altered, either thrown in the garbage bin or arbitrarily overrun, such as the overrun on the promise of \$10-billion deficits, now currently sitting at \$25 billion.

We question today, as we debate the bill, what really is the purpose of the bill? What is the purpose when we see some of these changes?

● (1050)

Again, it is all about balance. It is all about striking the right balance between collecting data and privacy of Canadians. I will underscore that because there is no doubt about the information that it receives and the importance of work done by Statistics Canada, however, the private lives of Canadians should never be put in jeopardy.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, perhaps my contribution is more a comment than it is a question. I would just like to say that I take exception to the fact that the member suggests that somehow the set of questions that Statistics Canada uses should be coming back to the political world in order to be decided upon, whether or not they are appropriate.

In fact, in order to ensure that that independence exists within Statistics Canada, it needs to be afforded the opportunity to come up with those questions and to make sure that they are crafted in a non-political environment.

The direction as it relates to the independence of Statistics Canada is on the right course. I would argue that what the member is saying is in fact going to create more problems and more issues within Statistics Canada, in making sure that it has the independence it requires to bring back solid, sound data.

● (1055)

Mr. Phil McColeman: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member's intervention. When we start to, as a Parliament, hand over sole responsibility without any ministerial oversight, in terms of what an independent chief statistician could create, I am not suggesting here that Parliament should craft the questions. Absolutely not, we should not craft the questions.

What we should be doing is what we are currently doing under the design of the program, and that is ministerial oversight of those questions to be sure they are appropriate. Let me give some other examples of constituents who have brought to us their concerns, saying that when they receive the questionnaires, the ag questionnaires specifically, they are looking at the questions and asking, "Am I comfortable answering some of these very personal questions?"

What I spoke about in my speech was absolutely accurate about some of the questions they are being asked. They are very personal questions about how they live their lives. It is mandatory to fill it out. I do not know the numbers, but we have had examples in our party of constituents who are saying to us in our ridings, "Well, I will just lie, and I will give false information on that particular one."

Government Orders

There are consequences for giving false information that are outlined in the legislation. However, frankly, who is going to enforce that? Who is going to dig deep enough to find out that people lied about the number of bathrooms in their house, or the fact that they get up in five in the morning to go to work but they lied and said that they got up at nine in the morning, giving false information.

If we are to make sure the questions are relevant, the minister involved here should have that oversight. We need to have these people be as independent as possible, but there is a place for the minister to be involved and there is a place, if necessary, for Parliament to be involved.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that the hon. member for Brantford—Brant is not responsible for any of the disastrous attacks on Statistics Canada that occurred under the previous government. Those decisions were made in the Prime Minister's Office.

However, the reaction of Canadians strongly in support of a long-form census that is mandatory is because we want sound information for evidence-based policy so that policy-makers have information that is not tainted by political interference. That is why there is a lot of strong public support for more independence in the office of Statistics Canada.

We will never make up the lost years when information was not collected. Researchers are at a loss. There will be this gap in terms of knowing what happened with the gap between the rich and the poor. What was going on in terms of health outcomes? For policy, we need reliable research.

What the previous government did, with all due respect to this individual member, was shameful, must never occur again, and I do not think this bill goes far enough to ensure the independence of Statistics Canada from political interference. With all due respect, I disagree with the essence of the member's presentation this morning.

Mr. Phil McColeman: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member respectfully disagreeing, but I respectfully disagree with the member.

It has always been a core belief of our side that the privacy of Canadians must be protected at all costs. It must be protected in terms of what they choose or do not choose. Hence, the short-form census, which continues to exist, plus the voluntary information that we sought from Canadians was a way to express that and for them to say that they would not be put in jail for doing this, that they would not be penalized excessively. There is this balance and that has to come into play.

Some people would choose the balance that was just described to us by the member, which is a balance that totally outweighs any relevance from this body where Canadians should be able to have that accountability. It takes them out of the equation. It makes this a completely independent body, let it do as it may, with no real accountability through the minister or for us as individual members to take our concerns to the minister and then for the minister to adequately address them. Because of the independence of this individual, he or she could say, "I don't have the time of day for this" or "I'm just doing what I think is best for gathering data and asking questions". That is improper balance.

● (1100)

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is not really surprising to me, and the hon. member for Brantford—Brant referred to this in his speech, that we are moving into this top-down approach, and we are seeing on a lot of levels that the government knows best. There is seemingly a contempt for the provinces and territories.

This legislation was introduced by the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, who happens to be the minister responsible for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, based out of Mississauga and seemingly knows what is best for Atlantic Canada.

One of the concerns the member raised was the fact that we were going to get away from this representation of the provinces and territories and moving to this 10-member council, which again potentially lends itself to the fact that there would be Liberal supporters on this rather than fair representation across the country, as is currently the case.

Could the member comment further on that and on some of the concerns he has?

Mr. Phil McColeman: Mr. Speaker, I tried to articulate in my speech the large concern for the fact that this was an oversight body that currently represented every province and every territory, with 13 individuals. That is part of what goes into bringing in the right data from all parts of the country in terms of advising the chief statistician.

When we move to what the legislation proposes, it opens it up to all kinds of potential for abuse. The potential for abuse largely is that the Liberals have a list of friendly people they would like to see put on a board so they can reward them.

People might say that is very cynical and that never happens. After my almost nine years here and watching all types of governments, this happens. Look at provincial governments where this is happening today. Look at Ontario, my province, and the kind of outright patronage that is going on through the Wynne government and the kind of abuses of power that we are witnessing. This should be one of the most prosperous, best run, most resourceful provinces in the country and instead has been turned upside down, accepting transfer payments and looking as being the poor brother or poor sister.

I digress, but the reality is that when we change something as fundamental as the governance structure as proposed in the bill, that is what happens. It opens it up to that. Will it happen? I do not know. Does it happen? Absolutely. Ask any member here and he or she would have to reply that in all honesty it does happen. That is why we should not change this.

Ms. Dianne L. Watts (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock.

I am pleased to speak to Bill C-36, an act to amend the Statistics Act.

Government Orders

The legislation aims to provide more independence to Canada's chief statistician. It would update penalties for Canadians who failed to complete their short-form census. It would replace the National Statistics Council with the new Canada statistics advisory council. There would no longer be a requirement to obtain the consent of Canadians to transfer their personal information from Statistics Canada to Library and Archives Canada.

I would like to address each one of these changes. Some of them are supportable and some are not.

Let me first begin with the increased independence of the chief statistician.

Under the legislation, Canada's chief statistician would have sole responsibility to decide the methods, procedures, and operations of all statistical programs under Statistics Canada. It would also mean that he or she would have full authority over the collection, compilation, analysis, abstraction, and publication of all statistical information. The chief statistician would also have control of the content released and publicized, and how and when this information would be circulated.

While some aspects of the legislation make sense, and the chief statistician should be able to decide the best way to gather data and what the process should look like, we also need to ensure that he or she remains accountable to the minister and Canadians. Moreover, the new powers granted are such that he or she will have the final say on where information is stored, as well as the type of information being collected, as he or she will have powers to decide what questions are asked and which ones are not.

I will acknowledge that this will likely be good news to the former chief statistician, Wayne Smith, who resigned recently over the Liberal government's push to use Shared Services Canada to store statistical information. While there may be a need to use a different method to protect Canada's data, we need to ensure we have a system of checks and balances and ensure that this information does not fall to a third party to store and potentially undermine the security of Canadians.

We have seen many examples of the hacking of systems worldwide. We have seen the manipulation of information, the selling and trading of information, and our own systems have been subject to these same practices. The Liberal government is now reopening the process to allow a Chinese company to buy a Canadian IT firm against the recommendations and warnings from CSIS. We need to ensure the minister and all departments under Statistics Canada's purview are held accountable to Canadians. Giving the chief statistician the final say without any accountability really undermines that process.

The second change would remove the penalty of imprisonment for Canadians who failed to fill out census forms. I think we can all fully support this change. In fact, it was the previous Conservative government that removed this penalty from every survey, except the short-form census.

The third change is the bill would create the Canadian statistics advisory council. This council would replace the National Statistics Council, which has been in place since the 1980s. This new council would reduce the membership of the current council to just 10

members. In addition to advising the chief statistician, the new council would also advise the minister and would be required to produce an annual report.

• (1105)

Again, the issues with this section have to do with accountability. In particular, I am concerned with the new membership structure.

The current council has representation from every province and every territory in Canada. However, the new council will only include 10 members and will not include representation from every province and territory. In fact, three provinces and territories will not be represented. What is even more troubling is that we will not know the makeup or representation of the council until the Prime Minister and his cabinet appoint the members.

It is inappropriate for cabinet to decide which regions are important enough to have a voice at the table and which ones are not.

We collect data from Canadians in every province and every territory across the country. Not to have representation from three provinces and territories is unacceptable. This change needs to be rectified.

The fourth change is one that gives myself and my colleagues on this side of the House the most concern. The government will no longer require the explicit consent of Canadians to transfer their personal census information from Statistics Canada to Library and Archives Canada after a period of 92 years. Once the information has been transferred to Library and Archives Canada, it will be public and available for anyone to view and use at will.

The privacy and security of Canadians should be of the utmost priority for any government. The work that Statistics Canada does is so important, not only for policy-makers in crafting our legislation, but also for helping Canadian research and academia sectors, business sectors, environmental sectors, and for future historians who will be looking to understand the evolution of Canadian society.

However, regardless of all the great work Statistics Canada does, the right of Canadians to privacy over their own information cannot be compromised. Canadians should have the right to consent to the transfer of any personal information obtained through the census.

In today's digital age of easy and instant information sharing, we cannot forget how easy it is for information to be shared and used without our permission. We should not be giving anyone the power to transfer some of our most personal data to a public domain without our explicit permission.

Even though the legislation has a delay period of 92 years for transferring and publishing our personal information, the type of information collected by Statistics Canada will often include or impact not only those individuals, but also their spouses, their children, and other family members. The argument that 92 years is a sufficient length of time to cancel out any worry about invasion of privacy assumes that the data looks at the individual in a vacuum.

Government Orders

We need to be aware that sharing and transferring this information to Library and Archives Canada will impact not only the individual, but also those who are, or were, connected to that individual. This is the most problematic piece of the legislation. An amendment that requires the explicit consent of the individual should be included.

The bill has potential. The work that Statistics Canada does is extremely important, but the collection and storage of data cannot come at the expense of the privacy of individuals or their families.

We also need to ensure that Canadians from all regions are represented equally and fairly, and that Canadians can be confident that the personal data they provide to the government is stored securely and is not shared without their consent.

• (1110)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this legislation is a strong positive step forward for StatsCan. I was a bit surprised at the member's argument about the release of information. She can correct me if I am wrong, but she seems to be of the opinion that it is the only way the census information that is collected could ever be released to Library and Archives Canada. I appreciate that she noted that the government said that, after 92 years it should be released, but the member is suggesting that it be qualified. Does that mean, for example, that before the information that had been collected from millions of Canadians 92 years ago could be released to Library and Archives Canada, their descendants would have to give consent? Could the member expand on how the Conservative Party would see that actually work? Should we try to trace the descendants of those people from 92 years ago through genealogy, and if we cannot trace them, then it would never be given to Library and Archives Canada? I am not quite clear exactly how it would be implemented.

• (1115)

Ms. Dianne L. Watts: Mr. Speaker, it is not as involved as the member is making it out to be. It would be a simple question on any census sheet that asks, "Do you give consent to have this information released in a period of 92 years?" Anyone who fills out a census form can sign it. It would not be necessary to go through the whole process of trying to track down descendants. I think that is just hogwash. It is merely adding a question on any census form for people to give their consent to have it released, pure and simple.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we all have a lot of questions. I am glad to see that my colleague seems to think Statistics Canada and the long-form census are so important.

The Conservative Party seems to be more open-minded about some issues than before. Do I detect a schism in the Conservative Party line on these issues, on the long-form census and the party's deliberate scientific blindness regarding demographic data that are so important to industry? Are they becoming more open-minded, or have I misinterpreted?

[*English*]

Ms. Dianne L. Watts: Mr. Speaker, I would think that the Conservatives have always been open-minded. I would also say that it is not about being fractured; it is about common sense. The

collection of data is very important for Stats Canada, and for research right across the board for many organizations and many sectors. It is the anonymization of that data that becomes useful. When it is attached to a name or a family and can be traced back, that is where the problem comes in. Data is collected and used in many cases, but is anonymized, and it gives researchers a tool to gather information and do the research they need to do. Therefore, how this could be done is very simple.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, going back to the discussion we were having about the 92 years and the requirement for that data to become accessible to the public, the fact that the member is suggesting we need to consent to that in advance underscores the disregard for how important it is for the data to be a requirement. Requiring people to fill out the long-form census is what makes the data relevant. If we do it in a fashion that lets people make the decision as to whether or not they want to do it, the data will be skewed. Likewise, if the only people whose data we are giving out 92 years from now are those who consent to it, the data would be skewed because it would only be representative of the people who are interested in giving it out. Therefore, it underscores the fact that I believe the former Conservative government did not understand the benefit in having the data be a requirement.

Ms. Dianne L. Watts: Mr. Speaker, all data could be used. People would be giving their consent to have their information put out there and their name used. If they do not give consent, and I go back to the anonymization of the data, they do not have their name attached to it. We still have the exact information and exactly what is there, but one's name is not attached to it. People should have the choice to do that. I think it is disrespectful to just put the data out there without consulting Canadians.

Mr. Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to Bill C-36, an act to amend the Statistics Act, an act with the stated purpose of strengthening the independence of Statistics Canada.

I would like to begin by thanking my hon. colleague the member for Haldimand—Norfolk for her leadership on this file, and I would like to start by stating my support and the support of my colleagues for Stats Canada and its staff for the great work they do. Whether Canadians realize it or not, we use that information provided by Stats Canada quite frequently, and it has done and continues to do some very good work.

To be completely honest, I did not know much about the Statistics Act prior to reading Bill C-36, but the changes proposed in Bill C-36 would have a direct and significant impact not only on Stats Canada but also on the way data is recorded, stored, and used here in Canada.

Government Orders

The Liberals have touted themselves as the party of transparency and accountability, and they would also argue that the bill is a continuation of this pledge. Yet, when reading the bill, I find it becomes clear that instead of increasing accountability and transparency, the bill does the exact opposite.

I should say that the bill is not all bad. In fact, at this moment there are many sections with which I do agree, but I plan to break the bill down into four major components and discuss each one separately.

First, the bill would appoint the chief statistician during good behaviour for a fixed, renewable term of five years, removable only for cause by the Governor in Council. It would also assign the chief statistician, or CS, the powers related to methods, procedures, and operations of Stats Canada.

Section 4 of the act would be replaced by subclause 4(1), which I will read:

The Governor in Council shall appoint the Chief Statistician of Canada to be the deputy head of Statistics Canada.

What my colleagues opposite would argue is that they would be giving the CS more independence and making him or her more accountable. Yet, as this above subclause states, the CS is appointed by the minister. This could easily be used as a partisan appointment, and we would be essentially assigning this person power related to methods, procedures, and operations of Stats Canada.

My point here is that the Liberals' pledge openness and transparency, yet there are other instances including just a year ago when parliamentary oversight of federal spy agencies was brought before this place. The Prime Minister unilaterally appointed my friend from Ottawa South as the committee chair, not to mention the PM's power to direct the committee to revise its annual and special reports to him if he believes the disclosure would injure international security, defence, or international relations.

Further, while it may not have been intended by the bill we are debating today, as it is currently written, the CS would be authorized to decide where Stats Canada data is stored. It is my understanding that there is an agreement to house the data with Shared Services Canada, but under the bill, the CS would be authorized to move it, or could be authorized, which might result in some security concerns.

This data is about Canadians from coast to coast to coast, and it is our job to ensure that any information they provide is kept private. After the most recent census, many concerned citizens reached out to me regarding the invasive questions they were forced to answer for fear of prosecution.

Under Bill C-36, the CS would have the authority to develop questioning within those surveys. We could potentially have a partisan appointee developing the questions within those surveys. It seems to me that this could potentially skew the important data collected by Stats Canada.

The second issue is that Bill C-36 would establish the Canadian statistics advisory council, which would be composed of 10 members and would replace the National Statistics Council, the NSC. The council would advise the CS and minister and focus on the quality of the national statistical system, including the relevance, accuracy, accessibility, and timelines of that information produced.

The council would be required to make a public annual report on the state of the system.

Much like with my previous concerns, let us take a look directly at Bill C-36, regarding membership:

The Council is composed of, in addition to the Chief Statistician, not more than 10 other members appointed by the Governor in Council to hold office during pleasure, including one Chairperson.

The chief statistician would be an ex-officio member of that council. Therefore, we now have a CS appointed by the minister and an advisory council appointed by the minister. This is just another opportunity for members to give their Liberal friends appointments.

● (1120)

Why does the government require a new council when there is already one in place, which has been working very well since the 1980s? It seems like a waste of taxpayer dollars just to replace one council with a new one. Perhaps the government should consider the taxpayer in this instance.

Another problem with the new Canadian statistics advisory council is the lack of proper representation. The current council has representation from all provinces and territories, but under the new council, there would be only 10 representatives. Therefore, my question is this. Which provinces or territories is the government planning to leave without representation on this council?

The third issue I have is that the bill would no longer require the consent of respondents to transfer their census information to Library and Archives Canada, and would repeal imprisonment as a penalty for any offence committed by a respondent. This suggested change in Bill C-36 is full of potential issues. I understand that the transfer of Canadians' data after 92 years might seem insignificant, but at the end of the day, this information is about Canadians and what belongs to them.

The government should not be deciding what can and cannot be transferred without the consent of respondents. This is the exact opposite of the transparency that the government is hiding behind. It is our previous government that was responsible for repealing the penalty of imprisonment for every survey except the mandatory short-form census.

Finally, the bill would amend certain provisions by modernizing the language of the act to better reflect current methods of collecting statistical information. Ensuring that our acts use language that is appropriate to reflect new and upcoming methods of collecting statistical information is important to keep Statistics Canada up to date. In this quickly changing global environment, I would note that the bill would do nothing to change the fact that the long-form census and census of agriculture are both mandatory, which leads me to my next issue: the mandatory long-form census.

Government Orders

It was our previous government that introduced the voluntary national household survey, which replaced the mandatory long-form census. When the Liberal government reinstated the long-form census, I was surprised by the number of constituents who expressed their concerns about the invasive questions that they were forced to answer. This is something on which I strongly disagree with members opposite. I do not believe that we should be forcing Canadians to give out this personal information under threat of prosecution.

As an MP, I have always given top priority to the privacy and security of Canadian citizens, as does everyone in the House, I am sure. I would like to quote my colleague the member for Haldimand—Norfolk, who said:

In closing, there is no doubt our society relies on information that it receives from the work done by Statistics Canada. It is important work, but the private lives of Canadians should never be put in jeopardy. Canadians, in their personal and business affairs, need to be able to trust the data that they give and get from Statistics Canada, and betraying that trust does not promote a stable environment where quality data can be obtained.

As I said at the beginning, I find myself supportive of a number of clauses of the bill, but I am also concerned about others. I seriously hope that the government will take into account some of the issues I have raised as we move forward to enhance Statistics Canada and the Statistics Act.

I would like to reiterate my robust support for the employees of Statistics Canada for the job they do each and every day on our behalf.

• (1125)

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have a number of questions, but I think the most pertinent to the member is in regard to the resignation of the former chief statistician of Statistics Canada, Mr. Wayne Smith. We know that he was a dedicated public servant who very clearly had every intention to make sure Statistics Canada was doing its job.

My question is on the reason for his resignation. What does my colleague believe in regard to this, and should the Liberal government be embarrassed by the fact that Mr. Smith felt so compelled to leave his post?

Mr. Jamie Schmale: Mr. Speaker, based on my speech, that is what my point was. We need to ensure that changes are made to the bill to strengthen it. The governing party is putting forward the bill, and hopefully it is listening to what we have been saying today.

However, there are two most important things that stick out, to me. One is the release of information and taking away Canadians' ability to make a choice. I have said many times in the House that the more options we give Canadians, the more choices they will give based on their personal situation. Therefore, taking away that choice is a very concerning part to me.

The other is taking away regional representation. I do not think it is right to take the current council down from 40 to 10 members, leaving some provinces or territories without representation. I hope the government does take a look at that and hopefully makes some changes if it feels they are necessary.

• (1130)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, members may agree to disagree on certain points, but all in all, there is some agreement and I appreciate the words that have been expressed so far this morning. I believe there is a consensus in the House that the information Statistics Canada provides is of great value. This legislation is moving more toward an independent Statistics Canada, which I would argue would be a healthier situation.

There is something that has not been referred to much in this discussion and that is the dropping of the penalty of imprisonment, which was often used when individuals said negative things toward Stats Canada. It really was not justified. I do not think anyone was ever put into prison. There might have been one individual who was, but it was more out of a protest and a willingness to want to go to prison.

I wonder if the member could provide some comments in regard to getting rid of that particular requirement, which we think is a positive thing, and anything else he might see fit to comment on.

Mr. Jamie Schmale: Mr. Speaker, I do not disagree with everything in the bill. There are some parts I agree with.

I cannot speak for my friend and his riding, but a number of my constituents approached me who were frustrated with that threat of imprisonment. That was their main concern. Everyone was going to fill out their census form anyway, but it was the wording and the threat that it could happen that concerned them. They felt that the government was being heavy-handed and would throw them in jail if they did not fill out the form. I do not know if that issue was raised in the member's riding, but it was raised with me many times, and rightfully so. The government should not be threatening people with jail time if they do not fill out the census form. As I said, my constituents were going to do it anyway, but the threat just seemed a little heavy-handed.

[Translation]

Mr. Alupa Clarke (Beauport—Limoilou, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate having the opportunity to speak this morning. I will be sharing my time with the member for Richmond Centre.

Like the members who have already spoken today, I want to talk about Bill C-36, which is meant to strengthen Statistics Canada's independence. Together, we will look at whether this bill can achieve that official objective because it might also have unofficial objectives.

I think it would be useful to explain to our constituents, including the wonderful people of Beauport—Limoilou, that Statistics Canada was created in 1971 because the federal government has a duty to collect and compile statistics on Canada and its people. Its duty is right there in the law that sets out the federal government's responsibilities. Statistics are therefore under federal jurisdiction. Even provincial statistics are within the agency's purview.

Statistics Canada has been serving Canadians for 40 years. It has produced many studies that I am sure have formed the basis for many of Canada's public policies. Those studies have led to positive outcomes for all Canadians.

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In our Liberal democracy, data are extremely important. I used data when I was studying political science, and I use them now in my day-to-day work.

Statistics Canada seeks to produce statistics on the country's populations, resources, economy, society, and culture. Statistics Canada is currently conducting over 300 studies, which will provide us with objective information that will help us make informed decisions while ensuring that the source of that information, the everyday lives of our fellow Canadians, is kept confidential.

I use these data in my capacity as an MP and so do my employees. The data are also used by businesses, universities, and scientists. They are used by the parties to determine their political platforms so that, when a party wins the election and takes office, it can develop informed public policies.

What does Bill C-36 do exactly? After reading the bill, my understanding is that it makes changes to four key areas.

First, the chief statistician would be appointed for a fixed term of five years, renewable for good behaviour and removable only for cause by the Governor in Council. That seems commendable. Although it is not the bill's intention, the chief statistician would nonetheless be authorized to choose where the statistical data would be stored. We think that could be problematic since the government gave the new Canadian statistics advisory council its name and so it obviously expects that council to advise the chief statistician.

Second, the bill provides for the creation of a new Canadian statistics advisory council made up of 10 members. It would replace the National Statistics Council, which currently has 13 members. I will come back to this later since it seems that this change will negatively impact provincial and territorial representation.

Third, under the bill, the consent of Canadians will no longer be required to transfer their census information to Library and Archives Canada.

Fourth, the bill will remove the penalty of imprisonment for Canadians who fail to fill out the census forms, a change that we strongly support.

I would like to say that one of our Conservative colleagues in the previous Parliament, Mr. Preston, had brought forward a bill to repeal the penalty of imprisonment for all surveys. Unfortunately, the bill did not receive royal assent before the writ was dropped.

● (1135)

Obviously, we support this aspect of the bill given that we wanted to make this change.

I will now speak to our position on this bill. We want to debate it in the House and vote to send it to committee for more in-depth study in order to make some amendments. In particular, we find that it is very important to amend the provisions of the bill that would change the National Statistics Council to the Canadians Statistics Advisory Council, a body with 10 members instead of 13.

We believe that this new advisory council would give the Liberals another opportunity to appoint their cronies. We have another concern. Since the council will provide advice about relevance, the

surveys could be biased towards the Liberals and even friends of the council.

We find it hard to understand why the government must establish a new council rather than just revising the mandate of the current National Statistics Council, which currently has 13 members representing the 10 provinces and three territories.

Much like we did during the debate on the selection of the next Supreme Court of Canada justice, we voiced our grave concerns regarding the importance of ensuring strong representation from all regions of Canada on the Supreme Court.

Because the council is going to have only 10 members instead of 13, we find ourselves debating the issue through the lens of defending the federation. Obviously, the representation of three jurisdictions in Canada will have to be cut from the council. Does this mean that three of the 10 provinces will no longer be represented on the new council, or have the Liberals decided that the three Canadian territories, that is, Nunavut, Yukon, and the Northwest Territories, will no longer be represented? In either case, whether representation on the council is taken away from three provinces or the three territories, we think it is appalling.

As I said earlier, the mission of Canada's statistics agency is to provide information to Canadians, particularly for the development of sound public policies with objectives based on reliable hard facts. At present, the council that is supposed to support the work of the chief statistician so that he can effectively run the agency will not have the support of people who understand the realities of the provinces and territories.

Furthermore, the bill does nothing to address the concerns raised by Mr. Smith, the former chief statistician. He resigned last summer after voicing his concerns, which are being ignored. When he appeared before the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates on November 16, 2016, Mr. Smith shared his three main concerns with us. This first was this:

● (1140)

[*English*]

...Shared Services Canada represented a major and unacceptable intrusion on the independence of Statistics Canada.

[*Translation*]

His second concern was as follows:

[*English*]

...the arrangement with Shared Services Canada imposed on Statistics Canada was inconsistent with the confidentiality guarantees given by the Statistics Act to persons and organizations providing information to Statistics Canada for statistical purposes.

[*Translation*]

His third concern was:

[*English*]

...dependence on Shared Services Canada was hobbling Statistics Canada in its day-to-day operations, reducing effectiveness, increasing costs, and creating unacceptable levels of risk to the delivery of Statistics Canada's programs.

*Government Orders**[Translation]*

The former chief statistician says he was not satisfied with the government's response to his concerns. I get the impression that this new bill does not fare much better.

For all these reasons, we hope that during review in committee, the government will accept our key amendments.

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to commend my colleague on his speech. He is clearly fascinated with how important these statistics are. I also want to thank him for the documentation he provided this morning.

However, given that the last part of his speech was pre-empted a bit for lack of time, I would ask him to say a bit more on what he believes to be the government's motivation for insisting on using Shared Services Canada, which will create independence issues, according to chief statistician Wayne Smith.

Is it possible that, after throwing so much money out the window in so little time, the government is now looking to make cuts even in areas that would require investment?

Mr. Alupa Clarke: Mr. Speaker, when I saw my colleague here today, I knew he would be the first to ask a question.

The bill states right there in black and white that its purpose is to strengthen the independence of Statistics Canada and give the chief statistician more tools with which to exercise that independence. We should, however, look at the Liberal Party's record on this issue so far. Its chief statistician resigned last summer, and its bill does not address Mr. Smith's concerns.

Mr. Smith would appear to be in a better position than the government to ascertain what Statistics Canada needs. The government's response to the needs he expressed is inadequate. I would like the government to explain how its bill will address the chief statistician's concerns.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am sure the member can appreciate that there are many Canadians who were somewhat disappointed about the cancellation of the mandatory long-form census. As a party, we made a commitment to reinstate the mandatory usage of the long-form census.

I wonder if the member could provide some insight on the current thinking regarding this form today by the Conservative Party. Do the Conservatives recognize the long-form census as a positive thing and that it would be good to keep it mandatory?

• (1145)

[Translation]

Mr. Alupa Clarke: Mr. Speaker, all surveys are very important to our democratic society. They provide basic information, real objective data that enable members of society, such as academics, political parties, and departments, to design public policy that meets Canadians' needs.

I myself have always been proud to respond to Statistics Canada surveys. I think they are essential to our democracy.

[English]

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I wonder if my colleague could answer this question. Do you believe that Statistics Canada should be independent from any government meddling? How would the Conservatives work to ensure that independence, and would they be committed to that independence in the case of, perhaps, a distant Conservative government following through to maintain that independence?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Just to clarify for the member, I am sure when she said "Do you believe", she meant the hon. member, not the Speaker.

[Translation]

Mr. Alupa Clarke: Mr. Speaker, Statistics Canada must absolutely be independent.

In passing, when we were in government, Canadian agencies and all crown corporations had the privilege of having a government that absolutely respected their independence. We see quite the opposite with this government.

For example, I participated in the study on the future of Canada Post. Government members issued an extremely intrusive report in which they brazenly told the crown corporation what it was to do instead of telling it to carry out its mandate and provide proper service to all Canadians.

The independence of our crown corporations and government agencies is very important. I will repeat that, ultimately, the former chief statistician was not pleased with the government. That may be a sign that the current government does not respect Statistic Canada's independence.

[English]

Hon. Alice Wong (Richmond Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today I wish to join my colleagues in the discussion regarding Bill C-36 and the proposed changes to the Statistics Act. Although many changes are proposed in the bill, ranging from minor language updates to creating a new Canadian statistics advisory council, the broader intent of the bill is to provide greater independence to Statistics Canada, or StatsCan, as I will be referring to it in my speech.

As many of my colleagues have already mentioned, the work done by StatsCan is very important in ensuring the appropriate protection of Canadians' personal information. Moreover, I recognize that the information stored and produced by StatsCan is crucial for wise and evidence-based decision-making by governments and that it provides important information for research and academic institutions.

As a former researcher myself, I think we can all agree that this information must be accurate and trustworthy to be relevant. However, what is even more important is that the privacy of Canadians is protected and that the collected information is kept secure.

Government Orders

I have three primary concerns regarding the proposed changes in Bill C-36. I will begin by speaking about the intended independence of Statistics Canada and the individual serving as the chief statistician, the CS. I will also comment on the proposed Canadian statistics advisory council, and I will finish my debate with the concern about information-sharing and the importance of privacy for Canadians.

I wish to state that the independence of StatsCan and the chief statistician is not inherently a poor decision. However, it is of great importance that should independence be given, there would be sufficient guidelines on what the chief statistician's role would be in how information would be handled. Guidelines regarding where information is stored, how it is regulated, and what information is gathered from Canadians must be considered.

As Bill C-36 proposes, the minister would no longer have direct control or influence over the methods, procedures, and operations of StatsCan. Instead, all of those decisions and processes would be determined by the chief statistician.

We must remember that it is elected officials who are accountable to Canadians, and when we give too much independence to departments, such as StatsCan, we are limiting the accountability of that organization to Canadians.

We answer to the people, and when the people are those involved, as they are in the circumstance of personal information and data, there must be a source of accountability. This notion of accountability extends further to those who oversee the programs and activities of the organization. This leads to my next concern.

Currently, the National Statistics Council serves as an overarching advisory committee. It was established in 1985, with members from all territories and provinces. The council provides insight and advice to the chief statistician regarding StatsCan's activities and programs, as described on StatsCan's website. The proposed Canadian statistics advisory council would not include representation from across the country. Instead, the new council would have only 10 members. They would report to both the chief statistician and the minister and would be tasked with producing an annual public report on the current statistical system.

• (1150)

It is simple math. Three territories or provinces would not be represented on the new council. Their feedback would be eliminated. This shows incredible disrespect for the provinces and territories.

I understand that the government enjoys creating new boards as a means to appoint its friends to new positions. I cannot understand why it could not have simply altered the current council to incorporate new responsibilities. This would help maintain equal representation from across the country.

When we are dealing with Canadians' personal information, we must ensure that those interacting with the data at StatsCan, as a whole, are not seeking to further the government's agenda. This would not only fly in the face of independence but would also undermine the government's accountability to Canadians.

As I previously mentioned, the protection of Canadians' security is of utmost importance. Furthermore, the information collected must

be appropriate and not viewed as invasive and too personal. With the independence of the chief statistician, he or she would be required to generate the questions included in the census or survey. It is important that there be accountability and that the questions generated are not deemed to be invasive, as that could skew results should individuals feel the need to inaccurately represent themselves. I understand that this is not the intent of the bill, but it is one of the concerns I have.

One last point on privacy is that Bill C-36 would remove the requirement for consent to transfer and store information records after 92 years. When information has been stored at StatsCan for 92 years, the data would be moved to Library and Archives Canada, where it would be accessible by all Canadians. I think many of my colleagues would agree that in the case of StatsCan data, it is not the place of the government to determine what personal information is kept private or made public without the consent of Canadians. When we are discussing private information, it is always the right of citizens to give their consent. It is not for the government to determine at what point consent for information-sharing should be waived.

As a former professor and self-proclaimed lifelong learner, I value the academic and research communities and the importance of having relevant, quality data. For this reason, I understand the importance of Statistics Canada and all the work it does. However, I too have participated in research and believe in the respect for and protection of citizen information. The government must strike the appropriate balance between protecting the privacy rights of Canadians and collecting good-quality data.

I look forward to continued debate on the bill, and I hope the concerns I have highlighted throughout my speech will be considered.

• (1155)

Mr. Steven MacKinnon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for her speech and for her constructive suggestions. I am sure some of them will be examined.

One thing we do not hear a lot coming from our friends across the way is praise for the independent work of Statistics Canada. We do not have to go very far to have a Conservative admit privately that the decision to go to the national household survey and upend our previous long-from census was perhaps something they paid too high a price for, given the outcome of that debate.

I wonder if the hon. member could reflect on the expertise of Statistics Canada and on the decision made to go to the national household survey and not make it mandatory.

Hon. Alice Wong: Mr. Speaker, in my speech I mentioned more than three or four times the importance of the work of Stats Canada and recognized the usefulness of collecting quality data. The most important thing to remember when collecting any data is the protection of privacy and the assurance that the data is reliable. I also mentioned in my speech that it is important to have accurate and relevant data in decision-making. That is why, although I have some concerns with the bill, I believe there are good measures in it that will help keep our research data relevant.

Government Orders

What is most important is that the people who are asked to answer the questions do not feel that the questions are too invasive or too personal. Otherwise they would probably give us wrong data, and that data would not be useful.

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there have been debates and arguments that the independence of Statistics Canada cannot be achieved when the government is trying to impose on it an information technology system through Shared Services Canada. On the one hand, Statistics Canada is asked to collect important data and to do it in a way that would be the most efficient, according to its own standards, but on the other hand, we are telling Stats Canada to do it while imposing on it methodology and technology that would impede this ability.

I would like to hear the comments and views of my colleague on this seemingly difference of opinion, and difference in perception on the independence of Statistics Canada.

• (1200)

Hon. Alice Wong: Mr. Speaker, it is important that the independence of Stats Canada be maintained so that a government would not be able to meddle with the data.

However, there should be guidelines as well regarding how the data is stored, the reach of the chief statistician, how the information is collected, and also how the questions are designed. All these are concerns that I have regarding the independence of StatsCan. Of course, I believe that it should be independent, but also there should be guidelines.

Ms. Dianne L. Watts (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as my colleague has already mentioned, she is a doctor and a professor and understands research and data. I just want her to comment on the National Statistics Council, its diversity and experience, and what her thoughts are on reducing the size of the council.

Hon. Alice Wong: Mr. Speaker, this is one of the concerns I mentioned in my speech. That portion of the bill is my major concern, because we have 13 provinces and territories, but in the new council the Liberals are proposing, there are only 10 members. This means that three provinces and territories will not be represented. If we want to have feedback from all the provinces and territories, this part must be amended. We should always include all representation, and their feedback should not be eliminated. This is one of the parts which the government needs to look at to make sure that the respect for all provinces and territories is there so that we will have collected data and feedback from the whole nation.

Hon. Michelle Rempel (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I rise today in the debate on Bill C-36, an act to amend the Statistics Act.

My understanding is that this bill was introduced by the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development on December 7 of last year. It proposes amendments to the Statistics Act with the purpose of strengthening the independence of Statistics Canada. That truly is the rub in this bill. Will this bill actually achieve that?

What this bill purports to do is it would appoint the chief statistician during good behaviour for a fixed renewable term of five years, removable only for cause by the Governor in Council. It would also assign the chief statistician powers related to methods,

procedures, and operations of Statistics Canada. What does this change in the bill practically do and where do some of my concerns lie?

First of all, while the minister would still have the ability to issue directives on statistical programs, which means being able to have some ministerial or government oversight on various statistical programs, he would no longer be able to issue directives on methods, procedures, and operations.

It is incumbent on the government to provide more information to Parliament on why it feels that change needs to be made. To me, I think there is actually a functionality of Parliament that could be lost in that particular change. Certainly the minister and his department would, from time to time, require some directive on those particular issues, and making this change might impede their progress on certain efforts there. I would be interested in hearing from the government specific examples or cases which it felt led to the necessary precipitation of this particular change.

The chief statistician may require any directive given to be made public and in writing before acting on the directive. I am not a statistician. My background is in economics. However, for anybody who is doing any sort of research methodology, there might be a survey bias or sample bias or failings in statistical methods if that publicity happens in the wrong format. Certainly the minister might have some interest in that particular component of it as well. Again, I would like to hear from the government about why it is making this particular change, and if there were cases presented to the minister that precipitated this change proposed by the bill.

It is also my understanding that even though this might not be the specific intent of this change in the bill, the chief statistician could now have authorization to choose where data is housed. That is a big concern. I know that privacy and data management are concerns for many Canadians. We have been talking about cybersecurity in various forms and shapes in parliamentary committees and through different pieces of legislation here in the House of Commons.

The government needs to clarify whether or not through this bill the chief statistician would have the authorization to change the data storage locations. My understanding right now is that there is an agreement that much of our data will be stored at Shared Services Canada. There is a broader policy discussion around Shared Services Canada and data management.

I think there would be agreement on all sides of this House that any decision to be made on the warehousing of very sensitive data that Statistics Canada might decide to collect should be informed by ministerial oversight. Prior to this bill passing, the government needs to clarify whether or not it would amend the portion of the bill that might allow that to happen. I certainly would not want to see the chief statistician, who is essentially not accountable to anyone, make an overarching decision on where that level of sensitive data would be housed, especially when there has been parliamentary direction to the housing of data made to date. I might add, just to contextualize this, let us say that the chief statistician chose to use a third party to house some or part of the data. There could be security concerns.

Government Orders

● (1205)

While the whole privacy component sounds sort of dry, it is quite valid. Again, it is incumbent upon the government to ensure that component is clarified and perhaps removed from this bill. I do not think that is an appropriate power for the chief statistician to have.

The chief statistician, under this change, would also have authority to develop questioning within surveys. There is a whole debate around that. We could spend hours talking about how sensitive or how invasive a survey from Statistics Canada should be and what the requirements are to that effect.

I was talking to a colleague at one point about how certain data collection around agricultural activities on farms could be used by businesses to form monopolies and price gouge and all these sorts of things. Many Canadians are very sensitive about the types of information that they share.

Again, I almost feel like the bill is a solution in search of a problem. The government has not really explained why it would give this power to the chief statistician. If there have been particular instances that the Liberals feel that removal of ministerial oversight on this particular issue is beneficial, I think they need to explain that to Canadians. Again, this is within a bill that might seem benign in so many different ways, but this is very impactful on the lives of Canadians. My question on that point is why? I do not understand.

Many of my colleagues have talked about the fact that the bill would create the Canadian statistics advisory council. It would be comprised of 10 members and would replace the National Statistics Council. The council would advise the chief statistician and the minister and would focus on the “quality of the national statistical system, including the relevance, accuracy, accessibility and timeliness” of the statistical information produced. Under this bill, the council would be required to “make public an annual report on the state of the national statistical system”.

The government has produced no evidence as to why it would make this change. This seems crazy. We are replacing a board. I want to refer to a quote on this. The National Statistics Council, which this bill is trying to dissolve, has been in place to advise the chief statistician since the 1980s. It is made up of 40 experts and has been described by the UN as, “a bulwark in defence of the objectivity, integrity, and long-term soundness of Canada's national statistical system”.

With this bill, the Liberals are trying to replace a body that has been described by the United Nations, which the government is quite fond of, as something that is fantastic and working great with a council that is appointed by the government. Given the powers that this council is going to have and the fact that the government is changing it from something that is quite objective and working well, it begs the question, why are the Liberals doing this? Why would they replace this council with political appointees?

Again, there is no evidence in the bill and there has not been any evidence with concrete examples presented in speeches by my colleagues opposite as to why something that is functioning well needs to be replaced. I feel like this is almost something that somebody who wants to be appointed to this new board cooked up

and gave to the minister and it was put in this bill. It just makes no sense.

Even so, if the government wants to come forward and say that the NSC is not functional in five or six different areas, then why not just give it a revised mandate? Look at the terms of reference under which the NSC operates and revise them.

I want to park that point for a moment, because in the latter half of my speech, I want to talk about why we are even spending parliamentary time with this bill as a priority. However, to continue on, my colleague who spoke earlier talked about how the NSC has representation from all corners of Canada. My understanding is that with the reduction in numbers, there will definitely be regions of this country that will lose their representation on this board.

● (1210)

That is important, because when looking at the priorities of Statistics Canada and the scope that is currently there, representation from each corner of the country is important. This is why we have Statistics Canada. It looks at regional differences in different types of datasets, which inform us on the best public policy options to take. I am concerned that the reduction in membership will remove the breadth of representation on the board right now.

The bill would no longer require “the consent of respondents to transfer their Census information to Library and Archives Canada and repeals imprisonment as a penalty for any offence committed by a respondent.”

We often talk about consent rights in this place in a wide variety of contexts but consent on information sharing is a topic that Parliament should be seized with. I would suggest that the bill perhaps violates the consent rights of Canadians in this regard. That is certainly not transparency. That would be the opposite of transparency. It is incumbent upon the government to talk about something that is not in the bill right now and that is how it plans to safeguard the consent rights of Canadians as to their information being shared before the bill is passed.

The bill would amend “certain provisions by modernizing the language of the Act to better reflect current methods of collecting statistical information”. That seems reasonable to me. Our legislation in this regard should not be static. We should make sure that our legislation reflects technological advancements and new methodology. That does seem reasonable to me.

The bill will head to industry committee should it pass the House. Industry committee will be seized with hearing witnesses on some of the points that I just raised.

Government Orders

Why is this legislation a priority? This is going to be the third bill that comes through the House of Commons and goes to industry committee and yet none of the bills have had any sort of reference to a jobs plan, innovation strategies, or anything that could particularly help Canada. My question is just simply: why? Why is this a legislative priority of the government? Why is this a priority of the House of Commons, which could be debating issues of much greater importance?

We are talking about statistics and the importance of statistics and I would like to give the House some statistics. Right now, my province has seen a change in unemployment rates in roughly an 18-month period from essentially the natural rate of unemployment in my home city of Calgary to over 10%. This is a sobering statistic.

When I think about what industry committee and the House should be seized with as opposed to changing the structure of the National Statistics Council and spending hours of debate on this, I have to wonder why are we not talking about how Canada's trade policy could be bolstered in light of some of the decisions that are being made in the United States right now. I would love to spend hours debating some strategy in terms of how we can take advantage of the opportunities created by the Canada-European free trade agreement. These are the things that industry committee should be seized with. The fact that the government wants to send this legislation to industry committee seems like it is filibustering that committee. It is very strange.

There are some other things I would like to see come out of industry committee as opposed to this legislation.

We talk about economic diversification in Alberta, which is something I have been interested in during the course of my parliamentary career. Why is industry committee not talking about a jobs plan that could create broader economic conditions for growth? I am speaking of things like a lower tax climate, especially when we look at the changes being made in the United States.

I hear colleagues in the United States saying that the new administration is going to be lowering taxes in several key areas that are going to render investment opportunities in Canada unattractive. Why is industry committee not studying the Canadian tax system, especially the proposed tax increases by the government, and how that will affect the competitiveness of our industries and our investment climate? That would be a great study for industry committee to look at. It could refer some recommendations back to the House. Instead, we have before us a bill that would change the National Statistics Council from 13 members to 10 who are now appointed. It makes no sense.

● (1215)

Something else I would like the industry committee to study that would use statistical data provided by Statistics Canada is how to spur innovation in a country where we have traditionally seen very high publication rates and we have focused on academic research. I fully support academic research and a strong academic research system, but that is where a lot of our investments over successive governments have gone. Why do we not see more industry-sponsored R and D, and why are some of our key strategies for the commercialization of research and development simply licensing technology out of the country? In some of our new and up-and-

coming industrial sectors like the competitiveness and the opportunities we have with clean tech, why do we see such low adoption rates of technology that is grown in Canada into Canadian industry? Why is that happening? Is there a policy that the government could undertake that could incent adoption of Canadian clean tech?

I have great respect for the current president of Sustainable Development Technology Canada. I just spent an hour talking to her about these sorts of things. Yet, I am coming into the House of Commons to debate the National Statistics Council when the government has shown no evidence that this needs to be changed.

If I were sitting on the industry committee, I would love to see the government study whether the impact of the carbon price affects mid-size energy sector companies at perhaps disproportionate ways to larger-sector companies; and whether this is the best public policy option to ensure the growth and development of the energy sector. That would be something that I know people in my riding would be very interested in because perhaps that could lead to a revocation of what I think is a very bad piece of public policy. It would not be tangential for the industry committee to even look at topics around price elasticity assumptions related to the carbon tax and potential impacts on the energy sector and various other industrial sectors as they relate to either job growth or job decline. I think that would be in the committee's scope. These are the things that parliamentarians on the industry committee could be studying.

What the government has prioritized in this bill is essentially reducing accountability from Statistics Canada to Parliament. I do not understand it. It seems bizarre to me.

Something I have heard over and over again from people in my community is that they are wondering why the government has not talked about how to retain skilled labour in Alberta during this downturn. I would love to see the industry committee spend some time in Alberta and go and talk to some of the key trade associations and professional groups like geologists and geophysicists and accountants and lawyers, and our whole services industry that we have taken decades to build up in Alberta. I would love the committee members to talk to those groups of people and ask what changes they are facing in terms of their decision to stay in Alberta or not; and then what public policy options the government can look at in terms of keeping them there, so that if there is an opportunity for further investment down the road, labour is not a deterrent to growth.

In fact, the industry committee could even look at the impacts of skilled labour availability in western Canada in terms of how that impacts jobs and growth in the energy sector. That would be such a relevant, interesting study. I have a hope that it would even get national media attention because that is something that parliamentarians could use their time on that would certainly help jobs and growth in Canada, which I would hope would be the mandate of the industry committee. Indeed, I hope it would be the mandate of Parliament.

Government Orders

I have significant concerns with this bill. To re-emphasize, I do not understand why the government has put this forward. More important, the government really owes an explanation to Canadians as to why it has chosen to spend the industry committee's time looking at this when there are so many other pressing concerns that the committee members could be using, and then reporting back to the House with concrete recommendations that could produce a jobs plan for Canada.

In conclusion, outside of explaining some of the key components that I had at the front end of the speech as to why these changes are being made, I hope that the government will also use the time of this House in a more effective way when it comes to creating jobs and economic growth for Canadians.

● (1220)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in listening to the member, I think she underestimates the importance of Statistics Canada and the work that it does. This is important legislation, contrary to what she might believe. We, as a party, have talked about bringing in legislation to allow for a more independent Statistics Canada. We have done that through this legislation. Therefore, it is the fulfillment of a commitment that was made. It is important to recognize that it is not only Ottawa but many other stakeholders that use the statistical information that is gathered.

The member asked what the legislation does and why we are debating it. It provides for that more independent Statistics Canada. One example of it reinforcing that independence is by assigning authority to the chief statistician to make decisions on several things, such as statistical procedures, methods and professional standards employed for the production of statistics, the content of statistical releases and publications, the timing and methods of dissemination of statistics compiled, and the operations and staff of Statistics Canada. Therefore, I hope the member will recognize that this is important legislation, and will vote accordingly.

Hon. Michelle Rempel: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite made an implication that I did not refer to in my speech. I do not think anyone here is underestimating or trying to diminish the importance of Statistics Canada to the work that we do in this place. In fact, it is vital. I am constantly asking for statistical analyses from the Library of Parliament when I am doing research that pertains to debating legislation in this House. There are so many people in this country who rely on this data.

However, this is a procedural bill. It changes the functionality of how Statistics Canada operates. It is not about diminishing its importance. Rather, the member opposite did nothing to say why this is a burning, pressing issue that the House of Commons should be seized with. Anybody who is watching this debate today will be saying, "Wait. What are they talking about? Why is this a problem?" This is not an issue for the front page of the newspapers. I have never had an email written to my office about the need to change the National Statistics Council from 13 members to 10 Liberal-appointed members. I would be hard-pressed to find anyone in this place who has received an email from a constituent to that effect. Therefore, the member opposite has unfortunately done a woefully inadequate job of trying to convince the House that this is a matter of significant burning import for Canadians.

● (1225)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech and comments.

There is one thing bothering me about this whole business of Statistics Canada. I believe we all agree on the importance of having reliable and objective data that can be compared over time. However, I am rather troubled by the fact that the chief statistician resigned in most vehement protest over the Liberals not keeping their promise about the independence of Statistics Canada.

Does my colleague share this concern? What does this say about Liberal promises?

[*English*]

Hon. Michelle Rempel: Mr. Speaker, I certainly share the deep concern of my colleague about the ability of the current government to keep its promises. When we are talking in the context of what is important to Canadians, the government has really shown Canadians a lack of care and concern with respect to fulfilling anything.

In terms of what my colleague is saying about independence, oversight, and the like, my colleagues across the way could have an opportunity by using their time in this place to deal with such things as the job crisis in Alberta, but are not. Rather, they are raising taxes, and changing the National Statistics Council. On behalf of everyone in the House, I thank the employees of Statistics Canada and the chief statistician for the work that they do to inform us. However, if they were in our shoes, I think that they would also be asking why we are debating this. I would love to see the statistical analysis on the number of Canadians who think this is a matter of import that should be raised, first and foremost, in the House of Commons.

Mr. Phil McColeman (Brantford—Brant, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member mentioned how thin the legislative agenda of the government was when we were spending this much time debating the redesign and re-engineering of a few procedural things for Statistics Canada to help it be more independent.

We have some concerns with the fact that certain regions of the country will not be represented in the oversight in governance and that there would be no ministerial accountability, hence, nothing from the House of Commons that could hold the government to account on these changes.

I come from Ontario, a province that is suffering from an energy expense crisis. Premier Wynne has taken it upon herself to redesign and re-engineer how we deliver and pay for our electricity. This means people right now, in the coldest weather of the year, are having a hard time just paying their electricity bills. I bring that to this debate simply because we know the government has imposed a carbon tax, but the analysis of who it affects the most has been redacted on the documents we have given to show the effect on some of the middle and low-income earners and how they are trying to cope with that expense.

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I ask my colleague again to not only comment on how thin this legislative agenda is, but on some of the more pressing issues, especially from my province.

Hon. Michelle Rempel: Mr. Speaker, my colleague brings forward such an important issue at which the industry committee could be looking, the issue of energy prices in Canada as it relates to Canada's competitiveness to attract industries and the concern we see with in the Canadian public.

I hear concerns from people across the country on Canada's ability to keep manufacturing jobs in Canada. Therefore, if we look at electricity and energy as a key input cost to our manufacturing sector, regardless of where they are located, but certainly those in Ontario, especially with what the American government is about to do in reducing regulatory burden and taxation on these types of sectors, why would the industry committee not be looking at things like energy costs in Ontario and coming up with public policy options to perhaps counteract the woefully inept and morally bankrupt Wynne government? We should be looking at how we can help save Ontario from the clutches of Kathleen Wynne. The industry committee could definitely be seized with that.

Beyond that, we also could be looking at the impact on confidence when we have such a detrimental policy that seems like something with which the industry committee could be entirely seized. Yet, we get changing the National Statistics Council from 13 members to 10 as a priority of the current Liberal government.

• (1230)

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I must concur that the situation in Ontario is beyond conscience in as much as the people of Ontario are being gouged in their energy costs and people are being driven from their homes. That is just not acceptable.

In regard to the bill before us, I have listened carefully, and my question for the member is this. In light of all she has said about the importance of statistics and how they are utilized, do the Conservatives still believe the long-form census should be eliminated, or would they keep it? As well, do they believe that access to Statistics Canada should be unrestricted by fees and copyright constraints?

Hon. Michelle Rempel: Mr. Speaker, I am a Conservative, so one of my first questions is on the sustainability in cost-of-government programming as it relates to our fiduciary responsibility to the handling of taxpayer dollars.

The question my colleague raises about fees, etc. to obtain Statistics Canada data would be a fantastic study for the industry committee. We could look to see if there are any barriers to access, how it affects jobs and the creation of growth, public policy, the ability of NGOs or average Canadians to access that data, and how that could impact the economy one way or another. What a fantastic study for the industry committee. Yet, the industry committee will be talking about the National Statistics Council and changing it from 13 members to 10 Liberal-appointed members. I would love for my colleague to stand in the industry committee and say something about that.

I am a Conservative, so my first question would be how much it would cost the government, how much revenue would be created by

those types of fees, and what would be the opportunity cost of removing it. That seems like a perfectly reasonable discussion to have in the industry committee. Yet, we have Bill C-36 as the Liberals' legislative priority.

Mr. Robert Sopuck (Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, CPC):

Mr. Speaker, before the House rose in December, the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development introduced Bill C-36, an act to amend the Statistics Act. This proposes a number of amendments to the Statistics Act that are intended to provide more independence to Statistics Canada and the chief statistician. However, in order for members of the House to properly debate these changes, it is important to first list all of the sections of the act that will be amended or added.

First, these changes will give sole responsibility to the chief statistician to decide, based on his or her professional opinion, how to carry out the methods and procedures of all statistical programs. This includes the collection, compilation, analysis, abstraction, and publication of all statistical information.

This last sentence is extremely important, because it touches on the issue of sampling theory. There is an old saying in computer science, and we all know it, "garbage in, garbage out". I am happy to say that my understanding of Statistics Canada, and I am old enough to remember when it was called the Dominion Bureau of Statistics, is that it has developed a worldwide reputation for competence. The phrase by Mark Twain certainly does not apply to it and Twain, quite wisely, said there are "lies, damned lies and statistics". I think Statistics Canada has proved Mark Twain wrong.

My sampling theory is very important. This is how we get the information we need to largely run society. What we are trying to do is determine the characteristics of a population. The population, one could say, are all of the voters in Canada. That is the population. We would never be able to sample all of the voters in Canada. The essence of statistics is to draw a sample of, in this case, the voters of Canada.

We are all familiar with political polls. The first thing I look at in polls is what the sample size is, what the distribution is across the country, what the distribution is by gender and age, and what the distribution is by education level. Each of those is a parameter. When the parameters change, the results change. In terms of what Statistics Canada does, it is critically important that it gets the sample size and the distribution of the sample correctly. In order to be a good sample, it must be random and independent from all other samples of this population. That is how we get accurate information.

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Under this bill, the chief statistician would have full authority over the content within statistical releases and publications issued by Statistics Canada, and how and when this information would be circulated. Furthermore, the chief statistician would be responsible for all operations and staff at Statistics Canada, and would be appointed for a fixed renewable term of five years.

In addition, the bill would establish the Canadian statistics advisory council, which would be comprised of 10 members and would replace the National Statistics Council that has been functioning since the mid-1980s. Why the Liberal government wants to replace the National Statistics Council, a model that has worked for almost 40 years, with a new 10-member Liberal-appointed council is beyond me, but this is in the bill. The new council would advise the chief statistician and minister, whereas the National Statistics Council solely advises the chief statistician. This is obviously a distinction without a difference.

In terms of the sample of the statistical experts in Canada, one would think that a council with more members on it, more representation from across the country, and more representative of disciplines, scientific, technical, and industrial disciplines, would be better in advising the chief statistician. I, for one, will be looking very closely at the qualifications of the new statistics council.

• (1235)

Within its mandate, the Canadian statistics advisory council would focus on the quality of the national statistical system, including the relevance, accuracy, accessibility, and timeliness of the statistical information produced by Statistic Canada. This obviously means that these individuals had better be experts in statistics. Statistics is a very complex field. It is very difficult to generate accurate information without doing exhaustive analyses. This council would also be required to make a public annual report on the state of the statistical system.

I am going to segue into the area of education. I think this is a positive suggestion for the new council and indeed Stats Canada as a whole.

Not every Canadian is fortunate to have been trained or partially trained in statistics and few are actually exposed to the discipline itself, how it creates the information we all need. However, every Canadian is affected by statistical analysis. Whether we vote, or purchase industrial products, or we farm, statistical analysis is extremely important. We often hear poll results that are accurate to 19 times out of 20. Again, there is a very complex theory behind that. Therefore, I would make a recommendation for the new statistics advisory council that it graft on a public education program in statistics, given how vital statistics are to any industrialized country.

I am a very strong supporter of data that is gathered accurately. It is this data and the subsequent analysis that guide much of industrial policy, economic development, and also guide decision-makers as to ways they can make proper decisions for their companies, their constituents, or indeed their country.

As well, Bill C-36 would allow for the transfers of census information from Statistics Canada to Library and Archives Canada after 92 years, without the consent of Canadians. We said that

Canadians had to consent to do this. This is a change. Once transferred to Library and Archives Canada, this information would be made available to all Canadians.

Finally, it would repeal imprisonment as a penalty for any offence committed by a respondent. Additionally, it would amend certain sections to make the language more modern and eliminate discrepancies between the English and French versions of the act.

After reading the bill at length, it has become evident that many aspects could be of concern to Canada and will need further discussion. It is our duty as opposition to critique and highlight any issues that we find evident in all legislation put forth by the government. As such, I will shed light on some of the concerns I have regarding Bill C-36.

Our Conservative Party strongly supports the work that Statistics Canada does and the key statistical data it provides. The Conservative Party of Canada is clearly the party of working people and economic development. Much of the economic development in our country is guided by good statistical work, much of that provided by Stats Canada. Indeed, Statistics Canada, as evolved from the former Dominion Bureau of Statistics, has developed a global reputation for competence.

We know how important this information is for governments, public policy-makers, the research and academic communities, the agricultural communities, the fishing community, the industrial community, the energy community, and it is vital to anyone who uses Stats Canada data for any purpose. In other words, they need to know they can trust its accuracy and quality.

However, the privacy of Canadians is most important, and fostering an environment that builds trust between Canadians and Statistics Canada is crucial. The Liberal government must ensure that the right balance is struck between protecting the privacy rights of Canadians while collecting good quality data.

• (1240)

As we saw in the last U.S. election, the issue of the security of electronic information was front and centre. Canadians have to trust, implicitly and explicitly, that the data they provide to Statistics Canada will be kept secure. This is absolutely crucial.

If Canadians do not trust Statistics Canada, they may be tempted to provide the wrong information or segue out of the program as best they can to avoid any hint of their information getting into the wrong hands. The privacy of Canadians has to be a primary objective of Statistics Canada.

In the past, Canadians have expressed concern about the questions asked of them in the census and in surveys conducted by Statistics Canada. They found questions, such as the number of bedrooms in their home, what time of day they leave for work and return, and how long it takes them to get there, to be an intrusion on their privacy.

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With the changes the Liberal government has proposed in this bill, the minister would no longer be able to issue directives to the chief statistician on methods, procedures, and operations. This means that the chief statistician would have sole authority to ask any questions he or she deemed fit on a census or survey, including those Canadians found intrusive.

The independence of scientists and technical people is very important, because without that independence, they are not able to conduct the objective research that determines the correct approach on many issues. Having said that, as this is a public agency, I have as a principle, and I think it is a principle for all Conservatives, that at the very end of the chain, there needs to be an elected official at some point. There can be all the safeguards so that the elected official does not interfere with professional and technical projects that are clearly apolitical, although it is very difficult in this day and age to find anything that is apolitical.

To have an unelected staff person, no matter how conscientious, completely out of any chain of command with an elected official would mean that citizens would have no redress if they found a census form to be offensive. They would have no way to talk to an accountable elected official and express their concerns. Obviously, not every citizen gets his or her way when talking to an elected official. However, someone who is elected listens in a different way than someone who is appointed.

Again, if this occurs, this could potentially result in the creation of distrust and cynicism towards Statistics Canada by the public and hinder the quality of data it oversees. Moreover, with the abdication of responsibility by the minister to the chief statistician, who would be responsible for answering to Canadians when they raised concerns regarding the methods used? This is an important question that, quite frankly, seems to me to be the opposite of an open and transparent government.

As well, I would like to touch a bit more on the section of this bill that amends the responsibilities of the chief statistician. The current changes state that he or she will “decide, based strictly on professional statistical standards that he or she considers appropriate, the methods and procedures for carrying out statistical programs regarding the collection, compilation, analysis, abstraction and publication of statistical information that is produced or is to be produced by Statistics Canada”.

One would hope, as well, that there will be an ongoing evolution within Statistics Canada, because statistical methods do change from time to time as new research develops new methods of statistical analysis. A research and development component would be important.

It is our job, as the opposition party, to highlight any implications a bill may have, regardless of intent. Even though it may not be the intent, this bill authorizes Statistics Canada to house all of its data wherever it chooses. If the chief statistician would like to move the private information of Canadians to a third party, he or she would have the ability to do so if this bill becomes law.

Again, this is quite concerning. The security and safety of Canadians and their private information should be the top priority of any government. Any use of a third party to house this data could

create security concerns, and again, damage the view Canadians have of Statistics Canada. If they do not have faith in Statistics Canada, as I said earlier, they will be reluctant to provide the information the country needs.

●(1245)

The Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development has also suggested that a Canadian statistics advisory council be created to replace the National Statistics Council. The new council would comprise 10 members. For those who do not know much about the National Statistics Council, it is already in place. According to Statistics Canada, the National Statistics Council advises the chief statistician of Canada on the full range of StatsCan's activities, particularly on overall program priorities. The council was created in 1985 under the Mulroney government and currently has representatives from all 13 provinces and territories. This is very important.

While the new council would provide insight to the chief statistician and the minister, as opposed to only the former, and would produce annual reports on the state of our statistical system, it would not have full representation from across Canada. This could result in one area of the country being favoured over the other, which is not fair to Canadians in those parts of the country.

I am going to talk a little about agriculture. I represent Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, a primarily agricultural constituency. In my time studying statistics, most of our textbooks actually came from agricultural colleges. Agriculture, and agricultural researchers, developed much of statistical theory. In fact, my third year statistical textbook was from Iowa State University and was written by two agricultural professors. They developed techniques like the Latin square and other methods for doing crop research. The research developed by agriculture has been used in all other disciplines that use statistical analysis. If I had my druthers about this particular new body the Liberals are proposing, I would strongly recommend that agriculture have a significant presence on the council, given the history agriculture has had with the development of statistical theory.

There is also fisheries. As a fisheries biologist myself, back in the days when I was doing fisheries research, everything we did was based on statistical analysis. For example, we would do things like age-length regression, where we would look at the size of a fish and determine its age and determine the growth rate. Those statistics were extremely important in developing fisheries management policy.

The natural resources industries, which include agriculture, fisheries, and energy, need to be represented on the council. Actually, I would say they need to be overrepresented. We need academics who are professors of statistics, for sure. Again, large organizations and agricultural institutions all employ statisticians. Having practical, on-the-ground people who have experience in the real world doing real-world analyses the public needs, would be very important.

In closing, we are extremely fortunate to live in our democratic society, where the rights of citizens and the protection of those rights are treated with the utmost importance, so we need to maintain the right of privacy under the new Statistics Act, Bill C-36.

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One cannot overestimate the importance of statistical analysis in our everyday lives, much of which we do not see in our day-to-day lives. The decisions that governments, institutions, industries, and universities make, by and large, are based on statistical theory. Under Bill C-36, it had better be good statistical theory.

• (1250)

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have to say that I am a bit confused. I was confused by the bill, and now I am a bit confused by the debates in front of us. I was confused by the bill, because the Liberals promised that they would bring back the mandatory long-form census, and that is not actually in the bill, and they promised in their platform that they would make Statistics Canada fully independent, and of course, that is not in the bill either. I do not think my confusion is just because it took me 48 hours to get back to Ottawa from a snowy Victoria in February. However, now I have listened to the debate on the bill, and one thing I can agree with the Conservatives on is the fact that the bill before us shows a paucity of proposals, on the Liberal side, for significant legislation.

I just heard the member for Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa talking about the fact that Conservatives believe in the importance of data, but it was the Conservative government that eliminated the long-form census and interrupted the long chain of very important data that was important to researchers across the country. He says that he believes that privacy is really important and seems to be opposed to the fact that after 92 years, information from the census might be made public. He seems inordinately concerned that people are being asked about the amount of time it takes them to commute, which I think is important information for transportation. Finally, he is concerned about the protection of privacy through Shared Services, when it was the Conservative government that came up with the idea of Shared Services, which might result in the improper storage of data.

Maybe the member can explain to me how his position is consistent with what the Conservative government did before.

• (1255)

Mr. Robert Sopuck: Mr. Speaker, we Manitobans, who are often laughed at because of our very fine weather, do so much appreciate when it snows in Victoria.

Regarding the long-form census, this has truly become a red herring. Most statistics is not mandatory. When voters are sampled, it is not mandatory for them to reply. When I was a fisheries biologist and took the fish out of the net, I did not have to ask them. We did it.

The point is that with proper sampling design, a proper sample size, and a proper project design, we can get equally good, if not better, information.

I would recommend that my hon. friend pick up a statistics textbook and look up sampling theory. If sampling is done right, it is astonishingly accurate. Much of what we do in this country, as I said earlier, in terms of decision-making, is based on non-coercive, sound sampling theory.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have to disagree with my colleague's last comment, in the sense that the member is trying to give an impression that we can

take any sample, and as long as it is thorough enough, in terms of size, and we get the information we require, we can get a good sense of exactly what is happening in a broader population.

The mandatory long-form census and the results that came from it, and this is what we heard from our science community, the professionals and individuals who know what it takes to get the job done, is one of the reasons we are making Statistics Canada more independent. That is one of the reasons for this legislation.

Like the member across the way, I went to university and studied some statistics. However, I recognize that there are individuals who have far superior expertise on the issues, and they would say that the mandatory form, for example, was absolutely necessary to validate the type of statistics we need to collect from Canadians.

I wonder if the member would provide his thoughts on the importance of professionals, those who have the expertise, and their ability to contribute to the bigger picture and make sure we get it right.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague opposite is making the assumption that to be professional it has to be a mandatory long-form census, which is clearly nonsense.

Again, to go back to sampling theory, it is extremely complex. If we consider all the members of Parliament in this House as a population, and we ask every one of them a question about something, that is not a sample. We are talking to the entire population, and what we get out of that is accurate.

However, in most cases, we are not able to ask an entire population a question or look at the population of the crop of wheat, for example, in western Canada, so we have to do a sample.

Of course, the qualifications of the statisticians and the type of sampling program they initiate is absolutely critical, but that has actually nothing to do with the mandatory long-form census.

I go back to the point that there are innumerable statistical studies in Canada, in North America, and around the world, that are not mandatory and that provide equally accurate information, assuming the sampling program is done competently.

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there has been a lot of comment, during debate on the bill, about the issue of independence. I will give my hon. colleague a moment to expand on one of the points he made in his speech around independence versus accountability. We indeed brought expert advisers to government to have independence to execute their tasks to the best of their professional ability, but accountability to Parliament and accountability to the voters are also important considerations that we cannot lose track of.

The ultimate independent government agency, independent from an elected Parliament, is a dictatorship where there is not actual accountability to the voters, so I would like him to comment on the chain of accountability as well.

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• (1300)

Mr. Robert Sopuck: Mr. Speaker, again, this is a matter of policy. The minister and the government of the day can make a policy statement that they absolutely will not interfere in the work that the chief statistician does, unless there is gross negligence or enough Canadians find a certain program so deeply offensive that they petition Parliament.

We could set the bar quite high in terms of when a minister would make a comment on a study that the chief statistician was doing. Having said that, if one looks at the history of the Dominion Bureau of Statistics and then StatsCan, one would find that issue rarely came up, unless I am mistaken. That organization, starting with the Dominion Bureau of Statistics, was a group of dedicated, professional statisticians, and I think they have done exemplary work over the years and continue to do so.

It is only us Conservatives who have the principles to actually think citizens are sovereign in their own country, and this is why I am so very pleased to be one of those Conservatives.

Mr. Earl Dreeshen (Red Deer—Mountain View, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for my good friend from Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, one of the questions that has come up is about accuracy and the point that we get so much more accuracy if we have the long-form census.

I wonder if he could comment on the Jedi religion that seemed to really spike up when people were forced to put their religious affiliations on the mandatory long-form census.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: Mr. Speaker, I am part of that religion myself. No, that is not quite true. When we make something mandatory, there are people in our society—good, solid, headstrong, independent people who value their privacy, their personal liberties—who will make a mockery of it, the census.

I go back to the point about the long-form census. If the sample size is 20 people in the country, so it is mandatory, so what? That is a lousy sample. We could have a voluntary census. If we sampled 10,000 people in the country, we would have a much higher rate of compliance, and at the same time, accuracy would be so much higher.

I want to thank my hon. friend for the question, I want to make the point that never in my parliamentary career or when I was contemplating one did I ever think I would be making a speech on statistical sampling theory.

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: Before resuming debate, I would like to inform hon. members that there have been more than five hours of debate on this motion during this first round. Consequently, all subsequent interventions shall be 10 minutes for speeches and five minutes for questions and comments.

[*English*]

Mr. Erin Weir (Regina—Lewvan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I was so looking forward to giving a 20-minute speech on this bill. It really pains me to be limited to 10 minutes, but again I appreciate the opportunity to speak.

The government prides itself on evidence-based policy. Statistics Canada is a critically important institution because it provides the evidence for that evidence-based policy. The independence of Statistics Canada is crucial because, without it, we might end up with policy-based evidence; we might end up with Statistics Canada producing information or failing to produce information in response to political directives. Therefore, if we are concerned about having good governance and evidence-based policy, it is really important that we have an independent professional statistics agency such as Statistics Canada. That is why this is an important piece of legislation.

Why is it a timely topic? It is a timely topic because, just in the past few years, we have had two chief statisticians resign in protest of a lack of independence for Statistics Canada.

The first one of these resignations was Munir Sheikh, who resigned in protest of the previous government's very strange decision to eliminate the mandatory long-form census. This was a decision that was objected to by almost every sector of society. It was a very odd decision. I do not know if it was an attempt to pander to certain libertarian elements, but there was never a big groundswell of Canadians who objected to having to fill out the census. It was once every decade in terms of the full census; or once every five years, if we include the partial census. Therefore, it was a very odd decision, and the chief statistician resigned to protest it.

We actually just had an interesting discussion in this House about the necessity for a mandatory long-form census. My colleague from Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa said we do not actually need to make it mandatory because we can just rely on sampling and proper sampling techniques. However, in order to design the sample, they need to know what the whole population is. In order to know that the sample is representative, they have to at some point have done a census of the entire population. Therefore a mandatory complete census is really the necessary foundation for all of the good sampling work that my colleague was mentioning. He used the analogy of this Parliament, and he stated that if we asked all 338 MPs to respond to something, that would not be a sample; that would be the entire population. That is true enough.

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However, let us try to imagine constructing a representative sample of the House of Commons. In order to do that, we would need to know something about the whole population. For example, we would need to know how many MPs are in each party caucus if we wanted our sample to have the right number of people from each party. We would need to know how many seats there are from each province in order to make sure our sample was regionally representative. Just using that rudimentary analogy, it is easy to see that people can do a lot of good research and statistical work based on sampling, but in order to construct those samples, they do periodically need to have some census of the entire population. That is why almost all advanced industrialized countries have these mandatory census practices periodically. It is a common-sense thing, and we are glad to have it back in Canada, although certainly, as some of my colleagues have pointed out, this legislation falls somewhat short in terms of making it truly mandatory.

The second chief statistician who resigned was Wayne Smith. He resigned quite recently, just in the past few months, to protest the way in which Statistics Canada's arrangement with Shared Services Canada had impaired the agency's independence. This is the real motivation for this bill being brought before the House.

• (1305)

The government, in response to this controversy of Wayne Smith's resignation, wants to be able to say that it is doing something to protect the independence of Statistics Canada, that it is taking action and dealing with the problem.

The odd thing is that this bill does not say anything about Statistics Canada's relationship with Shared Services Canada. It does not propose any sort of alternative model for Statistics Canada to get the IT services on which its important work depends.

While in terms of chronology and perhaps in terms of political positioning, the bill is a response to Mr. Smith's resignation, the content of the bill actually would not do anything to address the problems that motivated Mr. Smith's resignation.

We in the NDP are going to support this bill in order to get it before committee so we can try to make some improvements to it and so we can perhaps address some of these problems. However, it is important to note that in its current form this legislation would fall far short of dealing with what precipitated this crisis in Statistics Canada.

It is worth talking a bit about Shared Services Canada. This was really an attempt by the previous Conservative government to cut corners and to cut costs a bit and to say that, because it had IT services in many different departments and agencies, it would be more efficient to centralize them into one IT agency. There is some logic to that. One can imagine how it might have worked, but as with so many of these efforts in the federal government to centralize functions between departments and agencies, there were huge problems in the implementation and in the execution.

One issue with Shared Services Canada is that all departments and agencies were ordered to transfer their IT staff to the new Shared Services Canada, which made sense. However, Shared Services Canada needs more than IT professionals. It needs administrative assistants. It needs financial people. It needs other types of

managers. The way those people were put in place was that all the other departments and agencies were told that they needed to send x number of administrative assistants, x number of accountants, etc., to Shared Services Canada.

What did the managers in these other departments and agencies do? Did they send their best and most reliable employees away? No, they used it as an opportunity to perhaps send people whom they were trying to remove from their organizations anyway. In that sense, Shared Services Canada was really set up to fail through bad implementation and bad execution.

• (1310)

However, even if we are able to fix Shared Services Canada and get it functioning properly, there is still a huge problem with making Statistics Canada totally reliant on this other entity. By definition, that impinges upon the independence of Statistics Canada. In setting up Shared Services Canada, the government did recognize that there were some agencies in government that were so sensitive they had to have control of their own IT. This Parliament that we are in right now is an example of that. Other countries such as Britain, Australia, and New Zealand also manage to exempt their statistical agencies from their centralized government-wide IT structures.

Mr. Smith has a valid point in suggesting that Statistics Canada could be exempt from Shared Services Canada, and I am really hoping that is something we can look at in committee after passing the bill in the current reading.

There is definitely room to consider other arrangements. Statistics Canada maybe could have its own IT capacity. Failing that, if we do want Statistics Canada to work with Shared Services Canada, maybe Statistics Canada could at least have the option of sometimes going to other suppliers if Shared Services Canada cannot provide the required support. However, one way or another, we need to find a way to give Statistics Canada the kind of technical support and the kind of IT infrastructure it needs to do this critically important research and to provide this critically important information and evidence. I am disappointed that the bill we are considering today really fails to address that problem at all.

• (1315)

Ms. Dianne L. Watts (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a question with respect to making the information public after 92 years. Albeit that is looking at an individual in a vacuum, I am wondering what impact the member feels that would have on family members, children, and grandchildren?

Mr. Erin Weir: Mr. Speaker, it is a reasonable compromise to say that, although we need to have confidentiality, after a period as long as 92 years it is reasonable to make information and records public. It is extremely unlikely that would compromise the privacy of a living person, so I think that part of the legislation is appropriate. It will help with research and genealogy. Obviously, there are trade-offs that need to be made sometimes between making information available for research and protecting privacy. However, I do think that the 92-year guarantee of confidentiality is a reasonable balance to strike.

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Mr. Jim Egliniski (Yellowhead, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my understanding that the new Canadian statistics advisory council will be appointed through Governor in Council appointments. At this point, it is unclear what the application process will look like. My concern is that this is another opportunity for the government to appoint its buddies. Does the member opposite also share these concerns?

Mr. Erin Weir: Mr. Speaker, indeed I do share those concerns. Statistics Canada had a long-standing advisory board that was much larger and represented virtually every sector of society and every region of the country. Of course there are many benefits to that. In an effort to be as charitable as possible to the government, the idea may be that having a smaller body can be a more effective decision-making group, rather than a large body of appointees where it almost becomes an honorific. The devil here is in the details, and we need to know that the government will actually appoint well-qualified, independent people. Therefore, I think there is every reason to be suspicious that may not happen, and is a reason for us, as opposition MPs, to keep a careful watch on those appointments and that process.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there have been some comments from the official opposition today with respect to the manner in which the questions would be created, and the fact that there is a lack of political influence over whether that would come back to the minister or this House. Can the member comment as to what his feelings are with respect to whether the crafting of individual questions should be done with the independent agency or if that is something that should have some political influence?

Mr. Erin Weir: Mr. Speaker, I would agree with the member across the way that the crafting of questions should be left to the independent agency. The agency would not be operating in some sort of vacuum but crafting questions based on what is happening in the country, and what sort of data all of the stakeholders want, including the government. However, the final decision about drafting the questions needs to be made by the agency itself in order to preserve its independence, which is what we are trying to do here today.

Mr. Earl Dreeshen (Red Deer—Mountain View, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to speak today on Bill C-36. As someone who was in a classroom for 34 years teaching statistics, I really do wish that I had 20 minutes to be able to speak on this particular topic. My former students would recognize that it would have been a very short lesson.

The definition of statistics is “The branch of mathematics that deals with the collection, organization, analysis, and interpretation of numerical data. Statistics is especially useful in drawing general conclusions about a set of data from a sample of the data.” Therefore, when we consider this as the main focus for the Statistics Act, I think it becomes important that we look at how all of that data is collected and the rationale behind it.

The member for Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa spoke earlier of many of the different procedures that are there, such as the sampling theory, and the 95% confidence intervals that we hear so often when people talk about a particular survey being accurate within plus or minus 3 percentage points, 19 times out of 20. Well, that is where the 95% comes in. People have to understand how the

standard deviation and variance are developed from all of that, the Gaussian curves or the bell curves that people are put on, and then how we start to analyze it. This is not simply for questions of politics, but business uses this as well. It is very important, which is one of the reasons why the statistics and numbers we look at are so important for everyone in all walks of life.

Some of the commentary we heard earlier was such that as long as we make sure it is mandatory, then obviously we are going to get the best answers and everything is going to work out just fine. However, having sat on committees where we have had opportunities to speak with people from Statistics Canada, yes, they would have preferred that nothing changed so that the process would have been there, but as they mentioned, there are many ways to look at statistical analysis and sample theory to get the same type of results that we had from before. Therefore, it was a political decision to change it, and it is also a political decision to go back. It does not necessarily mean that the data we are going to have in order to do the analysis is going to be any more accurate.

One of the questions I posed earlier to a member had to do with some of the results that we get from the mandatory form, such as the fact that there is a great growth in the Jedi religion, as the question of religion was on the form and people had to write down what their religion was. Some people suggested that result might not have been accurate. Again, it is a position that has been presented.

People will look at some of these questions and wonder what kind of mob approach they can use for them. As we have social media and everything that is going on now, people can pick a question and completely throw it out by putting extra pressure on it. Therefore, these are the kinds of things that have to be weeded out. The point is, Statistics Canada knows how to do that. It has different sampling processes that can manage some of those situations.

Of course, the other thing that has been mentioned is the concept of a 92-year span. If we look at that at this point in time, it would be 2109 before anybody here who has done a census when they were 18 would even have to worry about it. However, over the last 100 years, we have had life expectancies that have gone from the 60s up to the mid-80s. We saw statistical data just today that indicates it was a mistake for the government to take the OAS from 67 back down to 65. Many countries throughout the world are recognizing the fact that people are living longer and they are going to be supported by taxpayers for a longer length of time.

These are the kinds of things that statistics and mathematics certainly talk about, but we sometimes have political influence or a political expediency such that, “Well, that’s what they said, and so if we say something different, then obviously we are going to be on the side of angels.” However, it does not necessarily work that way.

When we look at somebody who lives to be 110 years old, then 92 years after they did a survey at 18, they would be subject to the exposure of their data to the public. All we are saying is that there should be an opportunity for people to be able to opt out of that. We can say that 92 years sounds good, but maybe 120 years would be the number we would need.

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●(1320)

However, we should be aware of the realities that exist and take a look at the consequences of some of the decisions that are included there.

The other question is, who should be making up these questions as we go and poll the public to find out what their thoughts are. I think back to MyDemocracy.ca and its questions. Of course, there was no political influence there because this was given to an outside group that would be able to come up with answers that Canadians would want to present to the government to make decisions on. That was fortunate. There is a possibility that maybe some of those were moving in the wrong direction. I still have people who have taken the Vote Compass surveys. I do not know if they are still in therapy, but they were told that they were Liberals and this has hurt them immensely. We recognize how some of these things happen and we realize that it is not always going to be a 100% accurate result.

My point goes back to the fact that the people at Statistics Canada know how to do this. I am extremely honoured that one of my former students had worked at Statistics Canada. I understand the process and everything that is tied into it, recognizing how important it is that it has different procedures to be able to take bias out of its information. It is really an amazing science and I have been proud to work with that for many years.

While the Conservative Party supports and respects the work that Stats Canada does, we do not agree with some of the provisions in Bill C-36. It is our position that any changes to the Statistics Act should reflect our commitment to accountability and the privacy and security of Canadian citizens.

To further illustrate the issues of the bill, let us look at the proposed amendments that would modify the Statistics Act. With the amendments proposed, the bill would enable the minister responsible for Statistics Canada the ability to appoint a chief statistician for a fixed renewable term of five years, removable only “for cause by the Governor in Council”. The chief statistician would have full authority over the content within statistical releases and publications issued by Statistics Canada and how and when this information is circulated, and furthermore, the CS would be responsible for all operations and staff at Statistics Canada.

The bill would also assign the CS with “powers related to methods, procedures, and operations of Statistics Canada”. This means that while the minister would still be able to issue directives on statistical programs, the minister would no longer be able to issue directives on methods, procedures, and operations. The power would now be delegated solely to the chief statistician.

Here is the first red flag. These new powers would enable the CS to issue directives without it being made public. Bill C-36 provisions state that the chief statistician may publicize directives before acting on them, but does not make that mandatory. This speaks to another provision of the bill. It would no longer require “consent of respondents to transfer their Census information to Library and Archives Canada”. This is also very troubling because this amendment to the Statistics Act could actually violate the consent rights of Canadians and is opposite to transparency. Additionally, with the chief statistician's ability to issue directives on methods,

procedures, and operations, the CS would also be authorized to choose where it is housed. This is the second red flag.

I had the opportunity a few months ago to go to Belgium for the Blue Sky Free Forum on Science and Innovation Indicators through the OECD. There was discussion on metadata, research, and analysis and we saw how important it is to be able to take information, the massive number of data points that are there and to be able to funnel them. We have to recognize the issues that are surrounding that, the cybersecurity side of that as well, and these become critical points that should be looked at as we talk about statistics and how the world is going to deal with them. There is an interaction between our country and other countries as we have universities that do research back and forth, so the whole concept of statistics and the analysis of statistics is extremely important.

●(1325)

I would like Bill C-36 to go to committee so that parliamentarians can propose some much-needed amendments to the bill. Based on that, I am sure that we can work to make sure that accountability to Canadians is not lost by making the chief statistician more independent. It is our duty to make sure the changes to the Statistics Act encourage Canadians to provide full, complete, and accurate data so that when the time comes, they in turn would have access to quality data that is relevant, reliable, and accurate.

●(1330)

Ms. Dianne L. Watts (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would ask my colleague the same question. I know that the information would be made public after 92 years; however, individuals have families, children, and grandchildren. Does the member foresee any issues or impact it would have on families as a whole?

Mr. Earl Dreeshen: Mr. Speaker, certainly people believe there is going to be privacy. I mentioned earlier that some people could actually still be alive when this occurs, as medical procedures advance, and so on, but it is critical to realize that all we are saying is there should be an option based on this. Some people may look at it and say it is fine, and they do not really care, but we do not know what the ramifications would be. There is a law that says if people provide inaccurate information, they could be fined. They would not go to jail, but they could be fined.

It opens up so many new avenues that are certainly not worth going into when all it takes is providing an option for people to say that they would just as soon not have the data made public.

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, again and again I heard the Conservatives refer to the protection of privacy with the 92-year rule for the disclosure of data, that it is not like it is going to be published.

I come from a family that had various twists and turns. My mother spent years of her retirement trying to trace our family history and one of the important sources for that information was the census. I wonder if the Conservatives have really thought about the impacts on families in the future who want to resource their origins and find out where they came from. The census has certainly been an important part of that.

Again, I do not understand how, after 92 years, it would affect anybody's privacy, but it may, in fact, affect the ability of future descendants to find out where they came from and who they are as Canadians.

Mr. Earl Dreeshen: Mr. Speaker, I respect the position that the member has put forward. I suppose when we look at it there may be particular reasons that people choose not to have their data presented. Some people will simply look at it and say they will do it because they are forced to do it, but will wonder who needs to know how many bathrooms are in their house or what their religion is. Those things are helpful for knowing the makeup of communities, but there has to be a place for people to say that what they say and do should be private.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the legislation would enable the chief statistician to determine the types of questions that would be asked. I have had the opportunity, and perhaps the member across the way has also, to look at community profiles, something that allows for all sorts of potential development and different types of programs to go into communities. The needs will vary, and I suspect the questions were discussed well in advance. It is not just one person sitting in a room deciding what will be the 25, 50, 60, or 70 questions. Rather, it is based on consultation with many different stakeholders.

The member made reference to the fact that he is somewhat familiar with statistics. It is a complicated area. I have trust in Canada's chief statistician to make sure the questions are important for all sorts of analyses being done.

Does the member believe there is a need to have more independence within that office? That is something this legislation would provide.

Mr. Earl Dreeshen: Mr. Speaker, I agree that it is very important to have that type of information for community profiles, and there are ways of expanding it so one recognizes what takes place there.

The question is about getting input so we know we have the right questions. This is the point we have been making about the provinces and representation on the advisory committee that is going to be making decisions.

One of the comments earlier had to do with agriculture and how significant it is. This is a mandatory form. Maybe they should be paying attention, though, so they are not demanding that all of the information be entered while farmers are driving a tractor, or seeding, or harvesting, or out calving. These are the harassment sides of it. People look at that and the next time it comes up, they say they will get it done, but it will be done in five minutes' time, and they will be out the door.

If the government really wants accurate information, it has to make sure there is input from everyone, including the public, not just a group of statisticians that are trying to make that perfect model work.

•(1335)

Mr. Alexander Nuttall (Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is certainly an honour to rise today to speak to Bill C-36, regarding some changes to Statistics Canada and some of

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the reporting mechanisms, as well as the council that provides advice to the minister and to Statistics Canada as a whole.

As I have looked across the aisle throughout the last 16 months, I have seen a government that has been slow to action on bills. In fact, the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development has tabled three bills in this House. The first was regarding copyrighted works for persons with disabilities. I know that was something that was worked on prior to the government taking office. The second one was the disclosure of corporate boards, which is actually at the industry committee right now. The third one is Bill C-36, which is on the floor of the House right now.

What we have not seen to date is legislation from the government that is going to tackle the issues that Canadians are dealing with. It actually does not matter what part of the country they are in. For Canadians who are out west, in Alberta, there are obviously many issues with natural resources, with the oil sector, etc. For those in Ontario, manufacturing had a very tough time last year and, quite frankly, it has had a tough time for the last decade. What we would like to see from the government is some action on what it outlined there would be action on in its own throne speech on December 4, 2015.

Turning to this bill, which is obviously hiring a new Statistics Canada director, as well as the 10-person committee that is going to be reporting to Statistics Canada and to the minister, it is interesting that we see a change from 13 persons down to 10. That means there is inevitably going to be territories or provinces that will not be included in this reporting structure. We also see a disbanding of this council without a change in focus, if that is what was being asked for, which essentially gives the opportunity for the government to put its own appointees on this board.

It is interesting. When I was looking through the throne speech, I found an entire paragraph regarding open and transparent government. In it, it says:

Also notable are the things the Government will not do: it will not use government ads for partisan purposes; it will not interfere with the work of parliamentary officers; and it will not resort to devices like prorogation and omnibus bills to avoid scrutiny.

I found interesting that what was not in there was the appointing of cronies, the appointing of friends. What this bill is doing is it is eliminating 13 people who have been appointed in the past and it is appointing what I can only guess will be 10 Liberal friends. The minister appointed 10 other friends previously to the innovation council, which has travelled across the country. They have tabled a report, yet nothing has actually come to Parliament from that report.

What I would really like to see going forward from the government is a change in focus. There are certainly these bills and things we need to be working on, but it is not just what is being proposed by the government, it is also what is not being proposed by the government. The Liberals said in their own throne speech, in the opening paragraph, that Canadians:

....want to be able to trust their government.

And they want leadership that is focused on the things that matter most to them.

Things like growing the economy; creating jobs; strengthening the middle class, and helping those working hard to join it.

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Through careful consideration and respectful conduct, the Government can meet these challenges, and all others brought before it.

I will admit that in the last year there have been some movements the government has tried. I disagree with its philosophy and the ways in which it is proposing changes for our country in terms of tax structures, but it has tried to meet a couple of these in terms of strengthening the middle class.

However, what the Liberals have not done is they have not focused on jobs. They have not focused on opportunity for Canadians. They have not focused on those who are working hard to join the middle class, because what those people need more than anything else is a job. What they need is an opportunity to be prosperous. That just is not being talked about.

● (1340)

We have had the minister in this place at question period. We have had him at committee, speaking about a plan and a strategy that is to come. We have waited and waited. It is now 16 months after the last election and we still do not have a plan to create jobs in our country. Nothing has been put forward by the minister, no bill, no strategy, no plan that delineates what the Government of Canada would do to create an environment where jobs could be created.

It does not matter whether we are talking about the natural resources sector, which lost over 29,000 jobs last year, or the manufacturing sector, which lost 53,000 jobs last year, or entrepreneurs, over 70,000 of whom closed their doors last year, or even agriculture, which lost over 19,000 last year. The government has failed to put a plan or strategy before Canadians.

The three bills brought forward by the minister are things that need to be worked on, but two out of the three of them were on the shelf from the previous government. Two out of three of them were started under the previous Conservative government. What has the minister been doing for the last 16 months? Why has a strategy not been tabled before the House? Why do we not, as an assembly of the people, know what the targets are for the government? What is it trying to achieve? How many jobs is it trying to create? What sectors is it seeking to grow? What businesses, what associations is it working with?

Right now we have zero information on this front, and the longer I sit on the industry, science and technology committee, depending on who we talk to, the more I realize nothing is coming forward. There is no plan. There is no opportunity being created for Canadians. There is no strategy to get those who are out of work, whose jobs have left the country, back to work.

We need to focus on this going forward. It will not be enough to deal with bills, like appointing a new chief statistician. It will not be enough to put a bill that was on the shelf from the previous government regarding copyrighted works before the House. It is not enough to talk about the disclosure of boards. What the people of Canada were expecting from the government was leadership, and what they were expecting from the minister in particular was a strategy to put Canadians back to work, a strategy to ensure that our natural resource sector would rebound, a strategy to ensure that our manufacturing and agricultural sectors would be able to move forward.

What we have is the opposite. We have a minister for jobs, the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, who has not put a plan forward at all to create jobs in our country. We have a Minister of Finance who is raising taxes all over the place. It does not matter whether it carbon taxes, or payroll taxes, or eliminating tax credits, what we have seen is not a jobs minister looking at a strategy to create jobs, but a finance minister looking at a strategy to take money away from businesses that would otherwise be invested in jobs.

The industry committee has had many opportunities to talk about things like carbon tax. Unfortunately it is not something my friends on the other side of the aisle want to speak about. We have had many opportunities to talk about a plethora of items that we could use to at least determine the future of how the Canadian job market would look like. We have not gone down that road. Instead we are dealing with these three bills that are really operational matters.

I would ask today that the minister do his job, that the minister bring forward a strategy, that he follow through on his words that he spoke in this great chamber and put forward a plan for job growth in Canada, a plan to create an environment where Canadians will be prosperous and successful, earn their livings and provide for their families.

● (1345)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I totally disagree with, but appreciate, a number of comments the member has put on the record. We are talking about Statistics Canada and hopefully we will see the bill pass. It is important for Statistics Canada.

However, I take a great deal of exception to this. The member talks about this plan and how he wants it. The plan is there. All one has to do is read the budget. All one has to do is listen to what the Minister of Natural Resources has been talking about. There has been more of a proactive approach to dealing with the creation of jobs and supporting Canada's middle class since the last election than in the previous 10 years under the Harper administration. The Conservatives demonstrated they had lost touch with Canadians, and that is one of the reasons why we have been reaching out to Canadians and explaining the plan to them.

Will the member not agree that in due time Statistics Canada, doing what it does best, will continue to provide us the information that is necessary so we can continue to make plans, and better plans, to grow Canada's economy?

Mr. Alexander Nuttall: Mr. Speaker, certainly I would like to thank the member for his passionate words beforehand. The member may take exception to what I am saying in the House, but everything I am saying is true. There is no plan. We have not seen a single plan put forward with a single measurable thing to put Canadians back to work.

If there is a plan, could the member please stand and tell us how many jobs the Liberals are looking to create with the private sector in the natural resources industry? How many jobs are they looking to create in manufacturing? How are they going to stop those jobs from going to the United States? How many jobs are going to be lost because of payroll taxes?

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The reality is that there is no plan. In fact, I will go further than that. Not only is there no plan to create jobs, the Liberals' plan is killing jobs. Quite frankly, the member needs—

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments, the hon. member for Longueuil—Saint-Hubert.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the debate seems to be getting a little heated. As we draw closer to question period, everyone is getting a little excited.

In any case, I noticed this morning that the Conservatives seem to have changed their minds regarding the importance of statistics, which I am glad to see.

Is my colleague comfortable with the provisions of the bill that would eliminate the threat of jail time associated with the survey while still making participation mandatory?

[*English*]

Mr. Alexander Nuttall: Mr. Speaker, nothing excites me more than standing and responding to the hon. member's question. As we have been going through the bill, there are certainly some changes we would like to see going into committee. I happen to be honoured enough to sit on the industry committee, and we will address those at the committee as they come forward.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague for his passion and his work on the industry committee. I know, being in a neighbouring riding, we talk a lot about jobs and job creation.

Could my colleague tell us what he would do if he were in government?

Mr. Alexander Nuttall: Mr. Speaker, we have made no attempt to hide the fact that we would cancel the carbon tax. We have made no attempt to hide the fact that we believe the payroll tax increase is going to hurt job creation. We have made it very clear that we would like to reduce the small business taxes. In fact, the governing Liberal Party also made it clear it was going to reduce small business taxes, but unfortunately it never followed through on that.

There are a lot of things we could talk about, but I am out of time at this point. I would love to meet with the member outside and we could discuss that further.

• (1350)

Mr. Martin Shields (Bow River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is always a privilege for me to stand in the House to speak. Today, I would like to address the House as the member of Parliament for the riding of Bow River and to speak to Bill C-36, an act to amend the Statistics Act.

Back in a previous lifetime, I remember taking a statistics class and the professor saying that statistics were very interesting. The professor told us that if we wanted to tell the professor what we wanted to prove with our statistics, it would be proven both ways. We were thinking this was a political science class, not statistics class. However, statistics can be very interesting. I have heard many comments made here today, which are enlightening and very interesting.

This legislation would do a number of things, as all legislation brought before us would. There are positives, but not being perfect, there is always room for differing opinions on parts of the proposed legislation. I will share some of those opinions on the pieces I feel should be redressed.

The legislation would appoint the chief statistician for a fixed term of five years, which can be renewable on good behaviour, and the chief statistician would only be able to be removed by the Governor in Council, if absolutely necessary. That is positive.

The minister would be able to issue directives on statistical programs. What the minister would no longer be able to do would be to issue directives on methods, procedures, and operations. That could be limited to the elected MP and minister, and that is just a thought.

The bill would allow the chief statistician to make decisions on where all the data would be housed. This brings up major potential security concerns. Should the chief statistician choose to use a third party to store data, this could mean that Canadian statistical data could be at more risk of being breached. This is clearly not an ideal situation. We need to address this loophole. We live in a world that is fraught with cybersecurity risks. In fact, in the recent U.S. electoral campaign, one of the biggest issues discussed during the foreign policy debates was whether international hacking played a part in influencing some of their presidential and congressional elections.

There are a number of threats. We live in a time where big data is being used for many purposes. It is important that we, as federal legislators, take seriously our role in protecting the private information and data of our constituents. This will be an ever-evolving matter that will require close attention. I hope the chief statistician will be diligent in deciding where the data is stored.

Now, I understand it is with Shared Services Canada, which is an agency of the Government of Canada. Shared Services itself has a number of challenges and issues with which to deal. The question of security is an ongoing concern and one that must not be ignored when dealing with such crucial data.

Another facet of the bill is that it would allow the chief statistician to have the final say on survey questions. This, to me, would be a cause of potential problems that the government may not have considered in drafting the legislation.

Many people across Canada already feel as though survey questions are too invasive as it is. Due to this fact, a number of people will be untruthful on their surveys, and I may have been one of those. This leads to badly skewed data, which is every statistician's worst nightmare, no doubt.

One survey that is very pertinent in my riding is the census of agriculture. There are often complaints from those in the agricultural sector that these censuses are far too encroaching and prying.

The last one I will mention is where the talks about the change in membership. Subsection 8.1(2) states:

The Council is composed of, in addition to the Chief Statistician, not more than 10 other members appointed by the Governor in Council to hold office during pleasure, 20 including one Chairperson.

Statements by Members

As the council exists now, up to 40 members representing all provinces and territories in the country have a view of the survey. They work with it. Now it will be changed to 10 members. Those 10 may not be regional in representation. They may be from just one province or one city area, or they may all be urban, with no rural. We should look into that.

I do have concerns about potential issues with the legislation mentioned above. That being said, I have enjoyed hearing what colleagues have had to add to this debate.

Mr. Steven MacKinnon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have certainly had an interesting exchange of views on this important legislation concerning the independence and, indeed, the excellence of Statistics Canada. It reinforces our government's commitment to building data and informing good decisions.

I have heard all of the points that the member and some of his colleagues have made. Would the member not admit that really what this all comes down to is the fact that on this side of the House, we like evidence-based policy and on that side of the House, they seem to really like policy-based evidence?

• (1355)

Mr. Martin Shields: Mr. Speaker, having been involved in a lot of science in my career, I absolutely believe in a lot of science data.

One of the things I did not have time to mention was the 92-year limit the government put in the legislation. That is not acceptable. No means no if one is dead or alive, and no to data is important. There is science and there is data, and that one should stay dead as long as someone says no.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I find it fascinating to hear the Liberal side talk about evidence-based policy. My question is a direct one to the member who just gave a speech. Would he agree with me that Liberals like evidence-based policy in science until any sort of evidence or science does not agree with their position? Would the member agree with that, because we have certainly seen a history of that around here in the last year and six months.

Mr. Martin Shields: Mr. Speaker, in my past career, I was in situations where we had surveys and information, and whatever the results were, those were the results. We took that information and dealt with it, always believing that what had been said was what we needed to deal with, not make up something else afterward to justify the results. We take the results we are given and then we deal with that information.

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

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: On division.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Accordingly, the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology.

(Motion agreed to, bill read the second time and referred to a committee)

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

CHRONICLE HERALD

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, on January 23 of this year, the striking workers at the *Chronicle Herald* hit their one-year mark in a strike where it can only be described that management was operating in bad faith in not coming to the bargaining table.

Canadian media and real journalism is in crisis in Canada. The *Chronicle Herald* is the oldest independently owned newspaper in the country. I spent a lot of my life growing up in Nova Scotia. I read the *Chronicle Herald* for years, and it is shocking that more than a year has gone by while journalists who believe in their craft and their obligation to the public have stayed out on the picket lines and management has ignored their many flexible responses, including agreeing to a wage cut.

I mark the one-year anniversary with regret and urge both sides to get back to the bargaining table.

* * *

MARMORA SNOFEST

Mr. Mike Bossio (Hastings—Lennox and Addington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is “snow” place like Marmora, Ontario this weekend for the 39th annual SnoFest. This festival has the record as the oldest sled dog race in Canada. As Richard Lowery, one of the organizers, has said, SnoFest was started to help pull Marmora out of economic depression when the mines had closed and they were looking for something to inspire the community and bring everyone together.

It all starts this Friday night with the little nippers race for kids at the Marmora Public School, followed by the Marmora's Got Talent contest. Then we are in for the main event on Saturday morning at the fairgrounds for a 10-mile Nordic six-dog, pure Siberian husky race. There are plenty more races throughout Saturday and Sunday, along with a dance, public skating, curling, food, an artisan show, and more.

There is something for everyone, so mush on down to the races. It is easy to get there from Ottawa. “Gee” onto Highway 7, then “haw” into Marmora.

Statements by Members

●(1400)

DEMENTIA

Mr. Guy Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last week my staff and I completed training with the Alzheimer Society of Cornwall and District to better understand dementia, to recognize its symptoms, and to learn some tips on how to more effectively communicate with those who are living with this disease. I am proud to say that my office is the first MP office in Canada to be certified as a dementia-friendly community.

Becoming a dementia-friendly community is a simple task and will go a long way in dispelling myths about dementia and helping to eliminate the stigma that many of the over half-million Canadians living with dementia feel every day. Three out of four Canadians have been touched by dementia, be it a family member, a friend, or a neighbour.

I urge my colleagues to contact their local Alzheimer Society and tell them they want to become a dementia-friendly community. Together we can become leaders and help offer better service to those in our community who are living with Alzheimer's and other forms of dementia.

* * *

TOM CAMERON

Mr. Dan Ruimy (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today with a heavy heart to celebrate the life of a remarkable man from my riding of Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge.

Tom “Git er Done” Cameron is the stuff where legends come from. Tom became synonymous with Country Fest, Cops for Cancer, and the Royal Canadian Legion, just to name a few. Even while battling leukemia, and against doctors' orders, he insisted on giving his time to his community.

He lost his battle on December 17, but refused to pass until being able to watch children shop for Christmas gifts one last time through his beloved Christmas hamper program. Before he passed, Tom willed to me this tie as a reminder.

He loved his community, his friends, and his family, and he loved his country. In his own words, “if you have time in your life to volunteer, then pay it forward. That's something I've done all my life, and I'm richer for it.”

We are all richer because Tom has been a part of our lives.

* * *

NATURAL SCIENCES AND ENGINEERING RESEARCH COUNCIL OF CANADA AWARDS

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I wish to recognize the presence on the Hill today of pre-eminent Canadians who are this year's recipients of Canada's top research awards.

It is my particular honour to recognize Edmonton Strathcona constituent, Dr. Darren Grant, Canada research chair in astroparticle physics at the University of Alberta. He is receiving the E.W.R. Steacie Memorial Fellowship award. This award will support his

continued world-leading research at IceCube, the world's largest particle detector. Located at the South Pole, it records nearly massless subatomic particles called neutrinos by mining deep, ancient, pure, glacier ice. I am told the study of these contributes to the knowledge of how the universe evolved.

I invite all members of the House to join me in a round of applause for Dr. Grant and all of the award winners.

* * *

TABER FAMILY

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Toronto—Danforth, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our community suffered a terrible loss on Christmas Eve when a fire broke out at a family cottage on Stoney Lake, taking the lives of Jacquie Gardner, Geoff Taber, their sons, Scott and Andrew, and their family dogs, Shelby and Haley.

We met when Andrew started JK with my daughter at Frankland Community School. Jacquie volunteered in the classroom and was an active member of the parent community at Frankland, and later at Moncrest School. Jacquie was a founding member of the Danforth Hunger Squad for Second Harvest and was always there to lend a helping hand.

Geoff was a partner at Osler, Hoskin & Harcourt and worked to support entrepreneurs. Active in the community, he was a cyclist, a leader of the Riverdale Riders, and a coach for Withrow Park ball hockey.

Geoff and Jacquie were dedicated to Scott and Andrew and supported their love of hockey. They were growing up to be wonderful young men. We grieve for their loss but also celebrate all that they helped us build in our community.

* * *

●(1405)

DONALD S. AFFLECK

Mr. Kyle Peterson (Newmarket—Aurora, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Donald S. Affleck, Q.C., who passed away on January 25. Don was a graduate of Victoria College and a member of its football team. He graduated from the University of Toronto's law school and practised law for more than 50 years. He acted as a NAFTA arbitrator, as counsel to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance, and as chief counsel to the Royal Commission on Newspapers.

Don acted in many notable competition law cases. He also co-authored *Canadian Competition Law*, a widely recognized authority. He was not only an architect of competition law in Canada, he was also instrumental in establishing one of the first boutique litigation law firms in Toronto, having co-founded Affleck Greene McMurtry 25 years ago.

I had the honour of working with him for many years. He was a mentor and a friend, not only to me but to all who had the privilege of knowing him. The entire legal community has suffered a grave loss.

To his colleagues at the firm, to his entire family, and most importantly, to his wife Shannon, I offer my deepest sympathies.

Statements by Members

I will miss Don. May he rest in peace.

* * *

[*Translation*]

DAIRY FARMERS

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to rise in the House today to recognize the presence of many dairy producers from across Canada currently in Ottawa to raise awareness among elected representatives of the importance of their industry and milk that is 100% Canadian.

I am proud because my riding is a rural riding that is home to many job-creating dairy farms. These are businesses, often family businesses, that contribute to a key sector in our economy and our society.

I am proud because ever since I was elected, I never miss an opportunity to stand up in the House and defend the issues that matter to me the most, most particularly milk protein imports and supply management.

It is time for the government to take action. The Liberals kept repeating over and over that if they were elected, they would resolve this issue. Now, over a year and a half later, they have done nothing.

With \$3.6 billion in annual tax revenues and the 215,000 full-time jobs the industry maintains, I want to thank our dairy farmers for their hard work and assure them that I will continue to fight on their behalf, now and in the future.

* * *

[*English*]

ANNIEDALE SCHOOL

Mr. John Aldag (Cloverdale—Langley City, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this past Friday I had the opportunity to announce over \$800,000 in Government of Canada funding for heritage projects in the city of Surrey. This funding will not only allow the Surrey Museum to begin its expansion but to also restore the historic Anniedale School, Surrey's only remaining one-room schoolhouse.

Anniedale is Surrey's oldest surviving school building. Built in 1899, it was one of the first schools in the city and was used until 1954. Anniedale School is among a diverse collection of heritage sites in Cloverdale—Langley City, and it reminds us of our community's rich history.

Like many heritage buildings across Canada, the Anniedale School was, until recently, at risk due to neglect or demolition. I am proud to have announced the Government of Canada's involvement in the preservation of Cloverdale—Langley City's unique history.

With Canada's 150th year just beginning, I would encourage all Canadians, and every member in this House, to promote the preservation of our country's remarkable built heritage.

* * *

JUSTICE

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians should be able to expect that the Criminal Code accurately reflects the state of the law. There are multiple sections of

the Criminal Code that have been found unconstitutional and, yet, remain in the Criminal Code. These zombie laws can have serious consequences. That was illustrated last fall when Travis Vader's conviction for two counts of second-degree murder of Lyle and Marie McCann was vacated after the trial judge based his conviction on a zombie section of the Criminal Code.

Fortunately, there is something that the government can do to prevent the serious miscarriage of justice that the McCann family endured from happening again. The government can introduce legislation to repeal zombie sections of the Criminal Code. It is time for the government act. It is time for the government to repeal zombie laws.

* * *

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon (Kanata—Carleton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this weekend I had the privilege of joining school children in my riding as they prepared valentines for veterans. I also received a large envelope of valentines from W. Erskine Johnston Public School in Kanata, filled with gorgeous valentines for veterans.

● (1410)

[*Translation*]

Every year, Canadian schools and organizations are invited to make valentines for veterans.

[*English*]

These valentines are then distributed to veterans in long-term care facilities across the country in time for February 14. I want to make everyone aware of this great initiative, and I would like to inform members that I would gladly accept any valentines for veterans and make sure they get to our veterans, because they deserve our thanks and gratitude.

* * *

NATURAL SCIENCES AND ENGINEERING RESEARCH COUNCIL OF CANADA AWARDS

Mr. Andy Fillmore (Halifax, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today we are joined on Parliament Hill by the recipients of the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada's top research award. It is my distinct pleasure to note that this year's winner of our country's highest award for science and engineering research, the Herzberg Canada Gold Medal, is from my riding, the great city of Halifax, Nova Scotia.

Dr. Jeff Dahn of Dalhousie University is Canada's leader in battery research. Over the course of his career, he has helped pioneer the lithium-ion battery that is used in mobile technologies around the world. However, it gets better. In June of 2016, Dr. Dahn entered into a collaboration with Tesla, where he will use his expertise to improve electric vehicle performance. I would like to mention that this is the first time Tesla has ever collaborated with a university researcher.

Statements by Members

I proudly invite all members of the House to join me in applauding Dr. Dahn on this special occasion, and to once again congratulate all of the talented NSERC award recipients we have with us today.

* * *

WESTJET

Mr. David Yurdiga (Fort McMurray—Cold Lake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today I would like to pay tribute to WestJet airlines for a truly remarkable Christmas surprise and for its heroic evacuation efforts during the Fort McMurray fire.

WestJet's generosity and compassion is amazing. On November 26, at the Snowflake Soiree in Fort McMurray, WestJet hosted 1,000 local residents at an exciting party. Hundreds of gift boxes containing personalized family portraits and WestJet flight vouchers had arrived by parachute from the sky.

In the words of CEO Gregg Saretsky, "WestJet is deeply connected to the community, which is why we wanted to show them how much we care". The event was filmed to create the 2016 WestJet Christmas miracle video. In addition, WestJet has been working with partners to boost tourism. I encourage all members to visit Fort McMurray and experience the boreal forest and everything our multicultural community has to offer.

Thanks to WestJet for being an incredible corporate partner and bringing us some much-needed cheer. Once again, thanks to WestJet.

* * *

[Translation]

NATURAL SCIENCES AND ENGINEERING RESEARCH AWARDS

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to invite my colleagues to join me in celebrating the success of the talented recipients of the awards for Canada's best natural sciences and engineering researchers. Today, I am honoured to pay tribute to three Laval University researchers who are among this year's winners.

Christian Landry was awarded an E.W.R. Steacie Memorial Fellowship for his outstanding achievements early on in his career.

Laurent Drissen won the Synergy Award for Innovation for the partnership he established with ABB Inc. to develop a new instrument that significantly enhances the capabilities of the world's most powerful telescopes.

Finally, Sylvain Moineau received the John C. Polanyi Award for his work, which resulted in important international advances in genome research.

I invite all members of the House to join me in applauding these talented individuals and all other honourees in the field of natural sciences and engineering research in Canada.

[English]

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in sexism, racism, homophobia, transphobia, xenophobia, anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, we are seeing a tragic outbreak of hatred in this country and in the United States. We must speak out and denounce hatred in all of its forms, whether it comes as an anonymous tract left outside a church door, as happened recently in my riding, or whether it comes as a statement or action from the new President of the United States, all of us have the responsibility to speak out against hatred.

[Translation]

Nine days ago, the vicious murders at a Quebec City mosque showed us where hatred can lead. That must never happen again, and that is why we need to talk about it.

[English]

People are speaking out and speaking up. Canadians and Americans are marching, talking, and reacting on social media, because we all understand that hatred is wrong, that love should govern all of what we do in our lives.

Jack Layton's final words were clear:

My friends, love is better than anger. Hope is better than fear. Optimism is better than despair. So let us be loving, hopeful and optimistic. And we'll change the world.

* * *

• (1415)

QUEEN ELIZABETH II

Hon. Peter Van Loan (York—Simcoe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, Canadians across the country joined with all the people of the Commonwealth in celebrating and congratulating Her Majesty the Queen on her Sapphire Jubilee, marking 65 years since her accession to the throne.

Her Majesty has dedicated her entire life to service. As the Queen of Canada, she unites Canadians and gives us a shared sense of identity and belonging to our country.

Remarkably, Her Majesty has witnessed more than half of our country's history over her lifetime, and it is reflected in her admiration for how Canada has grown and matured while remaining true to its history, distinctive character, and values.

As we enter the 150th anniversary of our Confederation, we will continue our loyal dedication to the crown in Canada.

God save the Queen.

* * *

WORLD INTERFAITH HARMONY WEEK

Ms. Yasmin Ratansi (Don Valley East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today is the last day of celebrations of World Interfaith Harmony Week, as adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2010 to promote better understanding of different cultures and faiths.

In Canada, there were celebrations across the country including harmony through music, culture, and dialogue.

Oral Questions

In light of the recent events in Canada and across the globe, the work of World Interfaith Harmony Week is crucial.

I encourage all members to reach out to people of different traditions and backgrounds to build bridges across all faiths.

Canada has long been a diverse and accepting nation, and we must never allow a minority of people to spread hate and create intolerance. Let us all embrace and practise the motto of WIHW: love of the good and love of thy neighbour.

Peace, *om shanti, salaam, shalom.*

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

JUSTICE

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on the evening of July 30, 2008, Vincent Li boarded a Greyhound bus and beheaded 22-year-old Tim McLean.

Today he walks the streets like a free man, and he has even legally changed his name to Will Baker. I think I speak for a lot of Canadians when I say this does not seem right.

Can the Prime Minister assure Canadians he will look for ways to close loopholes that allow killers to change their names and even walk our streets only a few short years after their heinous crimes?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians need to know that they are safe in their communities, and that is why one of the most important priorities of any government is to keep Canadians and their communities safe.

We have a very strong justice system, which we are working hard to continually improve. I am very confident that our Minister of Justice is doing everything she can to make sure that Canadians are safe and that the right framework of laws and justice is in place to protect all of us.

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we know that the Minister of Justice is looking to reform the law in a different way, so when I hear the Prime Minister's response, I cannot help but think that he is more concerned with the well-being of Vincent Li, the man who actually beheaded Tim McLean in the middle of a bus, than he is with Tim's family.

The concern here is that Vincent Li is going to be living not far from Tim McLean's mother. Can the Prime Minister, once again, reassure me that he is going to start putting the rights of victims above criminals?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our hearts go out to the McLean family, and specifically to his mother. I cannot imagine the grief and anguish that she had to go through and that she must continue to experience.

It is the responsibility of all of us in this House to protect Canadians' rights, to protect victims, to make sure that every Canadian's rights are being respected. That is something we take very seriously.

[Translation]

TAXATION

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today, I hope the House will vote to block the Liberal plan to tax health and dental insurance benefits.

Now it looks like the Prime Minister wants to target seniors. He will not rule out the possibility of reducing the age amount and cancelling pension income splitting.

Will the Prime Minister abandon this plan to empty seniors' pockets?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the members opposite are the ones who raised the retirement age to 67 when they were in power. We promised to lower it to 65, and we kept that promise.

We also increased the guaranteed income supplement by \$1,000 for the most vulnerable seniors. We reformed and strengthened the CPP to ensure that everyone can collect a pension in the years to come. We pledged to protect seniors and help the most vulnerable, and that is exactly what we are going to do.

• (1420)

[English]

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is not the answer to the question I asked.

The tax breaks that I am referring to for seniors could be worth, on average, over \$1,000 per senior. Most seniors are already on a fixed income, and they cannot afford to lose this kind of money.

Is the Prime Minister seriously considering this kind of a cash grab on seniors to pay for his out-of-control spending?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on the contrary, this government takes very seriously the well-being of seniors.

That is why we increased the guaranteed income supplement by \$1,000 for the lowest-income seniors. That is why we committed and actually followed through on our commitment to lower the retirement age from 67 to 65. That is why we have strengthened the CPP, which will help seniors but also everyone as they approach retirement.

The fact is that this government is focused on helping our seniors, our vulnerable, low-income, and middle-income seniors. We will continue to do just that.

* * *

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we still do not have an answer.

With over three-quarters of our exports going to the U.S., thousands of jobs are riding on the Prime Minister's plan to renegotiate NAFTA. So far, his track record is not so great. The softwood lumber talks have gone so badly that the Prime Minister did not even include them in the mandate letters to his new Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister of International Trade.

Since the Prime Minister has abandoned softwood workers, why should Canadians have any faith in his ability to protect their jobs when he renegotiates NAFTA?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, since we formed government, we have been working very closely with the American administration, both the last one and this one, to deal with the softwood lumber issue that means jobs for thousands of Canadians, indeed jobs in communities right across the country.

We need to make sure we are preserving market access to the United States. That is exactly what we are focused on.

We continue to engage with the highest levels of the new American administration to emphasize how many Canadian jobs and American jobs depend on a close working relationship between our two countries and smooth flows across the border.

* * *

ETHICS

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister broke the law on conflict of interest during his exclusive vacation for him and a few friends. When the Prime Minister was forced to admit this fact, he said, "we don't see an issue on that".

My question for the Prime Minister is this. Has he personally met with the Ethics Commissioner, and what excuse did he provide her for breaking the law?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have said many times, this was a personal family vacation. I am working with the Ethics Commissioner to respond to any of her questions, and I look forward to continuing to engage with her as questions arise.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Sorry, Mr. Speaker, but knowing a billionaire for a long time does not excuse the Prime Minister of breaking the law.

[Translation]

The Prime Minister can do what he wants to try to distract us and blame others, but the fact remains that this is the first time the Ethics Commissioner has decided to investigate a sitting Prime Minister.

What message does it send to Canadians when the Prime Minister breaks the law and does not think he should face the consequences?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on the contrary, this is a victory for transparency, openness, and accountability. I am very happy to answer any questions the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner might have. It is important for all of us to answer the commissioner's questions on matters that are important to Canadians.

Oral Questions

[English]

PENSIONS

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the billionaire class and those hoping to join the billionaire class.

[Translation]

Yesterday, the Minister of Finance's economic advisory panel suggested increasing the retirement age.

When the minister was asked about this recommendation, he said that the government would, and I quote, "take that into consideration". Increasing the retirement age when seniors are already suffering is a bad idea.

Can the Prime Minister reject this recommendation and confirm that Canada will not increase the retirement age?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we were elected on a promise to lower the retirement age from 67 to 65 and that is exactly what we did. We will uphold that promise.

• (1425)

[English]

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the finance minister's panel recommended an increase to the retirement age. When asked about this proposal, the Liberal finance minister would not rule it out. Instead, he said, "we'll take that into consideration". Therefore, the government is considering forcing seniors to work longer.

I do not remember seeing that in the Liberal election platform. Will the Prime Minister stand up and dismiss this recommendation, and will he tell his finance minister that raising the retirement age is out of the question?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I invite the member opposite to consult liberal.ca where that promise is still written down. We lowered the age of retirement from 67 to 65, the way we promised to do it. That is what Canadians expect of us and that is what we are going to keep to.

* * *

[Translation]

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Hon. Denis Lebel (Lac-Saint-Jean, CPC): Mr. Speaker, over half of Canada's manufacturing output is exported, and 75% of our exports go to the United States.

How should Canada respond given the new American administration's protectionist bent and apparent desire to keep jobs in the U.S.? It could adopt a plan with clear objectives to support our businesses. Such a plan has yet to be announced, however.

What is the plan, then?

Oral Questions

Hon. Andrew Leslie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs (Canada-U.S. Relations), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is working hard to grow the middle class and to support those making significant efforts to join it.

We are working closely with manufacturers, suppliers, and union leaders in Canada. We need to take a team Canada approach. We need to work together, and that is what we are doing. We will vigorously defend our national interests and remain faithful to Canadian values.

* * *

SOFT WOOD LUMBER

Hon. Denis Lebel (Lac-Saint-Jean, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is not very reassuring.

Yesterday, ministers from across the country came to Ottawa to talk about the future of softwood lumber. Today, dairy producers from across Canada are here in Ottawa to voice their concerns. On June 29, I was here with all of our colleagues when the government said that it would resolve the softwood lumber issue within 100 days. However, this has not happened yet.

Do we not have reason to be worried? There is a lot of talk but no action. What is the plan?

Hon. Andrew Leslie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs (Canada-U.S. Relations), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the softwood lumber agreement expired under the previous government.

Our government will stand up and defend the interests of workers and producers in Canada's softwood lumber industry. We will continue to work closely with softwood lumber workers and producers. We do not want to reach just any deal. We want a good deal for Canada.

* * *

TAXATION

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Minister of Finance once again succeeded in not giving a clear answer to Canadians when I asked him whether his government intended to attack pension splitting.

Our fears were justified. Today, the *National Post* referred to another revenue-hungry strategy of the Minister of Finance, which this time concerns the age amount tax credit. The Leader of the Opposition asked the Prime Minister twice about this. The Prime Minister did not answer him.

Can the Minister of Finance tell us, yes or no, whether he intends to correct the errors in administration that his government has made at the expense of seniors?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what I can say is that we will continue our plan to help Canadians across the country, especially the middle class and the most vulnerable.

We started by introducing measures that have really helped the middle class: we cut taxes and increased income with the Canada

child benefit. We will continue to implement measures to improve their situation in the future.

[*English*]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there he goes again. He cannot answer the question. This is bad. If there is really a dodger-in-chief of the government, he must be the MVP of the year.

The reality is that today the *National Post* took another shot against him, talking about an even bigger pot of money for the Liberals, which is the age amount tax credit.

Can we have just once a crystal-clear answer, yes or no, does his government intend to attack his bad judgment and inadequacy to address the issue of finance and public money against the—

● (1430)

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, just to remind the House, this is the government that has moved forward on measures to help the most vulnerable with the Canada child benefit, to help the middle class with reductions in taxes, to help seniors who are most vulnerable. We are going to continue to move forward in this regard.

All of the measures that we put in the upcoming budget and budgets to come will be intended to improve Canadians' situations. That is our goal, because we recognize that it is important for the future of this country.

* * *

INFRASTRUCTURE

Ms. Dianne L. Watts (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on the Government of Canada's website it clearly states that 1,202 infrastructure projects have not started construction. That means that 96% of the projects that the Liberals have announced are not being built and are not creating jobs. Announcements do not create jobs.

For three days I have asked the minister to flow the remaining \$9 billion before the next construction season. He has refused to commit each and every time. When will the minister finally commit to flowing the \$9 billion to communities for infrastructure projects?

Hon. Amarjeet Sohi (Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are doubling our infrastructure investments to create long-term growth and jobs for the middle class, to build a low-carbon economy, as well as strong, inclusive, and welcoming communities.

We have approved more than 1,200 projects. I would like to tell the member that more than 60% of those projects are currently under way, creating opportunities for Canadians.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, mayors in every part of Canada are worried. The government promised them \$13.6 billion for infrastructure projects. However, according to the parliamentary budget officer's report, only \$4.6 billion have been approved.

How can these elected officials, who work hard every day, prepare their budgets without knowing whether the government will release the required funds?

Will the minister stop repeating the same list of projects that he has already approved and finally release the \$9 billion that all our communities need?

[English]

Hon. Amarjeet Sohi (Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me tell the House what the president of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities had to say about our program, “These unprecedented infrastructure investments will mean more growth, more jobs and stronger communities.” Let me tell the House what my mayor had to say about our plans, “Across the board, today’s announcement is a big acknowledgement that cities are critical partners in nation building.” Let me tell the House what the mayor of Surrey has to say, “The city of Surrey applauds the Federal Government’s commitment to providing—”

The Speaker: The hon. member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley.

* * *

DEMOCRATIC REFORM

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, do you know how cynicism grows in our politics? First, we ask Canadians to get engaged on reforming our democracy. Next, we have MPs hold town halls right across the country. Then we spend millions of dollars going back and forth asking Canadians, and in good faith they respond and in droves. They get excited about their democracy, but then Liberals say, “Sorry, Canada, not good enough. That is not the answer that Liberals were looking for.” That is how cynicism grows in our politics.

The Prime Minister campaigned on being an antidote to cynicism, not a brand new source of it, so at the very least, will he find the decency to apologize to Canadians who took him in good faith?

Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I sincerely hope that is not the road that anyone in this House would go down.

It is incumbent upon all of us as Canadians, as leaders, as political leaders in our communities to continue to encourage all Canadians to engage, whether or not they pursue policies that they are championing.

Engagement in our political process is so crucial and so fundamental, and I look forward to working with all members in this House to ensure we continue to encourage all Canadians to engage in politics.

* * *

[Translation]

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Beloeil—Chambly, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we just learned that a Muslim Canadian family was denied entry into the United States. Worse yet, the family members were questioned about their religious beliefs. This is a direct consequence of Donald Trump’s discriminatory policy.

Oral Questions

Will the government finally join the NDP in vigorously denouncing this shameful treatment of Canadian citizens?

[English]

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is clear on continuing the progressive tradition of Canada as being an open and compassionate society. We have been assured by the White House that Canadian citizens and holders of permanent resident cards that are valid continue to have access to the United States.

We will assist anyone with difficulties. We remain an open society that is open to people and ideas.

* * *

• (1435)

TAXATION

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a high-level finance department memo predicted of the Liberal carbon tax that it will “cascade through the economy in the form of high prices, thus leading all firms and consumers to pay more for goods and services”.

This memo focuses on the potential impact of a carbon tax on households. Key findings are blanked out. The government knows the cost to average Canadians of its carbon tax. Why is it hiding it?

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, unlike the party opposite, we understand that taking action on climate change will make us more competitive, not less.

With respect to the document—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. I know members want to hear the answer. We need to hear the answer. No interruptions are allowed, as members know.

The hon. minister of the environment has the floor.

Hon. Catherine McKenna: Mr. Speaker, as the member opposite well knows, the document to which he refers was actually created in 2015 under the previous government. He may know what is in the document.

I would like to also remind the member that it is non-partisan public servants who manage the access to information requests.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): The member is quite right, Mr. Speaker. It was produced the day after the last election when public servants were scrambling to find out how expensive this new party would be to the average Canadian.

In fact, they very dutifully produced a report that said that these costs would cascade down on to middle-class and working-class Canadians.

If that member is so confident in the findings that were produced in that document, she would uncensor it and release it for all Canadians to see. Why will she not?

Oral Questions

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would encourage the member to visit the Government of Canada website where he could actually find the findings of our provincial and federal working group on carbon pricing. I assume that the member has not gone there yet. I would be happy to direct the member to that website.

With respect to access to information requests, those are handled by non-partisan public servants. That is why the document was produced the way it was.

Mrs. Kelly Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the cost of transport is built into every single good and service. When we increase the cost of transporting goods and services with a new carbon tax, we increase the price of everything, making Canadian products uncompetitive. When asked about the economic impact of the carbon tax, the Minister of Transport's response, "it depends", does not inspire confidence.

Could the transport minister tell Canadians if his department has conducted any analysis of the impact the carbon tax will have on Canada's transportation sector?

[Translation]

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government recognizes that the economy and the environment go hand in hand. That is why we are working with the provinces and territories on addressing greenhouse gas emissions and growing our economy. The information the hon. member is looking for can also be found on the Environment and Climate Change Canada website.

[English]

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Conservative members on the natural resources committee demanded that we do an emergency study on the economic impact the carbon tax would have on our energy industry. The Liberals on that committee refused. Now we are asking for data that shows the impact the tax will have on our most vulnerable: seniors and young families. Again the Liberals have refused.

If the carbon tax is supposed to be some sort of job creation revelation, why are the Liberals hiding the facts? Will the facts show that thanks to the carbon tax, all Canadians will pay absolutely more for absolutely everything?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am grateful for the opportunity to remind the House that we all have a duty to meet the needs of our most vulnerable population.

This government has taken historic steps to reduce poverty. We have taken 40% of all children living in poverty out of poverty. We have taken 13,000 seniors out of poverty. We are looking forward to increasing the income security of our seniors. That is a package which we would invite our colleagues opposite to support very strongly.

• (1440)

YOUTH

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the minister of youth told a room full of young people that their skill set is the reason their generation faces precarious work. Unfortunately, this is only one of the many comments made by the government that shows just how out of touch it is. Low-wage, precarious work is not the fault of the millennial generation.

When will the government stop blaming young people, show leadership, and build good, stable jobs for millennials and all Canadians?

Mr. Peter Schiefke (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister (Youth), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are proud of the investments that we are making after 10 years of inaction by the previous government. We are proud of the fact that we are investing \$1.5 billion in our bursaries program, so that more students can go to university. We are proud of the fact that we are doubling the number of summer jobs by doubling the funding for the summer jobs program. We are also proud of the fact that we are investing record amounts in science, technology, and innovation, so that when those students graduate, they will have jobs waiting for them.

There is one more thing. Youth can be proud of the fact that for the first time, the Prime Minister also took on the role of minister of youth and is taking a hands-on approach to making sure they have all that they need to realize their full potential.

[Translation]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Salaberry—Suroît, NDP): Mr. Speaker, once again, the minister of youth has nothing to say.

The Prime Minister and minister of youth issued mandate letters to all of his ministers, but he has not yet written one for himself. That might explain why he is so out of touch with his file and gets heckled by young people during his forums. It might also explain why he never answers my questions, which results in ludicrous situations like what happened last December when the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources answered my question. How is that for accountability?

Will the minister of youth stop hiding behind his ministers, release his mandate letter, and explain what he is supposed to achieve?

Mr. Peter Schiefke (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister (Youth), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in addition to all of the investments I just talked about, our government is constantly engaged with youth. We created the very first Prime Minister's youth council. We created an expert panel to analyze the situation and talk to young people to help them see that we can improve their chances of getting the jobs they want.

We are working hard for youth, and that is what we will continue to do.

*Oral Questions**[English]***JUSTICE**

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Scarborough—Rouge Park, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister gave the Minister of Canadian Heritage and the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada mandate letter instructions to reinstate a modernized court challenges program. Could the Minister of Canadian Heritage give this House an update on the government's progress on this file?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to announce, along with my colleague the Minister of Justice, the reinstatement and modernization of the court challenges program.

[Translation]

This program has helped to hold successive governments accountable for defending the rights and freedoms of all Canadians.

[English]

It has given groups and individuals a strong voice to argue for language rights and equality rights in all spheres of life.

[Translation]

This is good news, and I am very happy to announce it here today.

* * *

*[English]***PUBLIC SERVICES**

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have learned that two-thirds of the Super Hornets in the U.S. navy have been grounded and are awaiting parts due to high costs. The Super Hornet now costs more to buy than the F-35. This is what happens when one buys a fighter jet at the end of its production life: higher costs and lower performance.

Will the Liberals proceed immediately to an open and transparent competition, and stop this dangerous and costly sole-source purchase of Super Hornets?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are committed to making sure that our women and men of the Canadian Forces, including our air force, have the right equipment. That is why we have committed to an open competition that we will be launching. Also, we are committed to making sure that we have the right equipment now to fill all the gaps. That is the reason we are having the interim purchase which the Minister of Public Services and Procurement is currently discussing with Boeing.

Mr. Alupa Clarke (Beauport—Limoilou, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is the main point: it is not the right equipment.

• (1445)

[Translation]

The Super Hornets will be operational for about 12 years, at most, and will cost Canadian taxpayers over \$300 million per plane. Worse still, there are no significant industrial benefits on the horizon for Canadian workers or businesses. The Minister of Public Services and Procurement has a duty to manage taxpayers' money prudently, while also supporting Canadian industries.

How far is the minister willing to go to promote the Liberal Party's political interests rather than the interests of all Canadians in this great federation?

[English]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if the previous government had looked after the Canadian Armed Forces and made the purchase, we would not be in this situation, but we are, and decisions have to be made.

We are committed to making sure that we have the right equipment. That is why we are moving very rapidly in making sure that we fill the gaps that have been created, and we are committed to making sure that we do that not just for our air force but for the entire Canadian Armed Forces. That is why we are conducting a very thorough defence review that I look forward to launching with our government in the early new year.

* * *

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a manufactured, make-believe capability gap the minister speaks of.

The Prime Minister has been campaigning on the backs of our men and women in uniform in the Canadian Armed Forces to earn himself a temporary seat on the UN Security Council. The defence minister has refused to say where in Africa our troops will be going, and he knows our troops will be in combat against child soldiers. Clearly, this is not a peacekeeping mission.

Before the Prime Minister sends our troops into combat against child soldiers in Africa, will he bring this UN combat mission to the House for a full debate and a vote?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have said right from the beginning that when it comes to conflict, we need to understand the situation on the ground. That is why we are taking the time to look at all the various factors. We are talking to experts, including former General Roméo Dallaire.

When it comes to the issue of child soldiers, my chief of the defence staff has done considerable work on this. Any decision that we make we'll be making sure our troops have the right equipment and the right rules of engagement to make sure they have the right impact on the ground.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals, who are nostalgic for Canada's peacekeeping missions from a bygone era, have always said that any deployment in Africa would not be a combat mission, and yet the army is working on developing guidelines with respect to child soldiers, including one measure that involves authorizing the use of force to kill them if necessary.

Considering how common the use of child soldiers is by Boko Haram, we have to expect that our troops will exchange fire with those child soldiers frequently. That looks a lot like a combat mission.

Oral Questions

Why are the Liberals so determined to drag us into this African quagmire, while still refusing to talk about it and debate it in the House?

[English]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, many times I have stated that Canada has a responsible place in the world. As we look at the various threats that we need to deal with, we need to reduce conflict as well. We need to reduce the recruitment into the violent extremist organizations so that we can prevent situations like child soldiers.

We have an extremely competent Canadian Armed Forces. Our chief of the defence staff is looking at these issues. With any mission that we send our troops on, we are making sure we are going to have the right impact on the ground. That is why we are taking the time to make this very important decision.

* * *

[Translation]

TAXATION

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in each of our ridings there are small business owners, farmers, and fishers who want to retire and sell their business to the next generation. The problem is that a farmer who wants to sell his farm to his children must pay hundreds of thousands of dollars more in taxes than if he sold it to a stranger.

[English]

My bill, Bill C-274, would level the playing field while minimizing tax avoidance opportunities. Amendments could be made to minimize them even more, but instead of working with me, the government will clearly whip the vote to defeat this bill without even proposing an alternative. Why will the Liberals not allow a free vote?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to start by saying that we recognize the importance of farmers and small businesses across our country. We recognize the importance of ensuring that they have an opportunity to pass their businesses to their next family member. The bill in question unfortunately would have the unintended consequence of opening up a tax loophole of up to \$1.2 billion for the richest of Canadians, so it is for that reason we believe this is not something that we can move forward on.

* * *

[Translation]

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau (Berthier—Maskinongé, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the survival of our family farms is a very important issue. I thank my colleague for all his work on this file and for his bill.

There are many dairy producers on the Hill today. They are asking the Prime Minister to protect family farms by voting for this bill, and they also want him to respond to their concerns about supply management in the context of the renegotiation of NAFTA.

Can the Prime Minister confirm for us today that he will protect every aspect of our supply management system when NAFTA is renegotiated?

• (1450)

[English]

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have said many times in the House, our government truly supports our Canadian dairy farmers and the supply management system. We are the party that fought hard to put the supply management system in place and we will continue to protect and defend it. Canada's supply management system is a model for the world, and our government will continue to work closely with farmers to make sure that our agricultural programs remain in place.

* * *

ETHICS

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let us take a deeper look at the Prime Minister's close friends who run the Liberal Party think tank, Canada 2020. Tom Pitfield worked on the Prime Minister's leadership campaign and the federal election. He is also married to the president of the Liberal Party of Canada. Tim Barber of Bluesky Strategy co-founded Canada 2020 and his bio brags about his experience in defence procurement. Susan Smith, another Canada 2020 co-founder, is registered to lobby the government. She is also president of the Ottawa Laurier Club for Liberal donors.

Will the Prime Minister commit today to quit giving taxpayer funds to his close Liberal friends at Canada 2020?

Hon. Kirsty Duncan (Minister of Science, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government values science and scientists and the important work they do. The Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council has a mandate to share and promote research with Canadians. As I said, the council is an arm's-length organization that is able to issue contracts below a certain threshold. The amount was below the threshold and the decision was made by the council. As I have said before, we will not politicize science the way the previous government did.

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Liberals have certainly turned ethical lapses into a science.

Canada 2020 has its hands all over the Liberal government. It is even out bragging about its new office space in the parliamentary precinct. We already know of the close relationship its president Tom Pitfield has with the Prime Minister, but what about Susan Smith? She is the co-founder of Canada 2020, principal of the lobby agency Bluesky Strategy, and president of the Liberal fundraising Laurier Club. The Prime Minister has given his friends at Canada 2020 and Bluesky Strategy unprecedented access.

Will the Prime Minister promise to quit giving taxpayer funds to his close Liberal friends at Canada 2020?

Oral Questions

Hon. Kirsty Duncan (Minister of Science, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have said, our government values science and scientists and the important work they do. As I have said, the granting council is an arm's-length organization. It has the ability to issue contracts below a certain value. This contract fell below that value and the decision was made by the council. I cannot repeat it enough. Our government will not politicize science the way the previous government did.

[Translation]

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, at a time when thousands of Canadians are looking for work, the Minister of Agriculture and the Minister of Justice are giving patronage jobs to their cronies.

As if finding jobs for their friends were not enough, the Liberals are also giving them money. They are also giving truckloads of it to Canada 2020, an organization made up of well-known friends of the Liberal family.

Rather than constantly rewarding his friends, will the Prime Minister take his job seriously and stop with this poor show of elastic ethics?

[English]

Hon. Kirsty Duncan (Minister of Science, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are so proud in this government that we value research, science, scientists, and the important work they do.

As I have repeated many times in the House, the granting council is an arm's-length organization. It has the ability to issue contracts below a certain value. This contract fell below that threshold and the council took a decision.

We are proud of our commitment to science.

* * *

TRANSPORT

Mr. Terry Sheehan (Sault Ste. Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, recently, the Minister of Transport made an announcement in my riding of Sault Ste. Marie about our government's investments in regional airports. In my region of northern Ontario alone, the airports of Sault Ste. Marie, Bearskin Lake, Fort Albany, Deer Lake, Lansdowne House, Moosonee, and Sachigo Lake all received important investments this year.

Would the Minister of Transport please update the House on how he is helping to improve connectivity in rural Canadian communities?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hard-working member from the Sioux. We deeply care about transport connectivity in our regions.

[Translation]

That is why we are investing \$58 million in our regional airports, including the Rouyn-Noranda airport in Quebec, the Gods River airport in Manitoba, the Points North Landing airport in Saskatchewan, the Terrace-Kitimat airport in British Columbia, the Red Sucker Lake airport in Manitoba, the Magdalen Island airport in Quebec, the Wabush airport in Labrador, and the Yellowknife airport in the Northwest Territories. It is a long list.

• (1455)

[English]

JUSTICE

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Justice has lamely tried to justify the Liberals' opposition to Wynn's law on the basis that it was not recommended in the Alberta bail review. Jonathan Denis, Alberta's former justice minister who ordered the review, says that Wynn's law actually complements the review, a review that was limited to provincial jurisdiction.

Now that the minister's lame excuse has clearly been debunked by the very minister who ordered the review, will she do the right thing and support Wynn's law?

Hon. Jody Wilson-Raybould (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to stand to again underscore that we are doing a comprehensive review of the criminal justice system, including bail reform. The report of the study that the member opposite is referring to was conducted or put in place after the tragic death of Constable Wynn. None of the 31 recommendations from the report spoke to the legislative changes that are proposed in the private member's bill.

Having said that, I will continue to work with my counterparts in the provinces and territories to ensure that we provide safety to Canadians, through the justice system, and ensure that we move forward with the comprehensive reform that has not occurred in over 20 years.

* * *

STATUS OF WOMEN

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Mr. Speaker, one in five sexual assault allegations is dismissed by the police as unfounded. Rape victims are being told that their experiences did not happen. In some places, the unfounded dismissal rate is as high as 30%. This is the result of a culture that continues to spread sexist myths about rape. It is exactly why many women are reluctant to report sexual assault in the first place. We need a system that believes survivors.

When will the government ensure rape victims get the support they deserve?

Hon. Maryam Monsef (Minister of Status of Women, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one in five unfounded cases of sexual assault is too many. One is too many. People should not live in fear of violence, regardless of their gender, where they live, or who they love.

We have heard the call for federal leadership. That is why I am looking forward to releasing the federal strategy on gender-based violence in the coming weeks.

*Oral Questions***HOUSING**

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada is growing and as we grow, the needs of Canadians also grow. The increased cost of rent in our larger cities is squeezing lower-income Canadians out of urban areas.

Would the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development please update the House on the progress of the government's national housing strategy, and how it will benefit low-income Canadians?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Guelph for his hard work on behalf of his constituents.

Our government believes that all Canadians deserve access to housing that meets their needs and that they can afford. Budget 2016 invested an additional \$2.3 billion over two years, which will directly help 200,000 Canadian families.

We will also be launching this year the first national housing strategy in four decades. This strategy will give our communities and our housing partners the long-term support they seek to meet the housing needs of our families.

* * *

DEMOCRATIC REFORM

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last weekend not one but several anonymous sources reported details of the cabinet meeting in which it was decided to change course on electoral reform. Any cabinet leak is prohibited by the policy on security of cabinet confidences. By law, such breaches require immediate investigation.

Given the existence of two anonymous sources, this does look a bit like a coordinated effort to allow the Prime Minister to spread the blame for changing course to the entire cabinet. However, I could be wrong about the source of leaks. Therefore, has a PCO investigation been launched into these leaks from cabinet?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, no, it has not.

* * *

[*Translation*]

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Rhéal Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in recent years, every time Ottawa has negotiated an agreement, it has used supply management as a bargaining chip. When it wanted to open the European market to western beef producers, Quebec paid the price. When it wanted to open the trans-Pacific market to grain producers, our Quebec producers paid the price. The worst part is that Ottawa cannot even be bothered to give them appropriate compensation.

With the Minister of Finance on his way to Washington, can the government guarantee that, for once, supply management will not be used as a bargaining chip?

● (1500)

[*English*]

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as my hon. colleague is well aware, we have and will continue to support the agricultural sector in our country, including supply management.

My hon. colleague is well aware that we put a \$350 million fund in place for innovation in the dairy farming processing sector. What the government is doing is making sure the farmers and the processing sector have the tools in order to do the job.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Simon Marcell (Mirabel, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Americans are engaging in unfair competition by generously subsidizing dairy products, but the federal government is turning a blind eye and letting our people down.

The reason supply management is not covered by NAFTA is to protect Quebec dairy producers, who are the first to pay the price for Ottawa's neglect.

Now that he has his limousine and his portfolio for betraying Quebec to the banks, will the Minister of International Trade do something to protect supply management?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his question.

He will be pleased to know that I met with dairy producers just this morning to reaffirm our commitment to supply management in Canada. We will work for all Canadians. We are working for farmers. We are working to promote trade by creating jobs. That is what we promised to do, and we will keep that promise.

* * *

[*English*]

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: I would like to draw to the attention of hon. members the presence in the gallery of the Gerhard Herzberg Canada Gold Medal for Science and Engineering prize winner Dr. Jeff Dahn and the John C. Polanyi Prize winner Dr. Sylvain Moineau.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: Also with us, in the ladies' gallery, are the winners of the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council Synergy Awards for Innovation, Steacie Memorial Fellowships and Gilles Brassard Doctoral Prize for Interdisciplinary Research.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

* * *

[*Translation*]

VACANCY

SAINT-LAURENT

The Speaker: It is my duty to inform the House that a vacancy has occurred in the representation, namely: the Honourable Stéphane Dion, member for the electoral district of Saint-Laurent, by resignation effective Monday, February 6, 2017.

Points of Order

Pursuant to subsection 25(1)(b) of the Parliament of Canada Act, I have addressed my warrant to the Chief Electoral Officer for the issue of a writ for the election of a member to fill this vacancy.

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Mr. Speaker, I believe that if you seek it, you will find unanimous consent for the following motion: that the House strongly condemn the hateful remarks made against the people of Quebec by a columnist from Vancouver in the *Washington Post* on February 1, 2017, and urge the government to stand up for Quebec's reputation on the international stage.

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

Some hon. members: No.

* * *

[English]

POINTS OF ORDER

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to inform the House of a breach of Standing Order 39. It is in regard to what is now popularly known as the carbon tax cover-up. It may rise—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order.

I would just remind colleagues that the member is allowed to present his point of order, and I would encourage the member to remember that this is not debate and to carry on with his point of order.

● (1505)

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, I ask members of the House not to shoot the messenger. That is just what people are saying.

This is a serious matter. Under the standing order referenced earlier, members have the right to submit questions to the government and receive responses to those factual questions. Beyond a potential breach of that standing order, this is a matter that may rise to the seriousness of contempt.

This chamber, of course, is the child of the mother Parliament in Britain, wherein the joint committee on parliamentary privilege attempted to provide a list of types of contempt which included, “deliberately altering, suppressing, concealing or destroying a paper required to be produced for the House”.

My point of order refers to the suppressing or concealing of said information. The evidence for the possibility of this breach is in comparing an Order Paper question and the non-response to it with subsequent documents that were released under access to information.

The original Order Paper question asked for “analysis conducted in 2015-2016 by the government with regard to the impact on family household budgets” of the carbon tax. The government refused to release any documents in that regard, suggesting that none existed.

At the time, I acted in good faith. I refuse to ascribe to malice that which might only have been explained by incompetence, as it would

be incompetent not to have done such an analysis before imposing such a tax. I took the government at its word.

A subsequent access to information request revealed that in fact it does have documentation that says, “Imposing a price on carbon emissions, either through a tax or cap-and-trade system, would raise the cost of fossil fuels and energy. These...costs would then cascade through the economy in the form of higher prices”. Those prices are then laid out in a table, which is whited out. As a result, we do not know what is in it, but we do know that it exists. Therefore, we know the government was breaching its duty to share that information with respect to the original Order Paper questions.

I then asked the government what impact the new carbon tax would have on the price of the market basket measure. That is a measure by Employment and Social Development Canada that determines the full cost that a family must absorb in order to buy basic goods and services required to live as a functional part of a society. Again, the government claimed not to have any data on that whatsoever.

However, the ATIP that I subsequently came into possession of says, “Imposing a price on carbon emissions, either through a [carbon] tax or a cap and-trade system, [does lead to] higher prices”. It goes on and makes reference to a second table, which would answer the question. Therefore, that table also exists.

Finally, I asked the government for any impacts to the change in food prices for a family of four. Again, the ATIP makes implicit reference to changes in the costs of food to nourish a family, but, of course, that too is blacked out.

I can go on and on. I think the government would like me to, but in the interest of brevity, Mr. Speaker, I will give you a systematic list of all of the documentation to which the government admits it is in possession, but which it deprived me of receiving when I submitted my original Order Paper question.

The Prime Minister is attempting to portray himself as a cornucopia, spraying riches far and wide, but he did not produce those riches. He takes them from those who did, and by depriving those people of the information on the original costs he deprives—

The Speaker: The member is now straying into debate. I would like him to stay on his point of order and conclude.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, I would like to conclude by simply referring back to the parliamentary tradition from which we take everything we have here in this august chamber and of course, that tradition comes from the mother Parliament in Great Britain, where in the 17th century the adoption of the bill of rights gave every subject and now citizen the principle of no taxation without representation. That is that the public must not be forced to bear the burden of any costs without its consent, but people cannot consent to something when they do not know what it is.

Business of Supply

Therefore, there can be no taxation without information. I ask the government to do the honourable thing and release that information immediately. Now if the government refuses to do so, you as president of this chamber have the obligation to compel it to do so. I ask, in the interests of taxpayers and the interests of the common people we are gathered here to represent, that you do just that.

• (1510)

The Speaker: The hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader is rising on the same point of order.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my comments will be brief. I will limit my response to what has already been stated many times in the House on this issue. As you know, the Speaker does not judge the content or quality of the answers provided in the House of Commons. The Chair has ruled consistently in this regard.

Speaker Jeanne Sauvé in her February 20, 1983, ruling stated that it is not the Chair's responsibility "to determine whether or not the contents of documents tabled in the House are accurate."

Speaker Milliken's ruling of December 12, 2002, stated that, "the Speaker has no role in reviewing the content of responses to written questions."

In fact, Mr. Speaker, your ruling of September 27, 2016, concerning the government's response to Order Paper Question No. 152, again supports this position.

Furthermore, *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, Second Edition, on page 522 states that, "There are no provisions in the rules for the Speaker to review government responses to questions."

I submit that the matter before us has been dealt with on numerous occasions in the past and I have no further comments at this point.

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for Carleton for raising this point of order. I thank the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and I will come back to the House in due course with a decision.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*Translation*]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—TAXES ON HEALTH AND DENTAL CARE PLANS

The House resumed from February 2 consideration of the motion and of the amendment.

The Speaker: It being 3:12 p.m., pursuant to order made Thursday, February 2, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the amendment to the motion relating to the business of supply.

Call in the members.

• (1520)

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

(*Division No. 187*)

YEAS

Members

Aboultaif	Albas
Albrecht	Allison
Ambrose	Anderson
Arnold	Barlow
Bergen	Berthold
Bezan	Block
Boucher	Brassard
Brown	Calkins
Carrie	Chong
Clarke	Clement
Cooper	Deltell
Diotte	Doherty
Dreeshen	Eglinski
Falk	Finley
Gallant	Généreux
Genus	Gladau
Gourde	Harder
Hoback	Jeneroux
Kelly	Kent
Kitchen	Kmiec
Lake	Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Lebel	Liepert
Lobb	Lukiwski
MacKenzie	Maguire
McCauley (Edmonton West)	McColeman
McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)	Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound)
Motz	Nater
Nicholson	Nuttall
O'Toole	Paul-Hus
Poillievre	Raitt
Rayes	Reid
Rempel	Richards
Ritz	Saroya
Schmale	Shields
Shipley	Sopuck
Stanton	Strahl
Stubbs	Sweet
Tilson	Trost
Van Kesteren	Van Loan
Vecchio	Viersen
Wagantall	Warkentin
Watts	Waugh
Webber	Wong
Yurdiga	Zimmer— 88

NAYS

Members

Aldag	Alghabra
Alleslev	Amos
Anandasangaree	Arseneault
Arya	Ashton
Aubin	Ayoub
Badawey	Bagnell
Bains	Barsalou-Duval
Baylis	Beech
Bennett	Bittle
Blaikie	Blair
Blaney (North Island—Powell River)	Boissonnault
Bossio	Boudrias
Boulerice	Boutin-Sweet
Bratina	Breton
Brisson	Brousseau
Caesar-Chavannes	Cannings
Caron	Carr
Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)	Casey (Charlottetown)
Chagger	Champagne
Chan	Chen
Choquette	Christopherson
Cormier	Cullen
Cuzner	Dabrusin
Damoff	Davies
DeCoursey	Dhaliwal
Dhillon	Di Iorio
Donnelly	Drouin
Dubé	Dubourg
Duclos	Duguid

Business of Supply

Duncan (Etobicoke North)
 Dusseault
 Dzerowicz
 Ehsassi
 Ellis
 Eyking
 Fergus
 Finnigan
 Fonseca
 Fortin
 Fraser (West Nova)
 Fry
 Garneau
 Gerretsen
 Goldsmith-Jones
 Gould
 Grewal
 Hardcastle
 Harvey
 Holland
 Hughes
 Hutchings
 Johns
 Jones
 Jowhari
 Kang
 Khera
 Lametti
 Lapointe
 Laverdière
 Lebouthillier
 Lemieux
 Levitt
 Lockhart
 Longfield
 MacAulay (Cardigan)
 MacKinnon (Gatineau)
 Maloney
 Masse (Windsor West)
 Mathysen
 May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
 McDonald
 McKay
 McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
 Mendès
 Mihychuk
 Soeurs)
 Monsef
 Morneau
 Mulcair
 Nantel
 Nault
 Oliphant
 O'Regan
 Pauzé
 Petitpas Taylor
 Picard
 Poissant
 Qualtrough
 Rankin
 Rioux
 Rodriguez
 Rudd
 Rusnak
 Saini
 Samson
 Sansoucy
 Scarpaleggia
 Schulte
 Sgro
 Sheehan
 Sidhu (Brampton South)
 Simms
 Sorbara
 Ste-Marie
 Stewart
 Tan
 Thériault
 Trudeau
 Vandal
 Vaughan
 Weir
 Wilkinson
 Wrzesnewskyj

Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)
 Duvall
 Easter
 El-Khoury
 Erskine-Smith
 Eyolfson
 Fillmore
 Fisher
 Foote
 Fragiskatos
 Fraser (Central Nova)
 Fuhr
 Garrison
 Gill
 Goodale
 Graham
 Hajdu
 Hardie
 Hehr
 Housefather
 Hussen
 Iacono
 Joly
 Jordan
 Julian
 Khalid
 Kwan
 Lamoureux
 Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)
 LeBlanc
 Lefebvre
 Leslie
 Lightbound
 Long
 Ludwig
 MacGregor
 Malcolmson
 Marcil
 Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)
 May (Cambridge)
 McCrimmon
 McGuinty
 McKenna
 McLeod (Northwest Territories)
 Mendicino
 Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-
 Moore
 Morrissey
 Murray
 Nassif
 O'Connell
 Oliver
 Paradis
 Peterson
 Philpott
 Plamondon
 Quach
 Ramsey
 Ratansi
 Robillard
 Romanado
 Ruimy
 Sahota
 Sajjan
 Sangha
 Sarai
 Schiefke
 Serré
 Shanahan
 Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)
 Sikand
 Sohi
 Spengemann
 Stetski
 Tabbara
 Tassi
 Tootoo
 Trudel
 Vandenberg
 Virani
 Whalen
 Wilson-Raybould
 Young

Zahid — 225

Nil

PAIRED

The Speaker: I declare the amendment lost.*[English]*

The next question is on the main motion. Is it the pleasure of the house to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.**Some hon. members:** No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Speaker: All those opposed to the motion will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.**The Speaker:** In my opinion, the nays have it.*And five or more members having risen:*

● (1530)

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

(Division No. 188)

YEAS

Members

Aboultaif	Albas
Albrecht	Allison
Ambrose	Anderson
Arnold	Ashton
Aubin	Barlow
Barsalou-Duval	Bergen
Berthold	Bezan
Blaikie	Blaney (North Island—Powell River)
Block	Boucher
Boudrias	Boulterice
Boutin-Sweet	Brassard
Brosseau	Brown
Calkins	Cannings
Caron	Carrie
Chong	Choquette
Christopherson	Clarke
Clement	Cooper
Cullen	Davies
Deltell	Diotte
Doherty	Donnelly
Dreeshen	Dubé
Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)	Dusseault
Duvall	Eglinski
Falk	Finley
Fortin	Gallant
Garrison	Généreux
Genuis	Gill
Gladu	Gourde
Hardcastle	Harder
Hoback	Hughes
Jeneroux	Johns
Julian	Kelly
Kent	Kitchen
Kniec	Kwan
Lake	Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Laverdière	Lebel
Liepert	Lobb
Lukiwski	MacGregor
MacKenzie	Maguire

Business of Supply

Malcolmson
Masse (Windsor West)
May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
McColeman
Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound)
Motz
Nantel
Nicholson
O'Toole
Pauzé
Poilievre
Raitt
Rankin
Reid
Richards
Sansoucy
Schmale
Shipley
Stanton
Stetski
Strahl
Sweet
Tilson
Trudel
Van Loan
Viersen
Warkentin
Waugh
Weir
Yurdiga

Marcil
Mathysen
McCauley (Edmonton West)
McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)
Moore
Mulcair
Nater
Nuttall
Paul-Hus
Plamondon
Quach
Ramsey
Rayes
Rempel
Ritz
Saroya
Shields
Sopuck
Ste-Marie
Stewart
Stubbs
Thériault
Trost
Van Kesteren
Vecchio
Wagantall
Watts
Webber
Wong
Zimmer — 138

Ludwig
MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)
May (Cambridge)
McCrimmon
McGuinity
McKenna
McLeod (Northwest Territories)
Mendicino
Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Sœurs)
Monsef
Morneau
Murray
Nault
Oliphant
O'Regan
Peterson
Philpott
Poissant
Ratans
Robillard
Romanado
Ruimy
Sahota
Sajjan
Sangha
Scarpaleggia
Schulte
Sgro
Sheehan
Sidhu (Brampton South)
Simms
Sorbara
Tabbara
Tassi
Trudeau
Vandenbeld
Virani
Wilkinson
Wrzesnewskyj
Zahid — 175

MacAulay (Cardigan)
Maloney
McDonald
McKay
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
Mendès
Mihychuk
Morrissey
Nassif
O'Connell
Oliver
Paradis
Petipas Taylor
Picard
Qualtrough
Rioux
Rodriguez
Rudd
Rusnak
Saini
Samson
Saraï
Schieffe
Serré
Shanahan
Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)
Sikand
Sohi
Spengemann
Tan
Tootoo
Vandal
Vaughan
Whalen
Wilson-Raybould
Young

NAYS

Members

Aldag
Alleslev
Anandasangaree
Arya
Badawey
Bains
Beech
Bittle
Boissonnault
Bratina
Brisson
Carr
Casey (Charlottetown)
Champagne
Chen
Cuzner
Damoff
Dhaliwal
Di Iorio
Dubourg
Duguid
Dzerowicz
Ehsassi
Ellis
Eyking
Fergus
Finnigan
Fonseca
Fragiskatos
Fraser (Central Nova)
Fuhr
Gerretsen
Goodale
Graham
Hajdu
Harvey
Holland
Hussen
Iacono
Jones
Jowhari
Khalid
Lametti
Lapointe
LeBlanc
Lefebvre
Leslie
Lightbound
Long

Alghabra
Amos
Arseneault
Ayoub
Bagnell
Baylis
Bennett
Blair
Bossio
Breton
Caesar-Chavannes
Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)
Chagger
Chan
Cormier
Dabrusin
DeCoursey
Dhillon
Drouin
Duclos
Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Easter
El-Khoury
Erskine-Smith
Eyolfson
Fillmore
Fisher
Foote
Fraser (West Nova)
Fry
Garneau
Goldsmith-Jones
Gould
Grewal
Hardie
Hehr
Housefather
Hutchings
Joly
Jordan
Kang
Khera
Lamoureux
Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)
Lebouthillier
Lemieux
Levitt
Lockhart
Longfield

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion defeated.

* * *

[*Translation*]

**CANADA-EUROPEAN UNION COMPREHENSIVE
ECONOMIC AND TRADE AGREEMENT
IMPLEMENTATION ACT**

The House resumed consideration from February 6 of Bill C-30, as reported (with amendments) from the committee, and of the motions in Group No. 1.

The Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred divisions at the report stage of Bill C-30.

The question is on Motion No. 2. The vote on this motion also applies to Motions Nos. 3 to 53.

● (1540)

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

(*Division No. 189*)

YEAS

Members

Ashton
Barsalou-Duval
Blaney (North Island—Powell River)
Boulerice
Brosseau

Aubin
Blaikie
Boudrias
Boutin-Sweet
Cannings

Business of Supply

Caron
Christopherson
Davies
Dubé
Dusseault
Fortin
Gill
Hughes
Julian
Laverdière
Malcolmson
Masse (Windsor West)
May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
Mulcair
Pauzé
Quach
Rankin
Ste-Marie
Stewart
Trudel

Choquette
Cullen
Donnelly
Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)
Duvall
Garrison
Hardcastle
Johns
Kwan
MacGregor
Marcil
Mathysen
Moore
Nantel
Plamondon
Ramsey
Sansoucy
Stetski
Thériault
Weir— 50

Kelly
Khalid
Kitchen
Lake
Lamoureux
Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Lebel
Lebouthillier
Lemieux
Levitt
Lightbound
Lockhart
Longfield
Lukiwski
MacKenzie
Maguire
Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)
May (Cambridge)
McCauley (Edmonton West)
McCrimmon
McGuinty
McKenna
McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)
Mendès
Mihychuk
Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Sœurs)
Monsef
Morneau
Motz
Nassif
Nault
Nuttall
Oliphant
O'Regan
Paradis
Peterson
Philpott
Poilievre
Qualtrough
Ratansi
Reid
Rjoux
Robillard
Romanado
Rudd
Rusnak
Saini
Samson
Sarai
Scarpaleggia
Schmale
Serré
Shanahan
Shields
Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)
Sikand
Sohi
Sorbara
Stanton
Stubbs
Tabbara
Tassi
Tootoo
Trudeau
Van Loan
Vandenbeld
Vecchio
Virani
Warkentin
Waugh
Whalen
Wilson-Raybould
Wrzesnewskyj
Yurdiga
Zimmer — 263

Kent
Khera
Kmieci
Lametti
Lapointe
Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)
LeBlanc
Lefebvre
Leslie
Liepert
Lobb
Long
Ludwig
MacAulay (Cardigan)
MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Maloney

NAYS

Members

Aboultaif
Albrecht
Alghabra
Allison
Amos
Anderson
Arseneault
Ayoub
Bagnell
Barlow
Beech
Bergen
Bezan
Blair
Boissonnault
Boucher
Bratina
Brisson
Caesar-Chavannes
Carr
Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)
Chagger
Chan
Chong
Clement
Cormier
Dabrusin
DeCourcey
Dhaliwal
Di Iorio
Doherty
Drouin
Duclos
Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Easter
Ehsassi
Ellis
Eyking
Falk
Fillmore
Finnigan
Fonseca
Fragiskatos
Fraser (Central Nova)
Fuhr
Garneau
Genuis
Gladu
Goodale
Gourde
Grewal
Harder
Harvey
Hoback
Housefather
Hutchings
Jeneroux
Jones
Jowhari

Albas
Aldag
Alleslev
Ambrose
Anandasangaree
Arnold
Arya
Badawey
Bains
Baylis
Bennett
Berthold
Bittle
Block
Bossio
Brassard
Breton
Brown
Calkins
Carrie
Casey (Charlottetown)
Champagne
Chen
Clarke
Cooper
Cuzner
Damoff
Deltell
Dhillon
Diotte
Dreeshen
Dubourg
Duguid
Dzerowicz
Eglinski
El-Khoury
Erskine-Smith
Eyolfson
Fergus
Finley
Fisher
Foote
Fraser (West Nova)
Fry
Gallant
Généreux
Gerretsen
Goldsmith-Jones
Gould
Graham
Hajdu
Hardie
Hehr
Holland
Hussen
Iacono
Joly
Jordan
Kang

McColeman
McDonald
McKay
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
McLeod (Northwest Territories)
Mendicino
Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound)
Morrissey
Murray
Nater
Nicholson
O'Connell
Oliver
O'Toole
Paul-Hus
Petipas Taylor
Picard
Poissant
Raitt
Rayes
Richards
Ritz
Rodriguez
Rota
Ruimy
Sahota
Sajjan
Sangha
Saroya
Schiefke
Schulte
Sgro
Sheehan
Shipley
Sidhu (Brampton South)
Simms
Sopuck
Spengemann
Strahl
Sweet
Tan
Tilson
Trost
Van Kesteren
Vandal
Vaughan
Viersen
Wagantall
Watts
Webber
Wilkinson
Wong
Young
Zahid

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare Motion No. 2 defeated. Accordingly, I declare Motions Nos. 3 to 53 defeated.

Business of Supply

[English]

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of International Trade, Lib.) moved that the bill be concurred in.

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

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: Mr. Speaker, I believe if you seek it, you will find unanimous consent to apply the result of the previous vote to this one, with Liberal members voting in favour.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Gordon Brown: Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives agree to apply, and will be voting yes.

[Translation]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet: Mr. Speaker, the NDP agrees to apply the vote, but we are voting no.

Mr. Luc Thériault: Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois agrees to apply the vote, but we are voting against.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, I agree to apply the vote and I am voting no.

[English]

Hon. Hunter Tootoo: Mr. Speaker, I agree to apply the vote, and will be voting yes.

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

(Division No. 190)

YEAS

Members

Aboultatif	Albas
Albrecht	Aldag
Algebra	Alleslev
Allison	Ambrose
Amos	Anandasangaree
Anderson	Arnold
Arseneault	Arya
Ayoub	Badawey
Bagnell	Bains
Barlow	Baylis
Beech	Bennett
Bergen	Berthold
Bezan	Bittle
Blair	Block
Boissonnault	Bossio
Boucher	Brassard
Bratina	Breton
Brisson	Brown
Caesar-Chavannes	Calkins
Carr	Carrie
Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)	Casey (Charlottetown)
Chagger	Champagne
Chan	Chen
Chong	Clarke
Clement	Cooper
Cormier	Cuzner
Dabrusin	Damoff
DeCoursey	Deltell
Dhaliwal	Dhillon
Di Iorio	Diotte
Doherty	Dreeshen
Drouin	Dubourg
Duclos	Duguid
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Dzerowicz
Easter	Eglinski

Ehsassi	El-Khoury
Ellis	Erskine-Smith
Eyking	Eyolfson
Falk	Fergus
Fillmore	Finley
Finnigan	Fisher
Fonseca	Foote
Fragiskatos	Fraser (West Nova)
Fraser (Central Nova)	Fry
Fuhr	Gallant
Gameau	Généreux
Genuis	Gerretsen
Gladu	Goldsmith-Jones
Goodale	Gould
Gourde	Graham
Grewal	Hajdu
Harder	Hardie
Harvey	Hehr
Hoback	Holland
Housefather	Hussen
Hutchings	Iacono
Jeneroux	Joly
Jones	Jordan
Jowhari	Kang
Kelly	Kent
Khalid	Khera
Kitchen	Kmieci
Lake	Lametti
Lamoureux	Lapointe
Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)
Lebel	LeBlanc
Lebouhiller	Lefebvre
Lemieux	Leslie
Levitt	Liepert
Lightbound	Lobb
Lockhart	Long
Longfield	Ludwig
Lukiwski	MacAulay (Cardigan)
MacKenzie	MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Maguire	Maloney
Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)	
May (Cambridge)	
McCaughey (Edmonton West)	McColeman
McCrimmon	McDonald
McGuinty	McKay
McKenna	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)	McLeod (Northwest Territories)
Mendès	Mendicino
Mihychuk	Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound)
Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Sœurs)	
Monsef	
Morneau	Morrissey
Motz	Murray
Nassif	Natier
Nault	Nicholson
Nuttall	O'Connell
Olipphant	Oliver
O'Regan	O'Toole
Paradis	Paul-Hus
Peterson	Petitpas Taylor
Philpott	Picard
Poilievre	Poissant
Qualtrough	Raitt
Ratansi	Rayes
Reid	Richards
Rioux	Ritz
Robillard	Rodriguez
Romanado	Rota
Rudd	Ruimy
Rusnak	Sahota
Saini	Saijan
Samson	Sangha
Sarai	Saroya
Scarpaleggia	Schieffe
Schmale	Schulte
Serré	Sgro
Shanahan	Sheehan
Shields	ShIPLEY
Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)	Sidhu (Brampton South)
Sikand	Simms
Sohi	Sopuck
Sorbara	Spengemann
Stanton	Strahl
Stubbs	Sweet

Business of Supply

Tabbara
Tassi
Tootoo
Trudeau
Van Loan
Vandenbeld
Vecchio
Virani
Warkentin
Waugh
Whalen
Wilson-Raybould
Wrzesnewskyj
Yurdiga
Zimmer — 263

Tan
Tilson
Trost
Van Kesteren
Vandal
Vaughan
Viersen
Wagantall
Watts
Webber
Wilkinson
Wong
Young
Zahid

NAYS

Members

Ashton
Barsalou-Duval
Blaney (North Island—Powell River)
Boulerice
Brosseau
Caron
Christopherson
Davies
Dubé
Dusseault
Fortin
Gill
Hughes
Julian
Laverdière
Malcolmson
Masse (Windsor West)
May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
Mulcair
Pauzé
Quach
Rankin
Ste-Marie
Stewart
Trudel

Aubin
Blaikie
Boudrias
Boutin-Sweet
Cannings
Choquette
Cullen
Donnelly
Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)
Duvall
Garrison
Harcastle
Johns
Kwan
MacGregor
Marcil
Mathysen
Moore
Nantel
Plamondon
Ramsey
Sansoucy
Stetski
Thériault
Weir — 50

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

* * *

CANADA-UKRAINE FREE TRADE AGREEMENT IMPLEMENTATION ACT

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill C-31, An Act to implement the Free Trade Agreement between Canada and Ukraine, as reported (without amendment) from the committee.

The Speaker: I wish to inform the House that because of the deferred recorded divisions government orders will be extended by 29 minutes.

There being no motions at report stage, the House will now proceed, without debate, to the putting of the question on the motion to concur in the bill at report stage.

● (1545)

Hon. Carla Qualtrough (for the Minister of International Trade) moved that the bill be concurred in.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.
(Motion agreed to)

Hon. Carla Qualtrough (for the Minister of International Trade) moved that the bill be read the third time and passed.

Ms. Pam Goldsmith-Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a great pleasure to rise in the House today in support of legislation to implement the Canada-Ukraine free trade agreement.

In the review of the Canada-Ukraine free trade agreement today, many members have underscored the friendship between our two countries and the importance of support to Ukraine in light of Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea and the ongoing Russian-backed insurgency in eastern Ukraine. As we witness renewed violence in the conflict, our hearts are with the people of Ukraine.

In spite of these challenges, Ukraine has made significant strides in its anti-corruption and reform efforts. We would like to emphasize the need to encourage the momentum toward securing Ukraine's future as a stable, democratic, and prosperous country.

The Government of Canada remains determined to deepen our bilateral ties with Ukraine to this end, including through this landmark agreement. A free trade agreement is a very valuable instrument to enhance our commercial ties and nurture a more stable, predictable trading relationship for sustainable economic growth.

The Canada-Ukraine free trade agreement is a high-quality agreement that, once implemented, would create new commercial opportunities for Canadian and Ukrainian businesses alike. This agreement would result in preferential market access for virtually all Canada-Ukraine trade. It would facilitate enhanced co-operation, improve our ability to resolve trade irritants, increase transparency in regulatory matters, and reduce transaction costs for businesses.

The Canada-Ukraine free trade agreement addresses non-tariff barriers and would help to ensure that technical regulations relating to food safety and animal and plant health and life are not used in a discriminatory way. These provisions would help to ensure that companies can take advantage of market access and not be hindered by unjustifiable or discriminatory rules.

The Canada-Ukraine free trade agreement would contribute to the protection and enhancement of intellectual property rights, which would help to foster competitiveness, innovation, and creativity, and to combat infringements and to establish a consultative mechanism providing a way to aid in bilateral resolutions.

This agreement includes provisions on competition policy, monopolies, and state enterprises to ensure that the benefits of trade liberalization are not undermined by anti-competitive business conduct, such as collusion among competitors, or by market distortion from monopolies or state enterprises.

This would create a fair and predictable environment for Canadian businesses. This agreement addresses the needs of the 21st century economy. Provisions on e-commerce would help to facilitate e-trade by ensuring that Canadian and Ukrainian businesses and consumers would not face customs duties on electronically transmitted digital products.

Business of Supply

Also, the agreement includes comprehensive and progressive provisions in the areas of labour, environment, transparency, and anti-corruption, as well as protections for the government's right to regulate in the public interest.

Canadians can be very proud of how this agreement would contribute to building sustainable economic growth in Ukraine. I am equally proud of the opportunities it promises to deliver to Canada and to Canadian businesses in a progressive and inclusive manner.

A key outcome of this agreement is the new market access that it would provide for goods produced and manufactured in Canada. Once the agreement is fully implemented, 99% of Canada's exports would be eligible to enter Ukraine duty free. This would put Canadian exporters on a level footing with European companies, which are already benefiting from the European free trade agreement with Ukraine.

Once implemented, the high-quality provisions of the Canada-Ukraine free trade agreement would create opportunities across Canada and across our industrial, fish and seafood, agriculture, and agrifood sectors. These sectors are all areas where Canada offers something important to the world, and they are integral to our economy in small and large communities right across the country.

Our exports of industrial products currently face tariffs of up to 25% in Ukraine. The majority of these tariffs would be eliminated the day the agreement enters into force. Examples of goods that stand to benefit include iron, steel, industrial machinery, plastic products, cosmetics, and fish and seafood. With regard to fish and seafood, for example, the sector employs 76,000 Canadians. Exports to Ukraine in this sector face tariffs as high as 20%, which would be eliminated when the agreement takes effect.

• (1550)

The agreement would also create opportunities for Canada's agriculture and agrifood sector. According to Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, in 2014 Canada was the fifth-largest agricultural exporter in the world, and the agriculture and agrifood industry employed 2.2 million Canadians. Canadian exports to Ukraine in this sector faced tariffs, however, of up to 30%, the majority of which would be eliminated upon entry into force of the free trade agreement, and nearly all of the remaining ones would be eliminated within seven years. Key Canadian agricultural products that stand to benefit from this duty-free access include beef, pulses, grains, canola oil, processed foods, oilseeds, and animal feed. It is important to note that nothing in this agreement would weaken our supply-management approach for dairy, poultry, and eggs.

Western Canada already has a significant export relationship with Ukraine, which averaged almost \$93 million per year over the last five years. The tariff eliminations and reductions we have secured would expand this relationship. Canadian pork exporters, for example, would be able to take advantage of unlimited duty-free access on fresh and chilled pork. Canadian exporters would also benefit from a large duty-free tariff rate quota for frozen pork and certain pork products, which currently face tariffs of up to 15%. The tariff rate quota would create meaningful new opportunities for Canadian farmers as it would exceed current Canadian exports of pork by a significant amount. It would also allow them to compete on a level playing field with competitors from across the European

Union. Canadian wine producers and pulse exporters would also benefit from full tariff elimination. This would open up new opportunities for these important industries.

Canadian companies from central Canada already export to Ukraine, and exported an average of \$69 million per year over the last five years. The Canada-Ukraine free trade agreement would provide new opportunities for the exporters of central Canada. For example, Ukraine would eliminate its 5% tariff immediately on maple syrup, which would provide new opportunities for the Canadian maple industry. Manufacturers in central Canada would be able to take advantage of new opportunities provided by the elimination of tariffs in this sector. The majority of these tariffs would be eliminated as soon as the agreement is implemented, which means early benefits.

Canadian exporters in Atlantic Canada already export an average of \$11 million annually. Exporters from this region would also benefit, in particular as a result of the elimination of Ukrainian tariffs on fish and seafood.

Creating new commercial opportunities like these is crucial to Canada's economic success because, if done properly, our government believes that trade can raise living standards, create more jobs, increase prosperity, and help to strengthen the middle class. Canada is a trading nation, and we need access to international markets to thrive. In Canada, one in six jobs is related to exports. In 2014, there were more than 33,000 Canadian goods-exporting companies, most of which are small and medium-sized enterprises. These companies understand the necessity of trade and the opportunities for trade that are generated by free trade agreements like the one we are discussing and supporting today. That is why implementing and expanding Canada's free trade agreements globally is a priority for this government.

The Canada-Ukraine free trade agreement is a tangible expression of our belief and experience that open, rules-based trade is a driver of economic opportunity and growth. By eliminating essentially all tariffs on currently traded goods between our two countries, Canada's exports would become more competitive in the Ukrainian market, a market that is very promising. Though Canada and Ukraine's bilateral merchandise trade was relatively modest in the years immediately following Ukraine's independence, our countries sought to encourage bilateral trade to complement the strong and extensive people-to-people linkages that tie our nations together. In 2015, despite ongoing challenges in Ukraine, bilateral trade between Canada and Ukraine increased to almost \$300 million. Economic analysis undertaken by Global Affairs Canada projects that, once fully implemented, the Canada-Ukraine free trade agreement would result in an increase of 19% in bilateral merchandise trade between our two countries over bilateral trade in 2014.

Business of Supply

This government also recognizes the need to provide support to companies that are seeking to utilize the provisions of a new free trade agreement. In order for the benefits of free trade agreements to be fully realized, businesses need to be aware of the agreements and how we can help. This is especially important for Canada, as many of our exporters are small and medium-sized enterprises that may not have the resources to remain informed about business developments such as this.

• (1555)

In order to ensure that Canadian companies have the information they need to take advantage of this free trade agreement when it comes into force, the government will lead communications and outreach initiatives with business. The government will also coordinate and conduct information seminars for business audiences, organized with provincial, territorial, and private-sector partners. In addition, Canadian trade commissioners will be ready and able to assist companies seeking to expand into the Ukrainian market and will be able to advise their clients about the provisions of this free trade agreement and the opportunities.

We also know that Canadian stakeholders support this agreement. We have heard that support from provincial and territorial government representatives, Canadian companies and industry associations, and groups such as the Ukrainian Canadian Congress and the Canada-Ukraine Chamber of Commerce.

Some Canadian stakeholders, such as the Canadian Pork Council, the Canadian Agri-Food Trade Alliance, Alberta Pork, Spirits Canada, and the Canadian Meat Council have publicly also announced their support for this initiative.

We also saw more than 400 businesses attend the Canada-Ukraine Business Forum in Toronto in June of last year. The objective of this forum was to provide information on the Canada-Ukraine free trade agreement.

This level of participation gives a clear indication of the strong support that exists for this agreement in Canada and in Ukrainian business communities. The importance of our relationship with Ukraine, the benefits that the Canada-Ukraine free trade agreement would bring, and the level of stakeholder support all indicate that this is an initiative we should move toward without delay.

Therefore, I urge all hon. members of the House to support Bill C-31, moving us closer to the realization of the economic benefits of the agreement and setting forth a clear demonstration of our ongoing commitment to deepening our partnership and our relationship with Ukraine.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate my colleague for her appointment. This is the first opportunity I have had to say this. I know she is probably expecting a question about religious freedom in eastern Ukraine, but instead I want to ask a slightly different type of question.

Of course, there is strategic importance to this deal as well, with our ongoing co-operation with Ukraine on a number of different levels. One of the things the Liberals did when they took office was cancel the sharing of satellite images with Ukraine. This is imagery that I know was very important to the Ukrainian military. I wonder if

the member could share her thoughts on that decision, and say if the government is going to be prepared to reverse course on that and restore this important form of support to Ukraine.

Ms. Pam Goldsmith-Jones: Mr. Speaker, I would like to reiterate something we have heard echoed on both sides of the House for the entire time that I have been here, which is that Canada is a strong and steadfast ally of Ukraine and always has been.

I think we are all very proud of this agreement. It is progressive, which is important, because we are here to support labour, environment, and provisions on anti-corruption for Ukraine as it improves.

Furthermore, in this agreement, in recognition of the support we are giving together, services and investment are not included. In two years, we look forward to discussing those further, but we are going with a step-by-step process to ensure the success of this free trade agreement.

• (1600)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am voting in favour of this bill, but I want to point out an interesting fact.

The Canada-Ukraine free trade agreement is a relatively simple bilateral trade agreement, unlike the Canada-Europe agreement, for example, which makes significant amendments to intellectual property rights, gives foreign investors special rights that Canadian companies do not have, and hurts dairy producers. I represent a riding where there is a significant number of dairy farms.

Does the hon. member agree that agreements such as the Canada-Ukraine trade agreement, which requires less compromise than the more comprehensive and controversial multilateral agreements, such as the TPP or the Canada-Europe agreement, are better for Canada?

[*English*]

Ms. Pam Goldsmith-Jones: Mr. Speaker, I certainly appreciate the support extended by the member opposite.

This is a high-standard agreement. It is good for Canada. It is good for Ukraine. It certainly is fully satisfactory, as the member mentioned. I am going to stick with the question, actually, of the agreement itself. We were able to move very quickly. We believe there are other aspects not included in this agreement that will strengthen this as well.

With regard to CETA and TPP, we have just completed extensive consultation on TPP. The committee is reviewing that right now, and there is no question that this input will guide us as we move with our progressive trade agenda in Asia. With regard to CETA, that is being debated all week in the House of Commons, and I look forward to the support for that as well by members of the House.

Mr. Arnold Chan (Scarborough—Agincourt, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me join my fellow colleagues in echoing my congratulations to my colleague on her appointment as Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade.

Business of Supply

I want to follow up on the comments made by my friend from Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan with respect to his earlier question, and I want to pose a question in the context of Canada's relationship with the Ukraine.

I first want to reiterate the government's position that regardless of which political party has stood in the House to condemn it, Canada condemns most aggressively the actions of Russia with respect to its unlawful annexation of Crimea. However, notwithstanding that, Canada also takes a very strong position in making sure that we move Ukraine forward in an open, democratic, liberal fashion.

I want to ask my hon. colleague why this particular agreement and what further steps Canada will be taking in the future to ensure that Ukraine continues to move down this particular path.

Ms. Pam Goldsmith-Jones: Mr. Speaker, the agreement contains a review clause, which obliges parties to consider amending and expanding upon this strong foundation within two years. We want to make sure we get this right. We want to support Ukraine in every way that we can and, at the same time, of course, support Canadian small and medium-sized businesses, in particular. That is the right way to go and it seems this agreement may enjoy the full support of every member of the House.

Ms. Dianne L. Watts (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, one of my colleagues asked a question regarding the sharing of satellite images with the Ukraine military and the parliamentary secretary did not respond. I am wondering if she could please answer the direct question.

Ms. Pam Goldsmith-Jones: Mr. Speaker, I would like to actually stay on the topic of the Canada-Ukraine free trade agreement. This is a landmark day for both of our countries. It is another shining example of the fact that we are friends and allies, steadfast and strong, not only in creating better economic opportunity but also in standing up for Ukraine and against the recent actions of Russia.

• (1605)

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I understand the point the member made about only wanting to narrowly discuss the trade file, but the fact of the matter is that throughout the speeches at second reading, there was very expansive discussion with members of the government, as well as members of the opposition, about the importance of our relationship with Ukraine and the interrelationship between the economic issues and security co-operation. After all, it was a question of trade that touched off the Maidan revolution.

The third time is a charm maybe. Could the member tell us what the government's plan is with respect to sharing RADARSAT images? This would be a very clear and concrete way for the government to put its money where its mouth is when it comes to standing with our ally, Ukraine.

Ms. Pam Goldsmith-Jones: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member opposite for reminding Canadians that as we considered this free trade agreement, we considered a much bigger picture.

As I stated in my opening comments, obviously Ukraine has been through very challenging times, but, in spite of that, it has made significant strides in anti-corruption and reform efforts. We would encourage momentum in the direction it is going through the adoption of this free trade agreement. The Government of Canada

remains determined to deepen our bilateral ties with Ukraine, including through this agreement.

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

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the comments that the parliamentary secretary put on the record today with regard to Ukraine and trade. Trade is important for both Canada and Ukraine and it is great to see that we have come to an agreement. It was not long ago when, just a few yards away, the President of Ukraine addressed the House and talked about the importance of trade and wanting a trade agreement. There should be no surprise in the sense that we have a very rich Ukrainian heritage here in Canada, estimated at about 1.3 million people, and growing, which is a great thing.

I am wondering if the member would concur with me and many others that this trade agreement is one way of bridging the economic ties, which would not only assist Ukraine but also Canada. In essence, both countries, both great nations, can benefit from this particular agreement.

Ms. Pam Goldsmith-Jones: Yes, I would concur, Mr. Speaker, and I am hopeful that every member of this House will concur. It comes at an important time in general. I appreciate the comments around free trade agreements. This is one that is highly supportable. It is fully satisfactory to Canadians and it strengthens opportunity for our friends in Ukraine.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise to address this very important discussion about the Canada-Ukraine free trade agreement that, of course, we in the Conservative Party are very pleased to be supporting and I think not unfairly take a fair bit of credit for it being here today.

It also gives me an opportunity to speak more broadly about the Canada-Ukraine relationship and the importance of ongoing co-operation, and indeed some of the areas where we believe the government needs to do better when it comes to supporting our ally, Ukraine.

People watching this debate will hear members from all parties speak about the importance of that relationship and the critical contribution that the Ukrainian communities here in Canada have made to our country, but also about the ongoing opportunities for mutually beneficial exchanges, economically and on other fronts. We will hear those sentiments from all members of this House.

There are some important ways in which the government is not putting its money where its mouth is when it comes to co-operation with Ukraine, so I appreciate the opportunity to draw the attention of members of the House to those issues as well as certainly celebrating the important step forward that this marks.

If members will indulge me for a minute, I would like to make a few comments about my own constituency, because we have a very large and very active Ukrainian Canadian community in my own constituency of Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan.

Business of Supply

I might get in trouble with some other members of my caucus if I said we are number one in terms of reflecting Ukrainian culture in Canada, but certainly we are up there. We have the Ukrainian Cultural Heritage Village, which is an outdoor interpretive centre that provides visitors with an opportunity to learn about and understand the experience of early Ukrainian pioneers to western Canada, many of whom came at a time when multiculturalism was not recognized or appreciated in the same way that it is today. They were brave in coming to a new country, stepped out, and contributed so much to the rich, multicultural fabric of western Canada in particular, but also of our entire country.

My constituency is home to many eminent Ukrainian Canadians, including former Alberta premier Ed Stelmach, who continues to be very active and a great citizen of our community.

I personally had the opportunity to visit Ukraine in August 2016. I was there for the 25th anniversary of independence. Of course, we are celebrating this year the 150th anniversary of our country, but very much the founding of Canada is an event in our history, not an event of personal memory. Being in Ukraine and living through, in a sense, observing the emotions and the joy that people there have in their independence and how recent that experience was, how most people remember a time before independence, really hits home the importance of that national pride and how much Ukrainians have struggled in order to achieve their independence.

Ukraine and Canada are very similar. We have a great deal in common in terms of our values, our history, our diversity, our commitment to democracy. The one thing that makes us very different is that Ukraine is in a much tougher neighbourhood, and that has created all kinds of challenges, histories of occupation, ongoing occupation in eastern Ukraine, and yet the resilience of the Ukrainian people in the midst of all sorts of challenges is really inspiring for me.

We had the opportunity to hear from people about events as recent as the Maidan where young people, people of all ages risked their lives to stand for democracy, to stand up for the kinds of values that they wanted their country to embody. It is inspiring for me as a democratic politician here to see people in other countries willing to risk, willing to give their lives in order to stand up for the values they believe in.

Many of us here stand up for our values in different ways, but fortunately we are not in a position where we have to risk our lives to do so. The opportunity to interface with people who are in that situation really pushes me, and I think for other members who have not had an opportunity to have those conversations, prods them to value the things that we hold dear and to be willing to stand up and fight for them.

•(1610)

We have an important relationship with Ukraine. It is a relationship of shared values, it is a relationship of shared history, and that relationship is particularly evident in my constituency and the many people in my constituency who trace their origins to Ukraine.

In the history of the recent changes in Ukraine, the Maidan, the democratic movement for change that took place two years ago, the

touchstone for that discussion was a trade debate. It was about the desire of the Putin regime to prevent Ukraine from having closer trading relationships with Europe.

As we move forward with this bill to implement closer trading relationships between Canada and Ukraine, it is worth thinking about in that context. These kinds of trading relations between Ukraine and countries, democracies with similar values, are very important for Ukraine as a country that is solidifying its position and its commitment to the kinds of values that we share, the kind of trade as well as security co-operation. This is important for Ukraine to continue to develop and be reflective of those values.

We speak in general about the benefits of trade and maybe I will get time to speak more broadly about the economic benefits of trade, but there is a strategic dimension to trade as well. Trade provides us with an opportunity to deepen our partnership, deepen the people-to-people connections that exist between countries with similar values.

If I can draw a parallel to another trade discussion, I think the debate around the trans-Pacific partnership was quite similar insofar as it was an agreement between like-minded democracies, generally speaking, in the Asia-Pacific area, which were trying to set the terms of trade in a way that reflected their values without allowing a situation where the terms of trade in that region were set by China. One could speak of the economic benefits of the trans-Pacific partnership, but there was also a critical strategic value that was not recognized often enough in the context of our discussion.

Similarly, we can speak about trade with Ukraine, trade and other forms of co-operation between Canada, Europe, and other countries with Ukraine as helping to ensure that Ukraine is not economically vulnerable to the kind of extortion that the Putin regime has at times tried to exert on other countries. There is a strategic importance to this deal in terms of ensuring that Ukraine is able to continue to stand for the kinds of values that we regard as important and certainly that reflects the desire that I saw in the Ukrainian people when I was there last year.

Continuing in that vein, I would like to talk about the things I think the government needs to do better on when it comes to supporting Ukraine. There are a number of policy areas and I suspect there are members of the government who agree with me on these issues and want to see the cabinet respond. We have had a change in terms of some of the cabinet positions involved in Foreign Affairs, so I hope that we will see some changes in these areas.

The government talks about the importance of our friendship with Ukraine, but it also has talked about wanting to have closer relations with Russia. We need to make sure that the relationships with the partnerships that we establish internationally are indeed reflective of our values, and that we are not making unacceptable compromises in that respect.

Business of Supply

One of the issues that is critical here is the issue of human rights inside Russia. It is interesting for me that for many people in the Ukrainian community, a key priority is Canada being involved in the fight for improved human rights inside Russia. We can look around and see that any time a nation becomes a threat to the human rights of its own people, the government that is exacting human rights abuses against its own people will also be a threat to international peace and security. There is a continuity between the abuses of basic human rights that happen inside Russia and the abuses of human rights that are the result of Russian actions in Syria, in occupied parts of Ukraine, and in other countries.

• (1615)

Many people have been horrified by what the Russian government has undertaken inside Syria, but similar actions were undertaken in Chechnya and elsewhere. There is a continuity between the internal policies and the external policies. That is why it is so important for the Ukrainian community, as well as for the Russian community, that Canada take a strong position in support of the Magnitsky sanctions. Magnitsky sanctions are sanctions that target individual human rights abusers. They are named after Sergei Magnitsky, who was a Russian lawyer who was murdered. The goal of these sanctions is to individually and directly sanction people involved in human rights abuses in a way that would limit their ability to travel to undertake economic activity in other countries.

Canada can be a leader in this respect. It is important for our partnership with Ukraine, and for our commitment to our values more generally, that we have a government that stands for the Magnitsky sanctions, which is something our party supports. If I am not mistaken, it is something the government supported when it was in opposition. It is something we need to move forward on. I hope to see on that point some clear signals from the new Minister of Foreign Affairs, because this is important in standing up for our values in that region of the world.

More directly, and I have already raised this during our debate in questions and comments, we need to strengthen our military co-operation with Ukraine. Ukraine is in the middle of a foreign occupation. The Putin regime has occupied Crimea and parts of eastern Ukraine.

Even some of the language that is often used around this is somewhat misleading, the language of “separatists”, or perhaps “Russian-backed separatists”. In reality, what I was told repeatedly by Ukrainians I talked to is that this is not a case of local people who are upset at the Ukrainian government. This is an issue of people sent over the border by the Russian government and not identifying themselves, at least initially, as Russian soldiers but who are clearly agents of the Russian state.

The co-operation in response to that occupation is important. On some aspects of this, there is agreement from the government. Our position is that Canada needs to do as much as we can to support Ukraine.

Under the last government, we were providing vital satellite images to Ukraine that were useful for their military activities. Canada had the resources. We were collecting these satellite images, and we were sharing that information with Ukraine. It made sense for us to do so.

Ukraine is an economic partner of Canada. It is also a key ally, so let us share that satellite imagery with Ukraine in a way that helps it succeed in its fight against, let us call them what they are, Russian-backed terrorists who are occupying Ukraine.

I want to emphasize in the strongest possible terms upgrading our military co-operation in terms of the use and sharing of those satellite images. It is of critical importance to me, to my constituents, to the opposition, and I suspect, to at least some members of the government.

We need to hear clearly from the government with respect to renewing Canada's ongoing training mission. That is obviously another issue. Clarity from the government going forward about what is going to be done is important. Any ongoing support we could provide would be valuable. I know that the contribution of Canadians has been greatly appreciated. We can make a positive difference. It is noticed and it is appreciated by Ukrainians.

One of the things we could do in terms of our ongoing co-operation with Ukraine is reinstate international initiatives around communal harmony. One of the activities undertaken by the office of religious freedom, which existed in the previous government and has since been cancelled, was supporting programs supporting communal harmony in Ukraine. Members may not be aware of the religious dimension of the occupation, but there has been a great deal of persecution of different religious communities in Russian-occupied parts of eastern Ukraine. That has been a key dimension of the repression of human rights that has taken place there.

• (1620)

Canada's engagement on this front, on initiatives on communal harmony, is very helpful to Ukraine. I know that the government has cancelled the office of religious freedom and has touted the alternative office it has created, but we have not actually seen the restoration of the direct involvement in key projects around the world that were making a difference in these areas. I think the model that existed was working. At the very least, let us look at reinstating some of that involvement Canada had in Ukraine, because it was positive, it was helpful, and it was certainly making a valuable difference.

Those are some key areas where we can do more. I know that members, again, across all parties, are committed to the idea of a partnership with Ukraine, but there needs to be the putting of real mettle behind that sentiment. Standing up for human rights issues inside Russia, as well as throughout the region, would mean Canada implementing its own Magnitsky act, strengthening our military co-operation with Ukraine, providing some clarity around the renewal of that training mission, restoring the sharing of satellite images, and finally, reinstating these communal harmony types of activities. I see these types of initiatives as being very positive for Ukraine.

In the remaining time I have, I will make a few comments with respect to some of the economic aspects of this agreement and the impact it will have.

Business of Supply

As other members have mentioned before, when this agreement comes into force, we know that Canada and Ukraine will immediately eliminate duties on very close to 100%, 99.9%, and 86% of respective current imports, thereby benefiting Ukrainian and Canadian exporters and consumers. This will provide real, substantial, concrete benefits for Canada and Ukraine.

Yes, there is the friendship connection and the strategic dimension, but there are also real economic gains that will come from this partnership. Canada's GDP is expected to grow by \$29.2 million under this agreement, and Ukraine's GDP would expand by \$18.6 million.

There are opportunities for more expanded trade over time between Canada and Ukraine, as like-minded allies, countries with shared values, and a great deal of shared experience.

The economic benefits that come from this will be significant as well. Estimates are that Canada's exports to Ukraine would increase by \$41.2 million. Canada's export gains would be broad-based, with exports of pork, machinery and equipment, transport equipment, other manufactured products, cars and parts, and chemical products being some of the key sectors affected.

There are also major potential benefits in the area of agriculture. We see those benefits, in particular, for western Canada. Our current exports from western Canada to Ukraine averaged close to \$80 million between 2011 and 2013, and we certainly have every reason to believe that we are going to see some increases there as well.

Let us be clear. We know that trade produces economic benefits. We have seen the benefits across the trade deals Canada has signed throughout its history, usually signed under Conservative governments, or at least in this case, with the process started under Conservative governments.

We saw in the early debates we had on free trade with the United States many naysayers. Many people said it would be the end of our sovereignty, but look at the incredible economic benefits that have flowed from free trade with the United States.

This is another trade deal that complements so many trade deals that were signed, finalized, or at least initiated under the previous government. We just voted on a bill on the Canada-EU free trade agreement. We are seeing the moving forward of trade deals that were undertaken under the previous government.

I hope we will also see from the new government some new initiatives around trade deals, the proactive negotiation of new trade deals, as well as the continuing of trade deals that were begun under the previous government. Especially in the kind of climate we are seeing internationally, and with the debates we are having around trade, it is important that we have a government that believes in the open economy and stands up for it.

With that in mind, I am pleased to be supporting this trade deal, and I look forward to continuing to encourage the government to do more to promote our positive relationship with Ukraine.

• (1625)

Ms. Tracey Ramsey (Essex, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the New Democrats will be supporting the Canada-Ukraine deal as well. I appreciated in the member's speech the importance of ensuring that

the friendship remains strong and that we can have a positive influence here in Canada to help Ukraine.

My question is about trade in general. Today is a perfect example of a deal, CETA, which is a large multinational deal with some losses Canada will experience in certain sectors. Then we look at this deal, a bilateral agreement, where we were able to have more comprehensive conversations. We were able to advocate for those sectors in Canada that would see the benefits, and vice versa for Ukraine. We were able to have that one-on-one conversation between two countries about the benefits of trade for both countries. That is why we see in this agreement no significant losses, because we were able to sit down one on one and have those conversations and ensure that the trade deal we were working on would benefit us all.

Does the member agree that bilateral deals such as CUFTA are better than deals like the TPP or CETA, large multinational deals that trade away intellectual property and Canadian jobs?

• (1630)

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, I am glad we will be voting the same way on this bill, although that does not seem to be impeding other kinds of disagreements during the debate.

I disagree with the premise of the question. I do not think there is some inherent superiority of bilateral trade deals over multilateral trade deals. This reflects a different understanding of what a trade deal is all about. I do not mean this pejoratively, but this is sort of the Donald Trump approach to trade deals and the NDP approach to trade deals, which is that it is all about wins and losses, that we are either winning or we are losing in a trade deal, and therefore if we are negotiating smaller trade deals, we are more likely to be winning as opposed to losing.

However, trade deals are not about beating other countries in the negotiations. Trade deals are actually about expanding the space for shared prosperity. Free trade is really about extending the space for liberty and allowing individuals greater opportunity to buy and sell products from other countries. Of course, nations are involved in the negotiating process as that proceeds, but the goal really is to open opportunities for individuals as well as businesses in both countries. In cases where it is possible to negotiate larger-scale multilateral trade deals that include more countries, it is always better to pursue free trade with more countries. We can do that through bilateral deals or through multilateral deals, but it takes longer to get to more countries if we do it solely on a bilateral basis.

Mr. Jim Eglinski (Yellowhead, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his interest in Ukraine, and I will give him credit for being in a very strong Ukrainian segment of Alberta, because that is where I grew up.

Business of Supply

In the situation in Ukraine, with the constant battling going on and the war between Russia and Ukraine, there have been many injuries to Ukrainian soldiers and Ukrainian civilians. A large number of doctors from across Canada, from coast to coast, have travelled, at their own expense, to Ukraine to assist in crucial surgery, facial reconstruction, etc.

Do you see that the federal government could play a role in assisting doctors from Canada in assisting in Ukraine? Right now it is being done at their own expense.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Once again, I am sure the member meant the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan.

Mr. Jim Eglinski: Through you, Mr. Speaker.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Yes, through me, that is good. I am glad that we got that clarified.

The hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member's commitment to this topic and his interesting proposal that the government might support perhaps paying physicians and other health care professionals who want to go to other parts of the world to be involved, in this case in Ukraine. It would be a proposal worthy of consideration, but I have no doubt, on the other hand, that there are many people in Canada who are willing to make those investments personally. I certainly applaud those who are doing that. I know there are many people from my community who travel around the world to involve themselves in humanitarian types of activities like this. We are all so proud of having the kinds of communities where people are willing to step forward and invest their own time and resources in making the world around us a better place.

Ms. Tracey Ramsey: Mr. Speaker, the member spoke a lot about the situation in Ukraine. Certainly, human rights is a concern. We know there are ongoing conflicts happening in Ukraine, so when the bill was at committee stage, I brought forward a proposal around human rights. I firmly believe, as do my NDP colleagues, that human rights should be enshrined in every trade agreement going forward. It is incredibly important that we address human rights in our own country, with our own flaws and history around human rights certainly around indigenous people. However, when we look to other countries, it is important that we have a level playing field around human rights.

I had pushed at trade committee to put a provision in place so we could receive reports on conditions inside Ukraine, with Canada being reciprocal, to ensure that the human rights of the people of Ukraine and Canada were being protected. I wonder if the member could speak to whether he would support the enshrining of human rights into trade agreements going forward.

• (1635)

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for provoking a discussion on an important issue. I would not be prepared here yet to endorse the text of the member's motion. I am not a member of the trade committee, and I do not know exactly what she was proposing.

Of course, trade deals generally do include detailed discussion of environmental issues, labour rights, and other issues around human rights. It is important that they do that, certainly. That was part of our approach when we were in government, and I am sure that will continue to be par for the course in trade deals.

It may be that when we look at the details we might have disagreements about the specific mechanism for best achieving that result. I would be very interested in looking at the member's specific proposal. In principle though, our trade deals are not just trade deals in isolation. They include issues around some of these other topics that have been addressed.

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, Foreign Affairs; the hon. member for Vancouver East, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship.

[*English*]

Ms. Tracey Ramsey (Essex, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to Bill C-31 at third reading. As my hon. colleagues will know, the New Democratic Party supported the bill at second reading, and we intend to continue supporting it at third reading.

A Canada-Ukraine trade agreement is significant for reasons beyond the opportunities it provides to Canadian exporters. The agreement symbolizes our countries' strong friendship, which is increasingly important as Ukraine continues to deal with conflict within its borders and a fragile relationship with Russia. These two issues are obviously deeply connected. In these tumultuous times, Ukraine is looking to its friends in the west. There is a strong case to be made that having a trade agreement with Ukraine is of great strategic importance. Indeed, Canada and Ukraine's friendship is often described as historic. We have spoken a lot in this place about the close socio-cultural ties between our two countries, and the strong Canadian Ukrainian communities across Canada.

Whom Canada trades with is very important and must be considered when it comes to analyzing free trade agreements. It is also important to consider the other country's record on labour and environmental rights, and how its government treats its citizens.

Canada is certainly not perfect with regard to our own human rights record. How our country has historically treated indigenous peoples is shameful. When we point our finger at other countries, it is important that we not forget our own failures with regard to respecting human rights.

Business of Supply

Having strong labour and environmental rights is not a question of either one does or does not. It requires an ongoing commitment. These rights can be granted, but they can also be eroded without vigilant stewardship, and there is always room to strengthen them. Canada still has a way to go. CUFTA includes chapters on labour and the environment, both of which are regarded as substantive. It is positive to see that these chapters are included in the agreement. One of the big criticisms of NAFTA has been that these two important areas were left out of the main agreement. They were relegated to side agreements, almost like they were afterthoughts.

Proponents of free trade claim that trade and investment deals will increase prosperity for all citizens. It is the idea that a rising tide will lift all boats. In fact, the opposite is true. Unfortunately, with trade agreements, history has shown us that the benefits of trade are not—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The hon. member for Mégantic—L'Érable is rising on a point of order.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Mr. Speaker, I am not sure there is quorum to continue debate. I would like you to check, please.

• (1640)

[English]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): I will check with the Table.

I believe we have quorum.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Essex.

Ms. Tracey Ramsey: It is unfortunate, Mr. Speaker, that I had to stop my speech because there were not enough Liberals in the House. In fact, I think—

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, on many occasions I have been in the House when there has not been one New Democrat MP in the chamber, and I have never made reference to that. I do not think it is appropriate for members to be making reference to who is or is not in the chamber.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): There is a rule that states we are not allowed to name who is or is not in the chamber. I look to the hon. member for Winnipeg North and the hon. member for Essex who clearly broke that rule. They should both retract their comments.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I withdraw my comment.

Ms. Tracey Ramsey: Mr. Speaker, I withdraw my comment as well.

As I was saying, it is the idea that a rising tide will lift all boats, but in fact the opposite is true. Unfortunately with trade agreements, history has shown us that the benefits of trade are not evenly distributed among all participants in the economy.

While corporate profits are soaring, wage growth in Canada since the 1970s has been stagnant. Household debt persists at record high levels while our younger generation struggles to find meaningful employment in an economy that no longer provides the stability and prosperity associated with full-time jobs that include benefits and pensions.

Looking at NAFTA, while it led to job creation in some sectors, it also devastated our manufacturing and textile sector. Let us not try to paint over that fact. Furthermore, having labour and environment in side agreements in NAFTA did not raise the standards in Mexico to the same standards as here in Canada. Again, I am pleased to see that the Canada-Ukraine agreement, which we are debating today, does not treat labour and environment with the same disregard as NAFTA did.

When we look at Ukraine, we see that the country has made a lot of progress since 2014 when it was in the grips of a civil war that killed over 9,000 Ukrainians and displaced around 1.5 million people. However, just this past week, we read about conflict breaking out again in eastern Ukraine. Thirty-five people were killed after what has been described in the media as extensive and indiscriminate shelling. There is a war going on, and it is destroying families and communities. Children have lost their parents.

I spoke earlier about how a country's human rights record is not a static thing. It changes over time. We know that in Ukraine there is still a lot of uncertainty and continued conflict. The fact is Ukraine is still at an early stage in its transition to a market economy. It has a history of political instability. It has a weak constitutional framework. It is viewed as having a weak business environment for these and many other reasons.

Canada is currently looking at whether to add Ukraine to our Automatic Firearms Country Control List. There were consultations over a year and a half ago, but the government has been mum on whether Ukraine will be added to the list or not. If it is added to the list, Canadian companies could be allowed to export certain prohibited firearms and weapons to Ukraine. Given the ongoing civil war in eastern Ukraine, I would be very concerned about Canadian weapons ending up in the wrong hands.

It is not just about today, but about tomorrow, and 10 and 20 years from now. We are hopeful that peace and stability will prevail. In the meantime, a very practical way that Canada can know with greater certainty that increased exports of Canadian goods would not negatively impact Ukraine's human rights is by requiring an annual independent review of the impact of CUFTA on human rights in both our countries. As a member of the Standing Committee on International Trade, I proposed this as a possible amendment to this legislation. My colleagues felt the inclusion of such a review would be seen as “an unnecessary criticism of Ukraine”.

As I said at committee, I think when we have relationships with other countries, there are sometimes difficult things that have to be addressed, and this is one of them. Human Rights Watch has noted concerns over steps by the Ukraine government to restrict freedom of information and the freedom of the media. Free trade agreements should not be a reason not to talk about differences or broach difficult subjects respectfully. In fact, as a Canadian citizen, I would expect that my government would be having these conversations as part of trade negotiations. These were the concerns I attempted to lay out before the committee.

Business of Supply

I also attempted to have the committee hit a pause button for a moment on Bill C-31 so that we could hear from some witnesses on this legislation. Unfortunately, the committee chose not to study the bill or hear from any witnesses beyond department officials. Without commenting on the merits of this legislation, I would like to note my deep concern with this approach.

As parliamentarians and as committee members, it is our job to study the legislation that comes before us and not just rubber-stamp it. Even if witnesses support the agreement, it is incredibly helpful to hear their testimony and to have an opportunity to ask questions and learn about the issues.

For example, when the committee studied CETA, albeit briefly, even stakeholder groups that supported the agreement talked about concerns with how the agreement would be implemented and how Canadian businesses needed support with accessing potential new markets. They made recommendations that they wanted us to carry forward to the government.

I would urge my colleagues on all sides of the House to not be afraid of asking questions and listening to Canadians, even on topics where we assume there will be overwhelming agreement.

● (1645)

In the Prime Minister's latest mandate letter to the Minister of International Trade, he said:

If we are to tackle the real challenges we face as a country - from a struggling middle class to the threat of climate change - Canadians need to have faith in their government's honesty and willingness to listen.

I would like to take a little more time to discuss some of the feedback our committee has received over the past year on how specifically the government can better help Canadian businesses access international markets. There are important points that are relevant to our consideration of the Canada-Ukraine free trade agreement.

From the perspective of Canadian small and medium-size businesses, the signing of a new agreement is just the beginning. Having a new agreement will not magically translate into increased trade flows. Supporting markets is a big challenge. I am pleased to see this is part of the new minister's mandate letter.

Specifically, he is instructed to develop and implement a new trade and investment strategy to support Canadian businesses exporting to international markets and help Canadian jurisdictions attract global investment. In particular, I would like to see the minister's efforts really focus on supporting Canadian SMEs, not just the large companies which have more means to pursue new markets. Around 90% of Canadian SMEs do not export their goods or services. This would include micro businesses as well.

In my riding of Essex, a lot of businesses cannot even connect yet to high speed Internet. It is difficult to think of how they will connect to potential new markets in Asia, Europe, including Ukraine, if they do not even have a quality Internet connection.

We have talked a lot at the trade committee about the important role of Global Affairs Canada and what it must play in terms of engaging Canadian businesses, listening to what the non-tariff

barriers are and working in close collaboration to address these issues.

I am pleased that the Canada-Ukraine Chamber of Commerce has been actively working to connect Ukrainian and Canadian businesses. There is also a role for the Canadian Trade Commissioner Service to play, and of course Export Development Canada.

I want to hear a lot more from the government on what its trade and investment strategy will include. I think too often these conversations are brushed to the side. They come as more of an afterthought after the agreement is signed.

I would also like to speak to a few more specific areas covered by the Canada-Ukraine free trade agreement.

At second reading and at committee, I raised the issue of steel. As we know, the issue of steel dumping is one of great concern for us in Canada. It impacts my riding of Essex, as well as Hamilton, Sault Ste. Marie, Regina, and many other Canadian communities. Therefore, when I saw that CUFTA would reduce tariffs on the trade of steel between our two countries, I wondered how this might impact the global steel trade and the challenges of overcapacity and dumping. It is something on which to keep an eye.

In the meantime, I would like to once again urge the government to take action on improving and strengthening Canada's trade remedy system. Canada needs to do a better job of protecting our steel industry. That means enforcing the rules and doing a better job when other countries like China are breaking the rules. Standing up for Canada's steel industry is about standing up for Canadian jobs.

The trade committee has committed to a brief study of dumping. I hope we can make room for this soon. It will be important to hear from Canadian producers and workers on how the broken trade remedy system is hurting our industry. The finance committee has already done a study of the trade remedy system, so the solutions are there. Now it is time for action.

By and large, Canada's steel sector will not stand to lose in CUFTA. In fact there are not really any losing sectors in this agreement, which is rare.

In CETA, Canada made some big concessions around pharmaceutical, intellectual property rights, and around dairy and our maritime industry. These concessions will mean a higher cost of medicine for Canadians, and they will mean our dairy sector will lose millions and our maritime sector will lose thousands of jobs.

I was surprised that Canada did not take a second look at what we gave up in CETA after the U.K. voted to leave the EU. After all, the U.K. makes up about half of Canada's market in the EU.

Business of Supply

In TPP, Canada would be forced to make many of the same concessions. We also know TPP would hurt our auto sector. In fact, TPP is estimated to cost Canada 58,000 jobs.

Both CETA and TPP include harmful investor-state provisions that erode Canada's sovereignty. These provisions make it harder for Canada to enact and enforce environmental rules, and they can also make it harder for Canada to introduce a national pharmacare plan. Even in the TPP, a special carve out was required to allow countries to preserve their ability to regulate cigarette packaging.

● (1650)

The problem with mega deals like TPP and CETA is that they ask countries to make a lot of concessions in areas that extend far beyond the traditional realms of trade. For example, the TPP includes a clause barring every other TPP member state from ever adopting Canada's notice and notice system for copyright rules. Our system is widely considered to strike a fair balance that respects the rights of users to share and collaborate, while ensuring that artists are fairly compensated for their work.

Perhaps the case could be made that trade-offs required by multilateral deals are worth it, if a government is willing to take proper steps to mitigate the negative effects. These trade deals can increase inequality if proper action isn't taken to make sure they do not. In this regard, bilateral trade deals tend to require countries to make far fewer concessions. They are easier to negotiate, and they are easier to ratify and implement. This is the kind of trade that the New Democrats tend to support, trade that reduces tariffs and boosts exports.

I would also point out that CUFTA is the second trade agreement the New Democrats have supported in this parliamentary session. We also supported the trade facilitation agreement.

My colleagues in the Liberal and Conservative Parties like to spread misinformation that the NDP is somehow anti-trade because we point out the flaws in the agreements, like NAFTA and the TPP.

We do not think a trade and investment agreement is appropriate with countries that have deeply concerning records on human rights. We want to see Canada do business with good partners of strategic importance. We want to see trade deals that do not harm the interests of everyday Canadians.

I would challenge my colleagues to participate in these debates about the merits of trade and investment deals on a case-by-case basis, instead of relying on blanket statements that all trade and investment is good therefore no study or critical analysis of an agreement is needed.

On the question before us today, I have studied the Canada-Ukraine free trade agreement closely. Like other trade agreements the New Democrats have supported, on balance this agreement does serve Canada's interests.

I would like to extend my appreciation to Mr. Marvin Hildebrand, chief negotiator of CUFTA, and his team for their hard work on this file. I do not doubt that our trade negotiators always have Canada's best interests in mind.

I am pleased that all parties in the House have extended their unanimous support for Bill C-31. Let us not forget that it is time to ensure that this and every trade deal works for Canadians and creates market access and benefits for Canadians that we expect.

Ms. Cheryl Hardcastle (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague for championing the best interests of all Canadians and, indeed, of all our trade partners when we negotiate bilateral agreements. We can see how far superior they are. We can see that when, as she mentioned, the NDP shares the very concerning shortcomings of agreements like CETA and the TPP, which take advantage of people, we know labour standards will be improved with the Ukraine under CUFTA.

I want to talk a little more about having the entrenchment of human rights in trade agreements being considered. One of the reasons we are discussing this trade agreement today is because we want a more fulsome response to human rights and our international obligations, especially when we have trade relationships.

I hope the hon. member can expand on that a little, as it is very important for all of us to be paying attention.

● (1655)

Ms. Tracey Ramsey: Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Windsor—Tecumseh does a great amount of work around human rights. The NDP firmly believes in protecting human rights around the world, not just for Canadians but we look beyond ourselves. Ukraine is a prime example of an opportunity to extend human rights and to ensure the human rights of Ukrainian people as well as Canadian people.

Unfortunately, the amendment I brought forward at committee was not adopted. The amendment was about having such a provision, as we have had in previous agreements such as the Colombia Free Trade Agreement. We really tried to enshrine that into the agreement.

It is so important, because as I mentioned in speech, in these past few weeks in eastern Ukraine the civil war has reignited. This is sparking the worst fighting they have seen since 2014-15. The Canadian government and everyone in the House has to be realistic about the potential human rights impacts of CUFTA. We of course would like to see peace and stability in Ukraine, and we continue to push for that. If the people of Ukraine are being threatened in some way, it is important that we are a strong ally to them.

Human rights should be entrenched in every agreement. When they are not a part of the agreement, it is unfortunately something that we cannot keep an eye on in a positive manner. I believe we have a responsibility to do that, and certainly in our friendship with Ukraine, it is incredibly important we do so.

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

Mr. Speaker, let me start off by giving the New Democratic Party credit for supporting what we believe is a very progressive trade agreement between two countries. People of both Ukraine and Canada will benefit immensely.

The member made reference to a number of issues surrounding Ukraine. One could easily become sympathetic as to why we have this important legislation and why we need to see it pass.

My question for the member is related to trade agreements in general. It is great that the New Democrats are supporting the Ukraine trade agreement. However, I am a little surprised they are voting against CETA. Could the member tell us what is so upsetting about CETA that is not found in the Ukraine agreement?

Ms. Tracey Ramsey: Mr. Speaker, the NDP is pleased to support the Canada-Ukraine deal. We supported the previous trade facilitation agreement. That is two agreements we have supported around trade in this session.

On the member's question with respect to CETA, when we talk about increasing the cost of pharmaceutical drugs for every Canadian, it is a serious matter. I am sure people in all of our ridings come into our offices every day, telling us they cannot afford medication. Whether they have a plan through their workplace or not, or they are supported in some way by the province, to increase the patent, to extend that two years, that did not happen in the Ukraine deal. The Ukraine deal does not address that. Therefore, 25% of the implementing legislation around CETA is with respect to changes to the intellectual property pharmaceuticals, which is of grave concern, and should be for every member in the House.

It is disappointing that Liberals at the committee level, and in the House, refuse to acknowledge the pieces in CETA that are of concern, such as the maritime jobs that would be lost, the cabotage jobs that would be lost across our country. We are seeing human rights violations on ships that are sitting in our waters because these are flags of convenience. Maritime workers from across the country have written to me about the changes in CETA around the Canada Coasting Trade Act.

Therefore, it is incumbent upon all members, but certainly the government, to look at all aspects of a trade deal, not just the positive. It is easy to only bring in the positive. When we are doing our full work around a trade deal, when we are being comprehensive, we look at both the positive and negative. Certainly, there are ways to mitigate the negative. It was very unfortunate to see in CETA that way dairy was being impacted in supply management. The compensation package that came forward was not even close to the \$4.3 billion that was promised under the previous government. We see a small drop in the bucket that will not help family farms across Canada. There are many other pieces of CETA that are of grave concern.

Therefore, I would ask that around every trade agreement, parliamentarians take it upon themselves to learn about which sectors will be impacted, which communities will be impacted, and how it will impact average Canadians.

•(1700)

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Essex for the voice she brings to the House of Commons, and to the trade committee. She does an extremely effective job of speaking out for our regular families across the country that are left aside by many of these trade deals.

Of course we are supporting the Canada-Ukraine trade deal. However, we have had a number of other trade deals referenced in the discussion taking place this afternoon. None of them are fair trade deals. None of them take as a starting point how we can improve the lives of regular families in Canada. That is part of the reason why the NDP and the member for Essex speak out against these bad trade deals that do not put in place the fair trade practices that most Canadians want to see.

For example, she referenced human rights. When we look at Mercosur and South America, they actually have poverty alleviation as part of their trade agreements. There are a number of different models that are fair trade agreements, rather than these right-wing free trade agreements that have all of the weaknesses the member for Essex has cited.

Therefore, I would like to ask the member for Essex this. What is her vision of trade for the future of Canada? How can we build trade agreements that help regular working families across the country, rather than contribute to higher drug costs and to lost jobs as she mentioned, and as we have seen consistently in the manufacturing and other sectors?

Ms. Tracey Ramsey: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his prior work on the trade file. He has certainly been available to me at any time to have conversations about previous Parliaments and trade deals that have gone through.

This is an incredibly important question, because if we look across Canada today, we see that average Canadians, families, and people who are working hard every day feel that trade deals have not served them or worked well for them. There has been no advantage to the average Canadian worker. We look at large trade agreements, and we will be talking soon about the renegotiation of NAFTA. Some 25 years on, we have lost our textile industry in Canada. There were many people employed in that sector. Our manufacturing sector has been hit incredibly hard.

If we look at NAFTA, a previous agreement, we see some opportunities to improve. In NAFTA, labour and the environment sit in side agreements, and in CUFTA, they are enshrined in the agreement, which is so important, because it really gives teeth, an ability for people to bring forward issues around those particular chapters and ensure that people in both countries are protected under them.

Business of Supply

When we look at Mexico as an example, we see that Mexican workers were never raised up to the standard of average North Americans as they were told they would be in NAFTA. New Democrats believe that is largely because these things are not enshrined in that agreement. In a renegotiation, it is very important that we ensure these things are included.

When we look at this trade agreement as opposed to other trade agreements, there is no ISDS clause. Other trade agreements include the investor-state dispute settlement in some shape or form. We see it kind of shifting a little, so to speak, in CETA. This has not worked well. We are the most sued developed country in the world under these provisions, so when they are not in trade deals, we are quite pleased, because that is a contentious issue, and most Canadians understand that.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj (Ettobicoke Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as we begin our debate here this evening, I note that tomorrow morning the Canada–Ukraine free trade agreement will be debated in the Verkhovna Rada, Ukraine's parliament. I issue a challenge to Speaker Parubiy, Ukraine's parliament and our colleagues to see which Parliament will pass this free trade agreement first.

This past July, as the chair of the Canada–Ukraine Parliamentary Friendship Group and as a Ukrainian Canadian, I had the honour of bearing witness to the historic signing of the Canada–Ukraine free trade agreement in the presidential ceremonial hall in Kiev. I would like to thank our Prime Minister for including me in the delegation and, more important, for making the state visit and signing a priority for our new government. In fact, it was the Prime Minister's first one-on-one state visit of his term after his visit to the United States. This will most likely be the first free trade agreement to be ratified by our government.

Watching my fellow Ukrainian Canadian, the former minister of international trade, sign the treaty was especially poignant, as we had first met in Kiev in 1992 as young and idealistic Canadians who were intent on making a difference in the ancestral homeland of our parents and grandparents, the minister as a journalist, and I a Canadian organizer of Rukh, Ukraine's democratic front. Twenty-five years later, the minister worked hard to make this free trade agreement a reality, Twenty-five years later, we accompanied Canada's Prime Minister for the signing of this historic agreement.

Why would the Canada–Ukraine free trade agreement be a priority for our country? Our bilateral trade has been a modest \$289 million on average for the past five years. Why was CUFTA's implementation specifically referred to in the previous international trade minister's mandate letter? Why would this free trade agreement be the sole such agreement to have the unanimous support of the current House? It is because not every free trade agreement is just about trade. It must be seen through various lenses, one of which is Canada's special relationship with Ukraine.

Internationally and in the House, everyone is aware of Canada and Ukraine's special relationship. However, the word “special” is not just an adjective but a term defined in an agreement in 1994, the joint declaration on the “special partnership” between Canada and Ukraine, an agreement which was reaffirmed in 2001 and again in

2008. As well, Ukraine is one of 25 countries of focus for the Canadian International Development Agency, CIDA.

Although Canadians and our symbol of the maple leaf are warmly received in almost every country of the planet, there is no country where Canadians are more warmly, in fact affectionately, welcomed than in Ukraine.

Many of us literally stood shoulder to shoulder with the people of Ukraine during the independence movement of 1988 tolasnost 1991, in the democratic revolutions, in the Orange Revolution of 2004, and in the revolution of dignity of 2014. I cannot relate to the House and the Canadian people how often during these historic events, Ukrainians, upon hearing that I was from Canada, would embrace me and say, “Thank you, Canada. Please say thank you to the people of Canada from us”.

For the past 25 years, tens of thousands of Ukrainian Canadians, as well as many of their Canadian friends, have directly engaged in building democracy in Ukraine. In many ways, my personal story of engagement in Ukraine's difficult journey toward freedom began in earnest in the summer of 1991, on the centenary of Ukrainian immigration to Canada. A group of youthful Ukrainian Canadians travelled into Ukraine's eastern Donbass region, the front line of the current Russo-Ukrainian war. It was the time of Mikhail Gorbachev's glasnost, when the Iron Curtain had been slightly drawn, allowing in the winds of change. For most in the Soviet Union, especially in the regions, it was like the wind rustling leaves at the tops of trees. We could hear it in the distance, but we could not feel it down on the ground.

● (1705)

Our group of Ukrainian Canadians decided to head into a region that had been among the most devastated by Soviet rule: the epicentre of the Holodomor, the genocide by famine of the Ukrainian people, a region whose churches had mostly been dynamited generations ago under Stalin's decrees; a region in which history, the past, had been destroyed and in whose libraries and schools history began with the 1917 Bolshevik revolution; a coal mining and heavily industrialized region that was also among the Soviet Union's most ecologically devastated. It was here, to a region formerly closed to westerners, that we brought Ukrainian- and Russian-language copies of Canada's Charter of Rights and Freedoms and pamphlets describing our multicultural nation.

It was also in this region that we had a glimpse into the future. It was here that in various towns, during the span of a week, I was taken in for so-called conversations by communist party first secretaries, the local KGB, and police. At times, conversations were theoretical, sometimes quite threatening. Others were almost pleasant.

Business of Supply

I recollect one particular incident when the police came. We had set up our little table with copies of Canada's Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and the police came and took me to meet with the communist first party secretary in his office. As I sat there, he was intent on showing me a model of a Lenin monument he was going to build in his town of Milove, near the Russian border, today near the front of the Russo-Ukraine war.

As I listened to him, I saw out his window that a fire truck, which looked like it was built in the fifties, had pulled up. It had a nozzle, almost like a tank turret, that it pointed at our Ukrainian Canadians standing at the little table with their Canadian flag and copies of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. As I was watching out of the corner of my eye, I asked the first party secretary if it would not be better to be spending resources not on this grand monument to Lenin. I said that it may well be that in the next few years, that monument may be taken down. I said that no matter how they might laud him in Moscow, would it not be better to spend those resources on local schools or to fix the potholed streets of his town?

In all of these conversations with officials, I noticed that there was a plan formulating. They spoke of how Ukraine was not really a country and that if Ukraine were to become independent, it would split up into regions. In fact, the same map was produced in different towns showing a small, truncated Ukraine, a Novorossiya, New Russia, a republic that encompassed all of Ukraine's south and east.

Later, in Luhansk, the capital of the current so-called Luhansk People's Republic, I met Don Cossacks, who had come from Russia's Rostov-on-Don, who, after selling me a Cossack hat for \$10, confided to me that they were actually soldiers sent in from a Russian military unit in friendship.

As I have previously stated, my experiences are just examples of the thousands of such personal experiences of Ukrainian Canadians in Ukraine. However, the ties between Ukraine and Canada run much deeper than the personal contributions of Ukrainian Canadians over the past 25 years. Ukraine has given Canada its most precious of gifts: its people. There are 1.3 million Canadians who can trace their ancestral roots to Ukraine.

Next year marks Canada's 150th anniversary. Last year Ukrainians marked the 125th anniversary of the arrival of the first Ukrainian pioneers in Canada's Prairies. These pioneers transformed the bush of the Prairies into the golden wheat fields of Manitoba, Alberta, and Saskatchewan. As one travels the vastness of the Prairies, the golden paysage is regularly broken by grain elevators and the domes of Ukrainian churches. There is not a city in Canada where golden church domes do not testify to the presence of Ukrainian Canadians. They testify to the perseverance, industry, and spirituality of Ukrainian Canadians.

• (1710)

The ribbons of steel of the Canadian Pacific Railway bound our vast Confederation together. It was largely Ukrainian Canadians who filled that prairie vastness. Their presence countered the movement of American settlers north who, as had their southern brethren in Texas, California, and other states previously, were opposing sovereignty threats to their northern neighbour.

Canada may well have had a very different geography if not for the government's policy at the time of free land to the people in sheepskin coats. However, Ukrainian Canadians did not only transform our landscape, they gave us a deeper understanding of who we are as a nation.

The term "multiculturalism" was first used by Senator Paul Yuzyk in his maiden Senate speech in 1963. The Ukrainian Canadian committee, as the congress was called at that time, lobbied the federal government through the 1960s on this issue, a government at the time whose official policy was biculturalism. It was due to these determined efforts that former Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau officially announced the federal policy of multiculturalism in 1971, thus transforming our understanding of Canada and who we are as a people.

Today, in a world of resurgent xenophobia and nativism, Canada stands as an aspirational city on the hill amongst liberal democracies. Our multiculturalism, our strength in diversity, is a shining example to a world of darkening chauvinism and increasing divisions.

Ukrainian Canadians' contributions to Canada both in numbers and in length of time qualify us as one of this country's founding peoples. It is why, when Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov referred to us as a "rabid diaspora" in January of last year while ranting against Canada's steadfast policy of standing with Ukraine, his denunciation was responded to by Canada's foreign minister's statement of January 27 last year in this House. Minister Dion stated:

I am so pleased...to express...the steadfast support of Canada for Ukraine, how much we deeply disagree with the invasion and interference of the Russian government in Ukraine, and also how much we will not tolerate from a Russian minister any insults against the community of Ukraine in Canada.

We owe so much to Ukrainian Canadians and we will always support them.

It must also be seen through a geopolitical lens in a world in which Ukraine has been the victim of military invasion and annexation of her territory by a Russia that does not subscribe to international treaties on the sanctity of borders, a violation of accords that have largely brought a grand peace to Europe since World War II.

It must be understood in the context of the 2014 Ukrainian revolution of dignity, a modern revolution by a people of 45 million in support of liberal democratic values and in support of their dream to be part of a multilateral European union of states with enshrined universal human and democratic rights.

Today, Russia poses the greatest geopolitical threat to liberal democracy in the west. Ukraine and her people are literally on the front line. When Putin ordered his armies to militarily invade and annex Ukrainian territory, he broke a fundamental principle of international rule of law, the sanctity of borders. We have not seen European borders changed through military force since the 1930s. Ten thousand Ukrainian soldiers, mostly volunteers, and civilians have been killed by invading Russian soldiers and their proxies. Two million Ukrainians are currently internally displaced. In annexed Crimea, Muslim Tatar leaders continue to disappear.

Business of Supply

Why did Putin invade? It was because the people of Ukraine chose liberty and democracy. Ukraine's revolution of dignity was a revolt against a new enslavement by the kleptocratic President Yanukovich, puppet of a dictatorial Kremlin. It was the first time in the history of the European Union that people, including student demonstrators, were shot by snipers, killed while carrying the European Union flag, a symbol of the western democratic values that we cherish.

These protestors were not only a threat to the puppet President Yanukovich and Putin's revanchist imperial vision; as the Russian President watched Kiev's Maidan with hundreds of thousands of citizens building barricades, he envisioned the contagion of the revolution of dignity spreading and infecting Russians.

• (1715)

Since 2000, Putin has methodically dismantled Russia's nascent democracy and created a new Russian dictatorship. At least 132 investigative journalists have been silenced in Russia through murder, as well as opposition leaders such as Boris Nemtsov, symbolically assassinated outside the Kremlin walls, and FSB defectors like British citizen Litvinenko, who was gruesomely poisoned by radioactive polonium in London, England.

Glorious patriotic wars started in Chechnya in 2000, Georgia in 2005, and Ukraine in 2014. However, Russia's war against Ukraine is not only imperial revanchism; it is to create a terrifying example of Ukraine for Putin's own Russian people, as a dismembered, failed democratic state.

The Kremlin has not only declared war militarily against Ukraine, and there is not only an ongoing propaganda war, but there is a Kremlin economic war against Ukraine. Russia had been Ukraine's largest trading partner, equivalent in importance to Canada's economic relationship with the United States. At the same time that Russia invaded militarily, Putin shut down trade with Ukraine. That is why the Canada-Ukraine free trade agreement is of such importance. It is a clear statement of support by Canada for Ukraine at a time of Kremlin military aggression and economic war. It is not just a reaffirmation of our government's policy in regard to free trade; it is a geopolitical statement of support.

Having earlier noted the current modest levels of trade, we should not dismiss the opportunities that CUFTA would afford to the business communities of both countries, especially for small and medium-size businesses. Ukraine, with its free trade association with the EU, can be the entry point for Canadian low-cost capital investment and low manufacturing costs on the European continent, a de facto gateway into the European market. Canada can become a gateway for nascent small and medium-size Ukrainian businesses to expand and invest in Canada as an entry point into the North American market.

CUFTA is but one effective tool in a policy kit to strengthen democracy in Ukraine and to contain Putin's plan to create a democratic failed state of Ukraine. We must renew and broaden Operation Unifier, our military training mission in Ukraine. However, while standing with Ukraine, we must also strengthen our resolve to stand shoulder to shoulder with Russia's embattled, yet courageous, democratic opposition.

This past week, I received the terrible news that my friend Vladimir Kara-Murza had been hospitalized in Russia due to acute intoxication by an unknown substance—poisoning. My prayers are with Vladimir and my thoughts with his wife, Yevgeniya, and their three children.

Vladimir had testified before the foreign affairs committee in Ottawa this past spring, stating that Canadian Magnitsky sanctions for gross human rights abusers would be a pro-Russian measure. He was joined on the panel of witnesses by Zhanna Nemtsova, the daughter of the late Boris Nemtsov, also an acquaintance of mine, who had come to Canada's Parliament in 2012 in support of Magnitsky legislation and was assassinated two years ago, on February 27, and by Bill Browder, whose lawyer, Sergei Magnitsky, had been tortured and killed in a Russian prison for uncovering, documenting, and reporting massive fraud against the Russian people by individuals sanctioned by President Putin.

We must join our American legislative colleagues in sanctioning gross human rights abusers by expanding our Special Economic Measures Act to build upon the U.S. Jackson-Vanik repeal and Sergei Magnitsky rule of law accountability act of 2012.

I conclude by thanking Canada on behalf of all Ukrainian Canadians. This has been freedom's shore and the land of opportunity for waves of Ukrainian immigrants for over 125 years. This is the land in which our ancestors, with their perseverance and industry, built new lives and, in building their lives, helped to build and transform our great country, Canada.

• (1720)

They built a future in their new homeland. However, they never forgot their ancestral roots, who they were and where they came from. The Canada-Ukraine free trade agreement is a hand of friendship and solidarity by Canada to a country, Ukraine, which gave its most precious resource, its human resources, its people, to us. Long may our special relationship endure.

Slava Canadi. Slava Ukraini.

• (1725)

Hon. Alice Wong (Richmond Centre, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have to stress that Canada has always been a good friend of Ukraine. I remember when Prime Minister Harper and I attended the opening ceremony of APEC in Beijing. The first thing he said to Putin was to get out of Ukraine. That shows the Conservative Party's strong support for our good friends in Ukraine.

Business of Supply

Economic growth is also the best way to grow a country, a region, or a community. I remember when I trained Muslim women, single parents, in Malaysia on how to start and run a small business successfully. These women saw the need for economic independence and they successfully became women entrepreneurs in their own country. SMEs are important and so is the strength of the Ukrainian community in my riding of Richmond Centre.

My question for my hon. colleague is this. How would you demonstrate that trade can help small and medium-sized entrepreneurs and businesses benefit and create jobs because of this free trade agreement?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I would remind the member not to use the word “you” and to address her comments to the Chair.

The hon. member for Etobicoke Centre.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for mentioning a previous prime minister. We have a proud history of Canadian prime ministers since 1991, both Conservative and Liberal, standing shoulder to shoulder with the people of Ukraine.

Prime Minister Brian Mulroney was the first western leader to acknowledge Ukraine's independence in December 1991, a day after the referendum for independence in Ukraine.

Prime Minister Paul Martin, during the Orange Revolution, sent an unprecedented 500 electoral observers to Ukraine for the rerunning of the presidential election.

In fact, I note that a former prime minister, John Turner, headed that mission. When he was asked if he would head up that mission, he was older at that point in time and it was Christmas in Canada, and he said he would go to Ukraine to show solidarity with the people of Ukraine and celebrate with his family a little after Christmas. He said it was too important to show that we stand shoulder to shoulder with the Ukrainian people.

The example of Prime Minister Harper was given.

I would like also to relate something I saw during the Prime Minister's state visit to Ukraine. On the first evening, there was an event and, as usual, crowds were gathering around the Prime Minister. He noticed two soldiers who had had facial reconstruction surgery done. He pointed them out to me and we walked over to them. Everyone was asking for pictures with the Prime Minister and he said he would be honoured to have a picture taken with these two Ukrainian soldiers, volunteers, who had fought on the front line in Ukraine. It is symbolic of the sort of position that all Canadian prime ministers have had with Ukraine.

Ms. Cheryl Hardcastle (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP): Madam Speaker, this is a very healthy trade agreement that sets an example for us on the merits of bilateral agreements.

New Democrats always are told we dwell on the negatives with respect to trade agreements. One of the positives is the addressing of labour standards in the Ukraine. Since it sounds like my colleague is very familiar with the Ukraine, I would love to hear a little more about addressing labour standards as a way of addressing human

rights and how this bilateral agreement is so important in achieving that.

• (1730)

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj: Madam Speaker, I would like to extend thanks and appreciation for the NDP's support for this very important free trade agreement.

As I mentioned in my speech, this free trade agreement is not strictly about trade. Yes, it is important for trade between our two countries as it provides opportunities for investment for small and medium-sized businesses in our two countries, but it also is a show of support for Ukraine as it transforms to a fully functional democracy with all of the guarantees of democratic rights, human rights, and labour rights. We have a number of projects that Canada is funding in those areas.

Mr. David de Burgh Graham (Laurentides—Labelle, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I really admire the work of the member for Etobicoke Centre on the Ukraine file over the years. I have learned a great deal from him. I have some Ukrainian ancestry of my own.

As we heard in the last question, there is a common misparlance in referring to the country as “the Ukraine” versus “Ukraine”. I wonder if the member could please explain to us why there is a difference and why it is important.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj: Madam Speaker, most Ukrainians and Ukrainian Canadians are very sensitive to this point. Ukraine is an independent country. It is not a territory. We refer to “the Northwest Territories” as a territory and not as a country. In Ukraine's case, we will often hear Russian diplomats use the terminology of “the Ukraine”. It is something that Ukrainian Canadians and Ukrainians are sensitive to. I thank the hon. member for having raised that particular point.

Mr. Jim Eglinski (Yellowhead, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Etobicoke Centre for the work he does through the Canada-Ukraine Friendship Group and with Ukrainians across this country and for the Ukrainian people themselves.

Earlier, I asked a question of one my colleagues about the work that many of our doctors from coast to coast in Canada have done in Ukraine on a volunteer basis. They go over there and work doing reconstructive surgery and fixing the troops hurt in Ukraine while fighting against the Russian aggression.

I wonder if the hon. member would speak about that. Does he think there is a role our government could play to assist the doctors who are going over to Ukraine to assist our Ukrainian brothers and sisters?

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member across the aisle for all of the work that he does with the Canada-Ukraine Friendship Group.

I would like to thank him for mentioning the work of Ukrainian Canadian doctors and Canadian doctors who have accompanied them. There are hundreds of projects that are funded and sponsored by Ukrainian Canadians.

I mentioned the two soldiers whom the Prime Minister had noted that evening who had facial reconstruction surgery. It was done by Dr. Oleh Antonyshyn, who is from my riding. He went over there. He has done this incredible work, as have other doctors.

Business of Supply

I should mention that there are camps being run by Ukrainian Canadians funded from Canada, which are also working in the areas of psychiatry and psychology with the widows and orphans of people who volunteered and fought on that front.

Ukrainian Canadians continue to make an invaluable contribution to Ukraine at this time of Russia's war against the people of Ukraine.

• (1735)

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is indeed a pleasure to be able to rise to speak on the Canada-Ukraine free trade agreement, Bill C-31, at third reading. Again, I would like to thank the government for getting this over the finish line. I want to, of course, take credit for it with our own Conservative government, the previous government, that started these negotiations and the member for Abbotsford and the member for Battlefords—Lloydminster who worked so hard in getting this done when they were in cabinet. It really does speak to how, on an all-party basis, we feel that this is an important trade agreement that benefits Canada and Ukraine. It is also about Canada demonstrating to the people of Ukraine that we stand with them during these very destabilizing times, with the fighting that we are seeing in Donbass, with the ongoing Russian proxies and the Russian military coming across the line into Donbass and continuing to escalate the violence. Of course we always have to remember the illegal invasion and occupation and annexation of Crimea and demand that the Russian Federation return that property, return that land back to Ukraine. No one in Canada and no one in the international community should ever recognize Crimea as anything but sovereign Ukrainian territory.

On the issue of Canada-Ukraine free trade, I think many Canadians often ask, “Where are the economic benefits? Where is the spinoff?” It has only averaged around \$290 million a year in bilateral trade between Canada and Ukraine, but we know that Ukraine itself has great opportunities to grow and prosper. We know that the people are very industrious, that they are now a hub of high-tech expertise. As they start to recover from the sanctions that they face from Russia, from the ongoing revenues that are required to protect Ukrainian territory and fund its national defence efforts, there will be a growth in GDP. As they start to adjust and come out from underneath the damage that was done to the economy and the corruption that was created by President Yanukovich and his regime, we know that there is greater opportunity for Canadian business, as well as greater opportunity for Ukrainians to do business with us in Canada.

All the numbers suggest that we will see an increase in GDP in Ukraine as well as in Canada but, ultimately, we are trying to ensure that all those who are over there right now in Ukraine who are fighting for their freedom, fighting for their sovereignty, will someday enjoy that peace and the prosperity that comes with it. The only way we can give them the hope of seeing their livelihoods and their fortunes improve is that we have to also be with them from an economic standpoint.

There is no question that both the Liberal government and the previous Conservative government have helped with humanitarian efforts. We have helped with providing non-lethal kinetic equipment to its military. We have helped with reformation and getting corruption out of the Ukrainian government. We do know that type of assistance is welcomed but, ultimately, people of Ukraine are

demanding that their government continue on with those reformations. They are demanding the corruption end and that they can actually enjoy the fruits of their labour without being shaken down on the street when they are taking their kids to school, by someone from the police or someone from the Russian mafia or anything along that line.

I just want to quickly highlight that there are some great opportunities. There are already Canadian companies that have done some amazing business in Ukraine. A lot of people do not realize but if they go shopping on Canadian Tire online, its entire online system is provided by a company out of Lviv called EPAM. It is a high-tech organization. It is there to help with any outsourcing that any company wants in managing their online and web services, from shopping to website management. It is there to assist and it does great work.

Bombardier is already in Ukraine, doing work and providing more in the areas of engineering and research and development in Kharkiv.

And then, right out of Winnipeg, Ag Growth International is providing grain-handling equipment. It is joint-venture farming in the Ukraine and would really like to see that expand. It really sees a future.

• (1740)

Many of us have agricultural backgrounds. The member for Battlefords—Lloydminster and I have been farmers. Whenever we go to Ukraine, the agricultural expanse is just amazing. It is the breadbasket of Europe and it is becoming a greater and greater exporter. That is one of the main resources Ukraine has and can capitalize on. Anything we can do from a Canadian standpoint to do more business in the agriculture sector there and to help with grain handling, with testing, with getting it to market is something we can really capitalize on and it would be very beneficial to both Ukraine and Canada.

Pratt & Whitney has just started a joint venture project with Antonov to refurbish aircraft and supply engines to Saudi Arabia and other countries.

Often Ukraine is referred to as a modern Silicon Valley because of the high tech sector, how it is developing, the education system and the way it has been set up. It has a number of hubs that have been situated around the country. They are attracting the right talent and the right environment is being created. There are things we can do in the high tech industry there, and it is already worth over \$5 billion U.S. There is this great opportunity for Canada to partner with with Ukraine, capitalize on that as well and make our country more prosperous along with it.

Business of Supply

One thing about having more trade is that it creates a new need, and that is the free flow of people. I tabled a petition in the House a while ago, with over 2,400 signatures on it from across Canada, demanding that a new visa regime was brought in so people could visit Canada from Ukraine a lot easier. We get to go over there visa-free for six months. They are asking for a reciprocal agreement with Canada so their youth, their students, their business people and those who are trying to reconnect with family can more easily come to Canada. As trade and their economic prosperity improve, there will be an increasing demand for us to change the visa regime. I encourage the government to look at the visa situation.

What we are looking at today is the escalation in fighting in Donbass, where there are Russian proxies, Russian military equipment and Russian soldiers who are so-called on leave and who are fighting in Donbass. That has definitely increased.

We know that President Putin loves to test the strength of world leaders. There is a new president of the United States. Even though there has been a lot of platitudes and diplomatic niceties exchanged between both President Trump and President Putin, we see Putin, behind his back, escalate the aggression in Donbass to see what type of response he will get from President Trump. He wants to see whether Trump is a man of his word, that he will stand by his rhetoric. He wants to see if he can determine whether he has the strength or weakness to deal with the international obligations that surround the violence in Donbass, and if he will stand with President Poroshenko and the people of Ukraine in pushing Russia out of Donbass.

There is a situation where Ukraine still needs defensive military equipment. I believe the government needs to look at everything, from defensive weapons to more non-kinetic military equipment, as well as supplying Ukraine again with RADARSAT images that Canada had been providing until June last year, something that Prime Minister Harper had committed to, and allow the Ukrainian government, the Ukrainian military, to see what type of excursions were taking place by Russian forces across into Ukraine, and also where the military units in Donbass, operated by the rebels, the Russian proxies, were stationed so they could adjust their military defensive lines in the appropriate fashion.

It is time to reinstate those RADARSAT images, to share those images with the military of Ukraine.

• (1745)

It is also time for the government to finally sign the defence and security co-operation agreement that the Conservative government under Stephen Harper had negotiated. All it needs is to be inked out, to ensure that we can have the ongoing military co-operation that we already see with Operation Unifier, which runs out at the end of March. I am hoping that the Minister of National Defence and the Minister of Foreign Affairs will renew that mission for more training and more co-operation.

Training is beyond just training soldiers. We are also training its military police, its logistical officers, and its medics so they can deal with traumatic injuries in the field, something that we have a great deal of experience with, coming back from Afghanistan and including what is happening today in Iraq.

Sharing that wealth of knowledge through Operation Unifier is one thing that I hope, and I demand, the government renews and extends for at least another two years; but the security co-operation agreement would help with the exchange of soldiers and military officers coming to Canada. It would help with the ongoing movement of military equipment between our two countries because it would be on a most favoured nation list then and be able to acquire Canadian military equipment. It is important that the agreement be signed and finalized, and now is the time to do it.

We are going to get the trade deal done. We are at third reading now, and the bill is going to go to the Senate where I expect it to be finalized in short order.

Ukraine needs our help today with the military fight that is taking place in Donbass, with the invasion, and with the escalation of violence coming from Russia and its proxies in Donbass.

President Poroshenko, when he was here, both talked about the extension of Operation Unifier, asking the Government of Canada to do that, and addressed the need to make sure that we get the security and defence co-operation agreement signed, get the radar satellite images reimplemented, and continue on with our co-operative training and assistance, which we have been doing with more than 200 soldiers. We pay tribute to all of those soldiers who are over there.

I hope that our Prime Minister is listening. I hope that the government will come to the aid of Ukraine again and stand with President Poroshenko and the Government of Ukraine. More importantly, this is about standing with the people of Ukraine who have to deal with this situation. They see Canada as their closest friend and ally. They appreciate all the help we have provided, the way we have been able to work through Operation Unifier, and the way we have worked with our NATO allies through NATO's Operation Reassurance. The people of Ukraine really appreciated our bringing our frigates into the Black Sea. They appreciate our going in there with the NATO maritime task force and doing co-operative training and exercises with the Ukrainian navy.

The former minister of foreign affairs liked to talk about having a normalized relationship with Russia. He also talked about how he wanted to appease President Putin by talking to him about what was happening in Ukraine. I have great hope that the new Minister of Foreign Affairs, who was the minister of trade and helped to get this final agreement to the House as a legislative bill, will continue on with her love of Ukraine and not appease Vladimir Putin and the Kremlin. She has a lot of experience in Moscow, having worked there as a journalist, and she has written extensively about the corruption in Russia and how it continues to try to exercise its sphere of influence over Ukraine. I would hope that, despite her predecessor taking a rather soft stance with Ukraine and trying to appease Russia, she will have the intestinal fortitude to stick to her beliefs, as someone like me who is proud of our Ukrainian heritage, and will continue to fight for the people of Ukraine.

Business of Supply

•(1750)

It will be interesting. Like me and a few others in this House, she has been banned from Russia. When she needs to meet with Foreign Minister Lavrov in Moscow, they will probably have to find a different rendezvous place. Perhaps Kiev would be a good place for them to have their discussions.

One of the things that I congratulate the government on is that it has continued with our line of sanctions against those in Russia and Ukraine who are responsible for the violence in Donbass, as well as the illegal activities taking place in Crimea. We have to make sure that we not only continue to hold those sanctions in place until Russia returns Crimea to Ukraine but we also have to continue to expand them. One of the ways we can do that is through the Magnitsky Act, which is one of the things that we have looked at, and I know the foreign affairs committee is studying it.

As members know, I tabled a bill in this House to have the Magnitsky Act become law. A similar bill was tabled in the other place by Senator Raynell Andreychuk. The bill in the Senate has passed committee stage. It is going back for report stage and then third reading. It is my hope that we will see it over here in the next few weeks so that we can have that debate in the House and give the Government of Canada the tools, through the Special Economic Measures Act, as well as the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, to impose travel bans and take action on economic sanctions against not only those corrupt foreign officials who are responsible for what we see happening in Ukraine and in Russia today but also against other individuals globally who are abusing their authority and power within their own governments against their own people. This could apply to corrupt dictators in North Korea or China. We could also be looking at individuals who may be committing human rights abuses in Venezuela, Indonesia, and even Cuba. There is an opportunity to use this on a larger scale.

The way the Special Economic Measures Act works right now is that Canada will not move against individuals unilaterally. We always work through multilateral organizations. If the UN or the OSCE pass a resolution, or NATO provides an article stating that we need to go after certain countries and individuals within those countries for human rights abuses, for corruption, or for military incursions that happen from time to time, then we can take action. However, the way our legislation is set out today, we are prevented to unilaterally act on our own, under our own authority, when we think it is right. That is why the Magnitsky law is so important, not only to go after Russians, which originally was the case in the law that was passed in the United States a few years ago, but, at the urging of Bill Browder, to remember Sergei Magnitsky for the fight he had with the Russian government in standing up against corruption and human rights abuses. Unfortunately, Sergei Magnitsky was murdered after being arrested, tortured, and detained in prison. Just this past December, the U.S. passed a new global Magnitsky Act, similar to what I am trying to do with my bill and what Senator Raynell Andreychuk is doing with hers, which is to provide that global scope in the memory of Sergei Magnitsky for fighting for that freedom.

In conclusion, I am looking forward to seeing this bill become law. I hope that it goes through the Senate in an expedited fashion, and that ultimately we will see a strong relationship on the trade

front grow and expand because of the Canada-Ukraine free trade agreement. I know that the people of Ukraine are the ones who would benefit the most and would see their economy improve. I subscribe to the saying that a rising tide lifts all ships, and this is about raising the waters right now.

•(1755)

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj (Etobicoke Centre, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank our colleague across the aisle for all of his work on the Ukrainian file over the past number of years. As he said, the Canadian government's support has been multifaceted. We are all thankful that in the House everyone stands united when it comes to CUFTA, the free trade agreement. He also mentioned Operation Unifier. The Minister of National Defence last week signalled that the odds are that this training mission will be extended. My personal hope is that it will be expanded, and I noted that the member referenced that as well.

I also noted that he made a distinction between kinetic defensive weapons and non-kinetic defensive weapons. Back when he was a member of the government, there was an opportunity to provide Ukraine with kinetic defensive weapons. It did not occur at that time. We now know that Russia has sent more than 600 tanks into eastern Ukraine, and more than 1,000 artillery systems, and that Ukraine keeps looking for systems such as the Javelin to counterbalance the threat of those tanks. Now that the member is in the opposition, has his opinion changed about kinetic defensive weapons for Ukraine?

Mr. James Bezan: Madam Speaker, actually it has not. My position today is the position I had when we were in government as well, and I did encourage government to look at using some of our tank-buster missiles as possible defensive equipment. Unfortunately, the ones that we were decommissioning were not considered useful from the standpoint of providing them to the Government of Ukraine. It is something that was discussed, but they were decommissioned because of a question around their efficacy, which would be a polite way to put it.

Things are also evolving. What we are now witnessing is a bigger push by the rebels and the Russian military farther into Ukraine. They are trying to gain more territory, so because of this new aggression and the expanded land grab that is being orchestrated from the Kremlin, I think there is now a need for us to provide Ukraine with those defensive weapons. No doubt, as we are fighting in the wintertime, there still need to be more supplies to help deal with winter weather. Ukraine's military is definitely getting better equipped all the time, but if there is any chance for Canada to provide the military equipment that is needed by the soldiers out there, we should be working with the government of Ukraine to make it happen.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): It being 5:59 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's Order Paper.

The hon. member for Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman will have just a little over six minutes left for questions and answers the next time this is before the House.

*Private Members' Business***PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS***[English]***WATER QUALITY**

The House resumed consideration from November 25, 2016, of Motion No. 69, and of the amendment.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to rise today to speak to this important motion. It is obvious but nonetheless worth repeating that water is a vital resource. It is vital to human health, it is vital to the environment as it infuses our ecosystems, and it is vital to our economy, not just to agriculture and aquaculture in obvious industries that would use water, but also to industries like pharmaceuticals and computers. Just ask someone from the computer industry how much water it takes to clean computer chips to make sure that they absolutely pristine.

Water is also a very complex issue from the point of view of creating an integrated approach to the resource, or a national water policy vision.

● (1800)

[Translation]

In other words, it is extremely complicated to create an integrated approach to the issue of freshwater, whether it be in Canada or elsewhere. There are many reasons for that. First, there is a multiplicity of issues surrounding water, and water is governed by more than one jurisdiction.

[English]

There is a multiplicity of issues surrounding water. Water is governed by more than one jurisdiction, by a multiplicity of jurisdictions. The challenge is, how do we focus public and political interest on such a big issue that calls for a broad, visionary, and systematic policy approach? The answer is to shine the light on water at every opportunity, namely when specific water incidents arise, such as Walkerton, which would be one example, boil water advisories in first nations communities, sewage overflows during rainstorms, or controlled sewage releases.

We have to use these opportunities not only to solve what are serious matters in a timely fashion but use these incidents to channel public concern about water to governments. These issues, in addition to being matters that require immediate government attention, are doorways for the public into the multiple facets of water policy.

The political ground is fertile for engaging Canadians on the issue of water. Canadians already rank water as a top priority. The Royal Bank of Canada water attitudes survey finds consistently that water ranks number two as a concern for Canadians, after health care. There is clearly an interest. The question becomes how to channel this interest to very specific water issues. The more, the better, because the more the public becomes interested in an array of water issues, the greater the chance that governments will act in an integrated, broad-based fashion to advance the water agenda.

I congratulate the member for Hamilton East—Stoney Creek for putting the spotlight on one particular issue, the very important issue of lead in drinking water, and in the process putting a focus on drinking water in general, and therefore on water itself in general.

Lead drinking water pipes are one pathway for lead to enter the human body. As we know, lead gasoline was another. Fortunately, we have addressed that problem. Lead in paint was another conduit, and that has been addressed fairly significantly, as far as I know. Lead in jewellery is another way lead can contaminate the human body. Of course, dust from smelters in areas that have smelters that emit emissions that have lead in them is another way.

One of the most recent flashpoints that underscores the need for a strong focus on water is what happened in Flint, Michigan. Flint also highlights a dimension that needs to be taken into account whenever we make policy decisions about water, or quite frankly any policy decision; that is, the socio-economic dimension. In this case, we are talking about the question of environmental justice.

In other words, the question that poses itself is this. Are decisions or a given decision likely to negatively affect disadvantaged socio-economic groups more than other groups in society? To quote from a U.S. EPA white paper dated October 2016 on revising the agency's lead and copper rule:

Because of disparities in the quality of housing, community economic status, and access to medical care, lead in drinking water (and other media) disproportionately affects lower-income people. In addition, lead has disproportionate health effects on infants and children. In revising the LCR, EPA seeks to address environmental justice concerns and to prioritize protection of infants and children who are most vulnerable to the most harmful effects of lead exposure.

In Flint, 42% of residents live below the poverty line. It is a stunning figure. To reduce the water-fund deficit, the city switched water sources in 2014. It was getting its water from Detroit, but that proved to be too expensive so it had the intention of connecting a water line from Flint to Lake Huron whereby it could access drinking water more cheaply. In the meantime, it had a two-year period in which it needed another source of drinking water other than the Detroit drinking water system. Therefore the town turned to the Flint River for its drinking water for, as I mentioned, this two-year period. Flint River water was of poor quality, among other things due to earlier industrial pollution. It was 19 times more corrosive than Detroit water. The water therefore corroded the aging lead pipes of Flint's drinking water distribution system, and we know what the results were: a drinking water crisis in Flint, Michigan. Just to give an example, one home, the home of Lee Anne Walters, mother of four, had 104 parts per billion of lead content in that home's drinking water as compared to the EPA limit of 15 parts per billion.

Private Members' Business

Fortunately, our Liberal government has made a major financial commitment to upgrading and modernizing our infrastructure, including our water infrastructure. We will thus hopefully not be plagued by problems like those in Flint. In fact, this can be called Canada's infrastructure moment. The 2016 budget made a 10-year, \$120-billion commitment to Canada's municipal infrastructure, in two phases. The first phase includes \$2 billion for rehabilitating and modernizing water infrastructure. Then in the fall 2016 economic update, the Minister of Finance increased that commitment by \$80 billion over 11 years, beginning in 2017 and 2018. This will be a further opportunity to address aging infrastructure, including old lead pipes in municipal water distribution systems.

Health Canada, for its part, is taking the initiative on lead in drinking water. A consultation has been launched by the federal-provincial-territorial committee on drinking water, and this consultation is open until March 15. It aims to set a new limit for the maximum acceptable concentration of lead in drinking water. The existing limit was set a quarter of a century ago in 1992. Health Canada's consultation document proposes a limit of five parts per billion, citing the impact of lead on IQ, especially in children.

It should be noted that no threshold can be identified below which lead is no longer associated with neuro-developmental effects. The U.S. limit is 15 parts per billion and the World Health Organization's limit is 10 parts per billion. Different limits are the product of different assumptions about consumption rates, body weights, and so on. In Canada, we are aiming ambitiously at lowering the maximum acceptable limit to five parts per billion. While Health Canada is working on the question of maximum allowable concentrations, we need to examine the issue from the point of view of controlling lead in drinking water, which is fundamentally an infrastructure issue.

• (1805)

Lead in drinking water serves to highlight the interdependent, interdepartmental, and interjurisdictional challenge surrounding water policy in our country. We need, at minimum, a two-track approach to this problem. The best permanent approach to getting lead out of drinking water—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I am sorry, but the time has expired. I am sure the member still had a few things to say on this matter, but perhaps he will be able to do so at some other point in time.

[*Translation*]

The hon. member for Mégantic—L'Érable.

• (1810)

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would have liked to hear what else my colleague had to say since he just seemed to be getting to the crux of the matter. However, I am sure there will be other opportunities to hear what he has to say. We will undoubtedly hear more from him on this important issue when it is referred to the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities.

First of all, I have to say that, on this side of the House, we are in favour of removing lead from our drinking water systems whenever possible. Obviously, we need to ensure that the federal government does not infringe on areas of provincial jurisdiction.

As a result, we are going to support the motion calling on the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities to undertake a study on the federal government's role in lead pipe infrastructure in Canada. However, it is important to remember to work with the provinces.

I would like to come back to the wording of the motion that was first moved by the member for Hamilton East—Stoney Creek. The initial motion that he moved read as follows:

That, in the opinion of the House: (a) the government should address the growing concerns of lead pipes and water quality in private residences across Canada by working with the provincial and territorial governments, Federation of Canadian Municipalities, as well as Indigenous partners, to advocate and establish possible solutions to these issues; (b) the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities should undertake a study on "The Federal Government's role in lead pipe infrastructure in Canada"; and (c) the Committee should report to the House no later than December 1, 2017;

The member for Winnipeg North proposed the following amendment, which changes the outcomes of the motion considerably. The amended motion reads as follows:

(a) the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities should undertake a study on (i) the presence of lead in Canadian tap water, (ii) provincial, territorial and municipal efforts to date to replace lead water distribution lines, (iii) current federal efforts to support other levels of government in the provision of safe drinking water...

The primary difference between the two statements is that, obviously, one of them completely eliminates the government's obligation to respond to the growing concerns regarding lead pipes. In addition, it gives a parliamentary committee, one that I am pleased to co-chair, as a matter of fact, the mandate to do basically everything, that is, to conduct any study the government should be conducting from its end.

Not only is a committee being asked to do the government's job, but the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities is also being asked to study "current federal efforts to support other levels of government in the provision of safe drinking water".

The amendment practically dictates the conclusions of the standing committee's report by saying from the beginning that the government's efforts on the issue of lead pipes must be recognized.

The original version of the motion mentioned the federal government's role in lead pipe infrastructure in Canada. That left the committee with some flexibility to be able to study the problematic aspects. It was not coming from an order from the House, the government deciding which subjects must be studied in any given file, in what order or timeframe.

Private Members' Business

Therefore, I am somewhat surprised by the amendment moved by the member for Winnipeg North. I have to say that we already saw this at the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities. We see it on a regular basis. This is the second time that resolutions or ministers' letters have dictated to the committee what it will study. We saw this with the Navigation Protection Act, when letters from the Minister of Transport in particular asked the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities to study this act with a view to repealing the amendments made by the previous government. The committee was asked to carry out a study and then dictated the solutions that it was to include in its report.

• (1815)

I am concerned that we will proceed in the same manner, that is, with an amended resolution such as the one presented to us. It will be up to the committee to determine whether the federal government is doing enough to help the other levels of government with the provision of safe drinking water, and it will be up to the committee to decide whether the government has made efforts to support the other levels of government determine whether the help they have received is sufficient.

With respect to the wording of the motion, I would like to say that I am disappointed. We definitely agree on the substance of the motion. We also agree that the federal government has a role to play in public health with respect to the presence of lead in drinking water lines, whether in big cities, rural areas, people's homes or municipal water lines.

I believe that the committee has a contribution to make so, for heaven's sake, let us allow the committee to come to its own conclusions. Let us allow parliamentarians of all parties on the committee to decide what the recommendations should be. Let us not dictate the findings that we want ahead of time just to help a member get the governing party's support for his motion.

The first motion was perfectly acceptable and would have allowed the committee to do its work. What is more, it would have forced the government to hold real discussions with other levels of government in order to quickly advance the file.

At the beginning of my remarks, I talked about the importance of not infringing on provincial jurisdiction on the lead pipe issue. Here is why. The provinces, particularly Quebec, have done a lot of work with regard to the quality of drinking water and the presence of lead in that water.

The website of the Quebec ministry for sustainable development, the environment, and the fight against climate change lists all of the measures that have been taken by the Government of Quebec and shared with the municipalities to protect citizens.

The reason it is taking so long to fix the situation has not changed. I used to be the mayor of Thetford Mines. We spent months testing the water for lead. In the end, when we realized there was a bit of lead contamination in Thetford Mines, the question became, who was going to pay to replace the pipes?

This is not about recognizing that there is a problem. The problem is clear. We know which pipes need to be replaced. This is about determining what needs to be done to fix the problem as quickly as

possible and protect the health of Canadians. In Thetford Mines, infrastructure investment programs have helped improve the situation greatly.

Who pays when the problem is in our own home, which is over 50 years old and has lead fittings on the pipes? Who pays when the pipe between the municipal water system and the residence is made of lead, or when it has lead fittings?

Unfortunately, many Canadians cannot afford it, so they follow the public health agency's recommendation and run their water for five minutes every morning. That clears out any lead in the pipes and prevents excessive lead intake, which is important, especially for pregnant women.

Asking people not to waste drinking water conflicts with telling them to run the water for at least five minutes to avoid contamination. In such cases though, we can all agree that health trumps the environment.

I believe that more should be done to raise people's awareness. Until the problem of lead in plumbing has been solved definitively, Canadians must be protected. That goes double for pregnant women, who are even more susceptible to serious illness caused by lead poisoning.

In conclusion, we will support the bill. I want to emphasize that I do not like the wording of the motion, but I think the committee will be able to make its own recommendations.

• (1820)

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Madam Speaker, my remarks on the motion currently before the House could be entitled "how to deflect the issue 101" or "how to turn a good idea into a waste of time".

The original text of the motion we are debating today called on the federal government to address the concerns of communities regarding water quality.

The motion called on the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities to undertake a study on the federal government's role in lead pipe infrastructure in Canada and report to the House no later than December 1, 2017, suggesting that it needs to be done right away because the situation is problematic, to say the least. The study seems to have been transformed into the creation of some kind of inventory, which is not at all what was intended.

The original text of the motion mandated the committee to recommend policies to the federal government for resolving the issue of lead water pipes, solders, and fittings. The study would also have allowed us to meet with a number of specialists who could have helped us determine whether, when it comes to public health and safety, the problems with lead and those with asbestos, for example, share any commonalities.

However, through a tired old magic trick, the Liberal government amended the motion and made the federal government's responsibility disappear from the wording of the motion. The government's amendment eliminates the committee's responsibility to recommend specific policies to fix the problem and relegates the work to simply taking stock of the efforts made by the different levels of government to address the problem.

As a member of the committee, I want express my deep disappointment with this sleight of hand that eliminates our capacity to propose solutions to a potentially significant public health problem. The same amendment does away with the sense of urgency that accompanied the original motion, which is outrageous when we know that at least 200,000 households in Canada are at risk of being exposed to the lead contained in their water lines.

We now know that water contaminated with lead is the source of many illnesses and behavioural problems. A study by the World Health Organization shows that the presence of even the smallest amount of lead can be toxic. More precisely, the WHO findings confirm that there is no threshold below which the exposure to lead is not a risk.

Despite the serious nature of the issue, there is no federal program to support provincial, territorial, and municipal initiatives to replace lead water lines or lines containing lead in the solder or gaskets.

However, Canadian communities are not immune to a crisis like the one in Flint, Michigan. In April 2014, the Municipality of Flint decided to take its drinking water from the river that crosses the city. The poor quality of the water corroded the pipes and released lead into the drinking water, causing the problems we have heard about. The pipes of 39,000 residents were corroded and for 1,000 days the city's inhabitants had no drinking water. In some homes, the lead concentration was 200 times the permitted level.

Closer to home, in Montreal, and 10 years after an agreement was reached with the provincial government, only 9,000 pipes have been replaced out of the 69,000 that are to be replaced by 2026.

Need I point out to members that although there are home water treatment devices that could eliminate lead from tap water, the only known effective method to date is replacing the lead lines?

In light of the difficulties experienced by the provinces, territories, and municipalities, it is time that the federal government establish a national strategy so as to be part of the solution to the problem. The findings of a committee study could be used to that end.

● (1825)

We can imagine that the government's backpedalling on this matter might have something do with the infrastructure privatization plan proposed by the Liberals in the form of their infrastructure bank, which is unlikely to generate the huge profits the investors are expecting to justify their investments.

Let us talk about what the NDP wants in return. It is no secret that the NDP strongly and vehemently opposes the public infrastructure privatization plan. We are proposing practical solutions for ways the federal government could help communities update their infrastructure, while also eliminating lead in all pipe systems.

Private Members' Business

So far, the diagnosis is clear: most municipalities and indigenous communities do not have a register of their water pipes, and the main reason is that most communities cannot afford one.

To address those funding shortfalls, the federal government could bring in a program to support small communities so that each and every one of them would be able to identify those water pipes and assess the quality of the water.

The Federation of Canadian Municipalities supports our position. I would like to quote an excerpt of an FCM document to that effect. It reads:

The distribution system should be seen as an extension of the water treatment facility "where the goal is to consistently produce safe, high quality drinking water as cost effectively as possible. Even in the absence of strong regulatory pressures, continuous monitoring systems have been installed"....

It goes on to say:

The ability to measure, monitor, and control all aspects of your distribution system water quality is mandatory to ensure safe water, to assess the seriousness of a situation during an emergency and to prove due diligence.

We are also asking the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities to undertake a study on the interest-free loan programs for homeowners put forward by the Cities of Ottawa, Hamilton, and London, for example. The purpose of these programs is to provide financial assistance to help residents replace lead pipes in their homes. The NDP is also asking the committee to consider how an infrastructure modernization program could be incorporated into the clean water and wastewater fund.

Let us remember that the second phase of the Liberals' infrastructure plan does not include any special provision to deal with this issue.

In closing, despite the many criticisms I have raised regarding the somewhat questionable approach, I still plan to support this motion because it is difficult to be against doing the right thing. However, I would like to once again remind members that the Liberal government completely gutted the original motion, which I thought had a lot more merit than the one we are preparing to vote on in the next few days.

Let us hope that the committee will know how to handle this study and will take a more comprehensive approach that is more consistent with reality and the needs expressed by our partners.

[English]

Mr. Larry Maguire (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Madam Speaker, before I begin my remarks on the motion of the member for Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, I would like to thank him for taking the leadership role on the issue of eliminating lead from our drinking water systems. As he quite rightly points out, probably over 200,000 households across Canada are currently at risk of lead exposure. I know the member has dealt with this issue as the former mayor of Hamilton, and has continued to shine the light and provide guidance at the federal level.

Private Members' Business

I am also encouraged to see the government propose an amendment to the motion, as I believe it will provide clear direction to the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities.

At this time, we only have rough estimates of how many homes and Canadians are at risk of lead exposure, and by determining the presence of lead in Canadian tap water and learning about and disseminating what communities and municipalities have done to replace lead water distribution lines, it would provide the federal government an opportunity to review what supports are currently in place to assist other levels of government in the provision of safe drinking water.

My constituency of Brandon—Souris is not immune from lead exposure, which stems from antiquated water pipelines. I would like to quote the late Bill Paton, who was a renowned professor at Brandon University and was well sought out for his advice on public policy matters. Back in February of 2013, Bill wrote to *The Brandon Sun* on the larger issue of the responsibility of governments to ensure safe drinking water. He wrote that Canada and its provinces should commit to water in our country that was drinkable, fishable, and swimmable. He said that if we had those three things, it would guarantee making our lives, our economy, and our health better.

I could not agree with Bill more, and even though we came from complete and utter opposite ends of the political spectrum, our passion for sustainable environmental practices was one thing we very much had in common. In fact, he would probably enjoy knowing that a Conservative member of Parliament was quoting one of his many letters to the editor, while, at the same time, supporting a private member's motion put forward by a Liberal.

It was only a couple years ago, in the city of Brandon, that high lead levels were found in the tap water of older homes that had pre-1950 water connections. A provincial study showed that lead contamination was in excess of the national drinking water guideline. In one case, there was a water test that came back that showed lead concentration was five times greater than the nominally accepted levels.

Even though these homes have had lead service connections for over 60 years, many residents were surprised to find out that there were up to 3,600 homes in the city that could still be at risk of exceeding lead contamination in their potable water.

In response to this troubling report, the city of Brandon started offering testing kits to residences, subsidized the cost, and delivered them to the lab in Winnipeg. However, there was still a \$20 charge to residents to help offset the cost of the water analysis.

While I know other communities across the country have offered to make these same sorts of tests free of charge, this motion, and, if passed, the subsequent committee report, could dig deeper as to whether test kits should be free of charge. While \$20 may not seem like a lot of money, I believe we can all agree that there should be no monetary barriers to determine whether drinking water supplied by a municipality is, in fact, safe to drink.

Regardless of the \$20 charge to test the water, it was reported in 2014 that more than 570 city homes had their water tested and of

those, 59 were found to have higher levels of lead contamination than the provincial standard of 10 micrograms.

While preparing for this motion, I read a variety of different approaches and government initiatives that encouraged home and building owners to get rid of their lead service lines.

The city of Brandon originally put in place a new pipe program, where the municipality would pay for half of the pipe replacement from the property line to the water main and the homeowner would be financially responsible for the rest. However, the homeowner was also on the hook for the entirety of the costs on their own property, while also having to cover half the costs of the municipality. Essentially, the homeowner would have been paying a very high portion of these project costs. To no one's surprise, not a single homeowner took the city up on the deal.

As we all know, it costs thousands of dollars to replace underground water pipes and that number could skyrocket if a sidewalk or concrete driveway has to be ripped up and then repaved in order to do so.

Obviously, municipalities would like to make their water services lead free, but it could cost a significant amount of money and put further strain on homeowners who are already paying significant amounts in property taxes.

• (1830)

To give just one example that highlights the costs associated with replacing pipelines, the City of Brandon estimated that if it were to assume all the costs of replacing the water service from the water main to the property line for 3,600 homes, it could cost approximately \$27 million.

Not only are there financial concerns for both municipalities and homeowners, but the presence of lead pipes, even after the drinking water has been tested and has found to be safe, can still diminish the resale value of a home.

A couple of years ago, before this report showing 3,600 homes in Brandon were at risk, homebuyers were not concerned about the safety of drinking water. Furthermore, many routine water tests do not actually look for lead, but now, due to the issue being on the front page of the local paper and the potential of severe health issues related to that exposure, it would not be unreasonable to see an uptake in conditions in sales agreements to include such tests. I believe this could also be another angle the committee might want to investigate if it undertakes the study contained in the motion.

Another aspect of dealing with traces of lead found in drinking water, without ripping up existing water pipelines, could be increased use of filters. Due to the aforementioned high cost to both the municipality and homeowner associated with ripping up lines, it is my hope that the committee hears evidence about how water filters could be a more cost-efficient but equally safe way of guaranteeing water quality.

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On a final note, one of the issues that I actively pursued since elected is that the federal government be a strong and consistent partner for local infrastructure projects. Across my constituency, and I know it is the same in many others, I was pleased that our former Conservative government supported and invested in numerous water projects, such as the expansion of water pipelines in my area of Brandon—Souris, in the regional municipalities of Elton and Whitehead. We also invested in lagoon water treatment facilities in communities like Virden and Deloraine. I believe this motion would allow the committee to discuss if water projects should remain a high priority for the infrastructure Canada program. Even though a federal government has no direct involvement in the maintenance of municipal water systems, I think all members in the House would agree that having access to safe and reliable drinking water is absolutely paramount.

It is my sincere hope and desire that the committee consults as broadly and as widely as possible. We should look at best practices used in other countries, and even here in our own backyard where municipalities have approached this issue using a myriad of programs and financial incentives.

I also believe that the federal government could play a productive role in working with provincial and territorial partners through existing infrastructure programs, such as the gas tax fund, which I was pleased to see was doubled, made permanent, and indexed in our Conservative government days, so our communities have a safe source of reliable infrastructure funds.

As we move forward, all of us in the House, even government members, should continue to ask the tough questions and hold the executive accountable for not getting infrastructure money out the door and getting projects moving. The recent PBO report is a reminder that just because infrastructure money is allocated, it does not guarantee it gets spent on critical projects that would improve the quality of life of the people we represent.

With that, I would like to once again thank the member for Hamilton East—Stoney Creek for bringing this motion forward, and I applaud the member for Winnipeg North for his very constructive amendment. I believe the motion should pass unanimously, and the committee begin its study.

•(1835)

Mr. Bob Bratina (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank all the members who spoke today and previously, the members for Brandon—Souris, Trois-Rivières, Mégantic—L'Érable, and Lac-Saint-Louis. I am touched by the government's willingness to move forward on a difficult subject.

Our discussions on Motion No. 69 and lead in drinking water are very timely, if we think about it. In Flint, Michigan, more than 1,700 residents are suing the U.S. government's Environmental Protection Agency for its mismanagement of the water crisis after extremely high levels of lead leached into the drinking water. The lawsuit states that the EPA failed to warn citizens of the dangers of consuming lead and failed to ensure that state and local authorities were accurately addressing the crisis on the ground.

The member for Mégantic—L'Érable mentioned that in Thetford Mines, they knew there was a lead issue, so it was not about that. It was about how they were going to fix it. However, there are many

communities that are continuing to find that they have lead issues. It is not general across every municipality throughout our country, even though the science is there and the knowledge should be there. It is quite important that we bring this back into focus.

It is an example of the crucial role a federal government should play in accumulating best practices and generating awareness of the dangers of lead consumption.

It is my hope that the transportation, infrastructure and communities committee's study will bring forward key findings regarding the scope of the problem of lead in drinking water across Canada, as well as recommendations for our government's role in guidance, advocacy, and education in eradicating these lead lines and effectively treating our water.

That brings me back to my number one point, which is that no amount of lead consumption is considered safe. The current guidelines are being studied right now by Health Canada's federal-provincial-territorial committee on drinking water. That committee is planning to update the Canadian drinking water guidelines for lead and suggest that it be reduced from the current number to half of that number, which shows the seriousness of this problem.

We can no longer take a reactive approach to combatting lead pipes and drinking water quality. The time has come for the federal government to work together with its provincial, territorial, municipal, and indigenous partners to create a unified cross-country solution to eradicate these issues, which affect the very young more than the old, and low-income families more than the affluent. Children in older, poorer neighbourhoods should not be exposed to a serious health hazard because of where they live or their family's economic status.

Safe drinking water in Canadian homes, schools, and places of work should be a right, not a privilege. That is why we have to move beyond words and begin to do the deeds that are required.

•(1840)

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Amendment agreed to)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The next question is on the main motion, as amended. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion as amended agreed to)

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

*Adjournment Proceedings**[English]*

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, we have this opportunity at the end of the day to ask members of the government to answer a question that we do not feel was properly answered during question period.

I have to say, reviewing the question and the answer that were given in this case, it was as if the question was not even heard when the answer was given. The question I asked was:

Mr. Speaker, China has just passed a new law aimed at shutting down Christian house churches where over 70 million Chinese people worship. In the same week, Muslim parents in the PRC were told that they would be reported to police if they encouraged their children to participate in religious activities.

I ask the minister to take this opportunity right now to specifically condemn these outrageous abuses of human rights. Will the government speak out clearly and specifically against the latest crackdown on religious liberty in China?

That was my question. It was a clear question, asking the government to take the opportunity to identify, to respond to, hopefully to condemn the abuses in China, happening then, happening now against Christians, Muslims, and other faith communities.

Here is the response that I got from the then-parliamentary secretary:

Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to discuss the office of human rights, freedoms and inclusion. We have a comprehensive mandate that includes all human rights, including, as I know it is so important to the member opposite, freedom of religion. Moreover, we have all 135 ambassadors championing this comprehensive vision. It is entrenched in their mandate. It is central to their work.

This allows Canada to be a more effective defender of universal human rights, which are universal, indivisible, and interdependent, and is properly reflected in the office of human rights, freedoms and inclusion.

Unfortunately, in asking a question specifically about the abuse of human rights in China, I got a response that did not mention China. The member did not even say the word China in response to a very clear and important question. I should add that these human rights issues are not difficult partisan questions. I am not laying a trap for the parliamentary secretary. I am simply asking the government to speak out clearly and specifically about things that should be Canadian values.

The government, tonight, has another opportunity. We know what is happening in China right now. We know that the current President Xi Jinping is pushing this crackdown against faith communities. It is something that we need to speak clearly about.

Many members in this House have spoken clearly about religious liberty issues in other places. We had a whole emergency debate here that I participated in around some of the policies in the United States. Yet, we need to speak more about the situation in China, the country with the world's greatest population, a rising economic power, and a country with which we have an important relationship with, but with which we cannot allow the compromise of our values in our interactions.

We have the opportunity tonight, again, for the parliamentary secretary, a different parliamentary secretary, to clearly and specifically speak out against the abuses of fundamental human rights that are happening in China. If we are true to our values, if the

government is true to its stated commitments around human rights, then we need to hear it speak specifically about the abuses in China.

In the past, the government has declined to take the opportunity to make these clear and specific and pointed comments. Minorities in China, the Christian community, the Muslim community, the Buddhist community, and other communities want to see that kind of response. I look forward to the parliamentary secretary now speaking clearly and specifically about the human rights abuses in China, and how unacceptable they are to us as Canadians.

• (1845)

Mr. Matt DeCoursey (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I can assure my friend across the way that members on this side of the floor often hear him as we enter this chamber. We certainly appreciate his contributions to this House. I am pleased to answer the question here this evening.

[Translation]

Promoting and protecting inclusion, respect for diversity, and human rights, including freedom of religion or belief, are integral to our government's foreign policy and a priority in our long-standing relationship with China.

We continue to lead the International Contact Group on Freedom of Religion or Belief, where concerns such as these are raised regularly.

In addition, Canadian representatives seize every opportunity to talk about human rights with their Chinese counterparts, including China's State Administration for Religious Affairs.

[English]

The Prime Minister also raised human rights concerns on his visit to China, and in turn, when Chinese Premier Li Keqiang visited Canada. Rest assured that we will continue to champion these important values at every juncture in our relationship with China.

The right of Chinese citizens to freedom of religious belief is enshrined in the Chinese Constitution, and this government will take every opportunity to call for its respect. We are aware that both official and underground Christian churches have been targeted by Chinese authorities, and their leaders have been repeatedly harassed and detained.

In June 2016, Chinese authorities began to demolish the largest Buddhist teaching academy in Larung Gar, Sichuan, Tibet. Monks and nuns from Qinghai, Gansu and Yunnan have been ordered to leave Larung Gar.

We are aware of continued reports of restrictions on freedom to worship and observe religious traditions by Christians in Zhejiang province, and on Muslim Uighurs in Xinjiang province, including inhibiting their freedom to fast during Ramadan. Like the member opposite, we are concerned about these continued developments.

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The Chinese government is currently reviewing its regulations of religious affairs, which governs religious administration. While the proposed amendments provide some clarity, such as in the definition and management of religious activities, the main outcome is greater oversight and stricter controls by China's security apparatus, thereby legally placing the church under the control of the state.

The proposed definition of “normal” religious activities does not recognize respect for diversity and inclusion, and the amendments have the potential to further suppress religious freedom, including religious education, expression and practices. It is only through our strategy of engagement that Canada can voice concern and engage with our Chinese counterparts to encourage respect for freedom of religion and human rights.

In stark opposition to the former government's hot and cold relations with China, we have embarked on a new relationship with China, one on an equal footing, one where various interests are met by human rights concerns and Canada's commitment to the rule of law.

• (1850)

[*Translation*]

I can assure the House that the Government of Canada will do everything it can to press China to honour its international human rights obligations and promote and protect inclusion and respect for diversity—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. The hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan.

[*English*]

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, the new parliamentary secretary's response was certainly a much more on-topic and on-point response than I have heard on this subject in the past. He recognizes the fact that there is an escalation of these abuses, and we were not starting from a particularly positive point in the first place.

I would ask the parliamentary secretary if we are going to hear, going forward, a PMO that is actually willing to criticize the abuses of the Chinese justice system, because we know those exist. In the past when asked by media, the PMO has declined to make those clear comments about the problems in the Chinese justice system.

What are the implications of this crackdown on religious liberty for the government's discussion of extradition? When holding particular religious views is a crime in China, how can we possibly contemplate extradition?

I would appreciate the member's comments on those points as well.

Mr. Matt DeCoursey: Madam Speaker, my friend across the way would know that this government has been unequivocal on its stance on respect for the rule of law and for human rights. He will know, and Canadians know, that these are an integral part of our foreign policy, because they are integral to who we are as Canadians.

As I said, we are deeply concerned about the proposed amendments to further regulate religious activities in China. Our Prime Minister, this government, all of us, have consistently called on China to protect and promote the freedom of religion or belief of all Chinese citizens.

Through these high-level exchanges and ongoing initiatives at the bilateral and multilateral level, we will continue to engage and encourage China to support inclusion and diversity, and to live up to its international human rights obligations.

Under this government, Canada is re-engaging with the world, and we will continue to champion values of inclusiveness and accountable governments, pluralism, rule of law, and human rights.

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Speaker, for many years Canadians have turned to live-in caregivers to provide care for their children and their seniors. As the accessibility of child care and home care for aging seniors has become increasingly difficult and the cost of child care is unaffordable, the demand for live-in caregiver programs has increased.

I do not think anyone questions the fact that there is a clear, long-term, demonstrated labour shortage in this area. The previous Conservative government acknowledged that the program was broken and that the live-in caregivers are in a very vulnerable position, prone to abuse and exploitation. Its supposed fixes to the problems in the program were entirely deficient and missed the central point, and that is, if individuals are good enough to work, they are good enough to stay.

Currently, live-in caregivers must work for two years in Canada before they can even apply for permanent residence. This leaves them in a vulnerable position, as individuals could be placed in a position where they are being exploited, but would not come forward out of fear that they would lose their opportunity to apply for permanent residence and ultimately gain access to Canada and become a citizen.

Not only is it a major problem, but while the Conservatives did away with the live-in component, they added other onerous barriers to the pathway for permanency for the caregivers program. For caregivers to be eligible to apply for permanent residence, they need to have Canadian post-secondary education credentials of at least one year, or an equivalent foreign credential supported by an educational credential assessment.

To top it off, even if they meet that requirement, there is now a backlog of almost 60,000 applications and increasingly longer processing times for the care workers to gain permanent residence in Canada and to be reunited with their families. In fact, the average wait times for families is four and a half years. The processing time is taking so long that for many families, their medical, criminal, and security checks have expired, and by the way, each medical costs an extra \$200 for each individual. It is a huge financial burden.

Immigration lawyer Lobat Sadrehashemi highlighted the injustice caregivers face when compared to other immigration streams at the citizenship committee. She stated:

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Even if you look at other programs, such as the Canadian experience class—which does require one year of work, so it's very similar—you'll see that their applications for permanent residence are processed in six months. That's the average processing time. Because they are allowed to bring their spouses on accompanied work permits, they are not separated from their families, whereas live-in caregivers are separated from their families while they are doing their work requirement, and then on top of that, their processing takes eight times longer, and during that time they are not with their families.

With such long delays in processing for some families, their children have aged out and would not be included in the application as they renew the process. As a result of this, lots of families are breaking down. Children have suffered such long separation from their mothers that they struggle to reconnect with them and, in effect, their mothers are strangers to them.

I ask government members to put this to themselves. What would they do and how would they find this acceptable if it were their own family in that situation?

For caregivers, it is a minimum of six years of separation. I hope the government will be in agreement on this point. This is frankly inhumane, and we need to fix the problem.

• (1855)

Mr. Serge Cormier (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Vancouver East for her question about pathways to permanent residence for caregivers. I also heard that she is doing a great job in the committee, and I look forward to working with her in my new role as parliamentary secretary.

[Translation]

The member was absolutely right when she said that live-in caregivers provide very valuable services to Canadians. As she knows, Canada's live-in caregiver program stopped accepting new applications in November 2014.

Because of the existing backlog, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada is still processing applications from live-in caregivers who applied under the previous program and applications from people who were grandfathered. No new applications have been accepted under that program in the past two years.

When the old program closed to new applicants, two new programs were introduced: the caring for children and caring for people with high medical needs classes.

[English]

Both of these programs offered pathways to permanent residence to caregivers without the requirement that they live in the home of their employer.

[Translation]

On October 31, the former minister of immigration, refugees and citizenship announced that the 2017 target for admissions of live-in caregivers and their families would be between 17,000 and 20,000 permanent residents. This number includes people who are already part of the live-in caregiver program and who will submit an application for permanent residence when they have two years' experience as temporary foreign workers.

Between 2009 and 2013, admissions of live-in caregivers and members of their families on average totalled only about 11,000 a year.

[English]

While this decision by the former Conservative government contributed to the backlog, our government is continuing to work on eliminating it. I am glad to report that we are making progress on that front.

[Translation]

In early 2015, there was a backlog of 57,000 applicants for live-in caregivers and members of their families who were awaiting a decision on their permanent residence application. As of January 24, 2017, this number had dropped to 31,000, which represents a decrease of 46% from early 2015.

Madam Speaker, I would like to again thank the member for her question and thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak to this important subject.

[English]

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Madam Speaker, the NDP believes that the immigration system is about nation building. Canada is a country that is built by the immigrant community. We are the faces of the world.

If we are to honour the caregiver workers and their contributions, we must hold true to the principle that if they are good enough to work here, they are good enough to stay.

With respect to the caregiver program, for the applicants who are on the wait list, it is a wait of six years plus for them to be reunited with their families. I am a mother of two. I cannot imagine what life is like for people to be separated from their own children simply because they are trying to make a better life for them.

The government needs to bring in a special measure, frankly, to fast-track these applications. It is not acceptable for those wait times to exist. If we value them as workers, we must do something about it.

The work that is being done on the backlog right now is still deficient. I call on the government to take action now.

• (1900)

[Translation]

Mr. Serge Cormier: Madam Speaker, as I mentioned earlier, the previous live-in caregiver program stopped accepting new applicants in 2014 and two new classes were established: the caring for children class and the caring for people with high medical needs class. For both these classes, family caregivers are not required to live with their employer.

[English]

Again, the planned admissions range for caregivers and their families in 2017 will be 17,000 to 20,000 permanent residents, notably higher than the levels Canada admitted when the live-in caregiver program was still open to applicants.

Adjournment Proceedings

[*Translation*]

We are making progress when it comes to clearing the backlog of applications for permanent residency filed by live-in caregivers and members of their family. We will continue to work on this.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 7:02 p.m.)

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