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(HANSARD)

Wednesday, March 8, 2017

—

Speaker: The Honourable Geoff Regan

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, March 8, 2017

The House met at 2 p.m.

Prayer

• (1405)

[English]

The Speaker: It being Wednesday, we will now have the singing of *O Canada*, led by the hon. member for Kitchener—Conestoga.

[Members sang the national anthem]

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[Translation]

DAUGHTERS OF THE VOTE

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, International Women's Day is not about celebration. It is about the struggle for women's rights because we still have a long way to go. In Quebec, the Collectif 8 mars selected “equality without limits” as the theme for this internationally recognized day.

Equality without limits is a laudable goal. It is a rallying cry because there are far too many obstacles to gender equality. Women represent half the population, so their voices must be part of the democratic process. Democracy needs women, and women need democracy to change the systems that prevent them from achieving their potential.

On this international day of the fight for women's rights, I encourage all women to claim their rightful place, seek the experience they need, make their voices heard, and express their ideas so that we can achieve equality without limits.

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[English]

HEROISM

Ms. Ruby Sahota (Brampton North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on February 14, tragedy struck my riding of Brampton North. Jyoti Kapadia and Iftekhar Niazi lost their lives, alongside their oldest daughter, Amina, after a fire engulfed their home while they slept. If not for the heroic act of one young man, another life could have been lost that day. Sheldon Teague, the 19-year-old basement tenant, heard the screams of the youngest daughter, Zoya, and rushed in to save her.

We know that Sheldon fought hard to save all of them and that he wishes he had, but his bravery saved Zoya, and for that he will forever be known as a true hero.

To avoid tragedies like this, I encourage all Canadians to check their smoke detectors regularly so that no lives are lost by fire.

I ask members to join me in thanking Sheldon for his heroic act that day and for inspiring us all.

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WOMEN IN SMALL BUSINESS

Hon. Alice Wong (Richmond Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise on this day, International Women's Day, to highlight women in small businesses. In Canada, 47% of small and medium-sized enterprises are wholly or partly owned by women. As a former small business owner myself, I understand that running a business requires dedication, hard work, and finding the right balance between business and family.

We must continue to encourage and empower women of all ages to accomplish their goals. We also need to ensure that the right tools, mentorship, and opportunities are provided to guarantee the success of our small businesses.

I hope this day reminds us that every day women in Canada and around the world greatly impact our economies and communities for the better. We must ensure that all women have a chance to pursue their dreams.

* * *

KARAM KITCHEN

Ms. Filomena Tassi (Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in February 2014, Hamilton City Council passed a motion declaring itself a sanctuary city. Since then, Hamilton has opened its arms and its resources to Syrian refugees.

I am very proud today, on International Women's Day, to share a success story with this house. This has to do with three Syrian refugee women: Rawa'a Aloliwi, Dalal AI Zoubi, and Manahel AI Shareef. For these women, English was not their first language, so they had to think of a way to communicate, and what better way than through food? Karam Kitchen was born. Within four days, they had reached their first goal, and shortly after they had raised more than \$15,000. Months on, the business is booming and they are cooking up a storm.

Statements by Members

On International Women's Day, I want to celebrate the success of these three entrepreneurial women and also celebrate my great, beloved city, Hamilton, the sanctuary city.

* * *

• (1410)

[Translation]

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on this International Women's Day and as part of an initiative led by Equal Voice, for a short time today, the House of Commons was made up entirely of young women: Daughters of the Vote.

The seat normally occupied by my colleague from Newmarket—Aurora was empty. In a courageous act of protest to remind us of all the women who have not been able to reach their full potential and whose political voices have been silenced because of systemic violence against women, Arezoo Najibzadeh chose to leave her seat vacant. Thank you, Arezoo, for reminding me that Canadian women won the right to vote through protest, not silence.

I am protesting here today, too. I protest the government's broken promises. The government could have taken action to improve the lives of women, through electoral reform and pay equity. I protest on behalf of all Canadian women who are counting on us to bring about change.

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INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Mr. Angelo Iacono (Alfred-Pellan, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on this International Women's Day we are standing up for “equality without limits”. I want to commend my female colleagues in the House of Commons on their dedication to public service. I also want to acknowledge my assistants and all women who work on the Hill, not to mention the women in my life: my mother, my sisters, and my wife, and especially the volunteers in Alfred-Pellan.

I also want to express my support for those organizations, such as the Table de concertation de Laval en condition féminine, that do incredible work to help women.

I would like to commend the young women who get involved and actively work to promote equality, including Lina Benredouane, the Alfred-Pellan delegate for Daughters of the Vote.

I sincerely believe that we, as men, have our work cut out for us if we are to catch up to Canadian women who are making their mark in every sector. I hope that we will continue the fight so that all women can have equal opportunities.

[English]

I send a special shout-out to Nathan Scuderi, a young artist from my riding, who designed this tie for me.

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DAUGHTERS OF THE VOTE

Mr. Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon—Grasswood, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to rise today on International Women's

Day to recognize two young women who live in my constituency of Saskatoon—Grasswood: Mariah Hillis and Sakeena Akhtar.

Mariah is a fourth-year University of Saskatchewan student who would like to pursue a career in social work, education, or law. She is a champion for disability rights and accessibility, and she volunteers in support of students with disabilities.

Sakeena is in her final year at the University of Saskatchewan. She is completing her Bachelor of Science in chemical engineering. Sakeena is passionate about preventive health care, the environment, and developing education and equal opportunity programs.

Mariah and Sakeena are in Ottawa today to participate in the Daughters of the Vote initiative marking 100 years of federal suffrage for women. I congratulate these outstanding constituents who are our future leaders in Canada.

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CANADIAN AGRICULTURAL SAFETY WEEK

Mrs. Alaina Lockhart (Fundy Royal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today as the first woman representative for Fundy Royal, the dairy centre of the Maritimes. On International Women's Day, I want to recognize the immense contribution women have made, and continue to make, to agriculture in Canada. In fact, more than half of the new farmers in the Atlantic region are women.

I would also like to alert this House that next week is Canadian Agricultural Safety Week, which is why I proudly wear my AgSafe ribbon today. I encourage all members to wear their ribbons next week to affirm their commitment to keeping all Canadian farmers, farm families, and farm workers free from injury.

* * *

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Mr. Arif Virani (Parkdale—High Park, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, every year on March 8 we celebrate International Women's Day. It is a day to recognize the profound contributions of women around the world and right here at home.

On this day, I would like to recognize The Redwood shelter, a centre for women fleeing domestic abuse and violence in my riding of Parkdale—High Park. Abi Ajobolade, and her predecessor, Anne-Marie Gardner, have built The Redwood over the past 24 years into one of the most pronounced voices in the campaign to end domestic violence.

Unfortunately, the very real need for their work continues, because the battle for gender equality and to bring to an end violence against women continues. That battle will not be won until Canadian men also take up the fight, side by side with their sisters, daughters, mothers, and partners.

On this International Women's Day, I call on all men in this chamber, men in my riding, and men around the country to join the important work of community pillars like The Redwood shelter to bring to an end gender violence and abuse against women.

Statements by Members

●(1415)

CRIMINAL CODE

Mr. Len Webber (Calgary Confederation, CPC): Mr. Speaker, later today, Bill S-217, Wynn's law, will come to a decisive vote. Members of the House will decide if the death of RCMP Constable David Wynn was in vain or if his death was the catalyst for meaningful change. Members will vote. They will decide if we are willing to lose another life, or lives, or if we will take responsible steps to protect Canadians. Members will cast a vote to keep a flawed justice system or a vote to improve our justice system.

We have the opportunity to honour the legacy of Constable David Wynn. We have the opportunity to make our streets safer. We have the opportunity to fix a loophole in our justice system. We have the opportunity to make a positive difference.

I encourage all colleagues to seize that opportunity and support Bill S-217.

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INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Ms. Anita Vandenberg (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today is International Women's Day, a time for us to reflect on the hard-won progress of women and their male allies toward real gender equality.

[*Translation*]

It is a unique privilege to represent a riding with such a wide diversity of feminists.

[*English*]

During the past week, I have had the honour of joining local women's organizations at the annual Ottawa Italian Women's FILO, the Ottawa Muslim Women's Organization, and the Somali Women's Circle Network.

Two days ago, we announced funding for Planned Parenthood Ottawa to combat sexual violence and reproductive coercion.

Today, as part of Equal Voice's Daughters of the Vote, we welcome young women from across Canada who are already community leaders.

[*Translation*]

I am proud to represent women who champion equality.

Happy International Women's Day.

* * *

[*English*]

ORGANIZED LABOUR

Hon. Judy A. Sgro (Humber River—Black Creek, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, organized labour has served and continues to serve a crucial role in our society.

From labour's earliest days fighting for safe working conditions, reasonable hours, and decent pay to more recent campaigns for improved pensions, job preservation, and community betterment, unions give much to many.

It is in this context that I rise to honour Joseph Mancinelli, the international VP and regional manager for central and eastern Canada for the Laborers' International Union of North America.

With Joseph's leadership, LiUNA has become one of the largest building trade unions, with some 150,000 Canadian members. These are families who contribute to Canada by working each day to build something we can all be proud of.

I salute Joseph, his team, and organized labour across the country. Together we are building better futures for the middle class and those who are working hard to join it.

* * *

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Hon. Michelle Rempel (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, because of every 100 incidents of sexual assault in Canada, only six are reported to the police; because 57% of aboriginal women in Canada have been sexually assaulted; because women workers in Canada earn an average of 67¢ for every dollar earned by men; because 45% of Canadian companies have all-male boards and only 26% of the people in this chamber are women; because in this decade more than 140 million girls will become child brides; because women are murdered in honour killings; because women's sexuality is seen as something to be repressed, hidden, and punished; because thousands of Yazidi women are being held as sexual slaves in Iraq; because half a billion women around the world are malnourished; because menstrual stigma prevents millions of girls from going to school; because people deny that women's rights are fragile. Because, because, because.

We need International Women's Day. We need feminism. Most importantly, we need action.

* * *

●(1420)

DAUGHTERS OF THE VOTE

Mr. Terry Duguid (Winnipeg South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as part of International Women's Day, it is our honour to welcome 338 extraordinary young women to the House of Commons. They are here to represent every federal riding in Canada as part of the Daughters of the Vote initiative.

These young women are the future of Canada's democracy. Today, they are experiencing the thrill of taking a seat in this chamber for the first time. They are also making a powerful statement, showing us that they belong here. Their ideas matter. They belong because gender equality matters.

Change does not happen overnight, but by being engaged day after day it is possible to make a difference. I have no doubt that these young women will continue using their energy, conviction, and commitment to drive Canada toward a more equal future for everyone.

On International Women's Day, that is something worth celebrating.

*Oral Questions***INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY**

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Mr. Speaker, after decades of marching, resisting, and persisting for equal rights, on International Women's Day we see first-hand the women's movement is stronger than ever.

Today, young women filled this House, a powerful show of new leadership. I honour especially delegate Arezoo Najibzadeh. She chose to leave her seat empty to represent the countless women who have been denied their political voice.

We need all women's voices. We need all hands on deck for the challenges that Canada faces. Yet successive Liberal and Conservative governments have failed to act. It is far past time for the Liberals to live up to their feminist claims and get to work.

We need action for women and for future generations. New Democrats will never stop fighting for women's equality and human rights.

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INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Sturgeon River—Parkland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today is International Women's Day, and Conservatives are celebrating the role of women in Canada's public life. We are encouraging the next generation of women and girls to reach even higher. That is why we are so proud to welcome the 338 Daughters of the Vote into the House today. In fact, they were a little rowdier than question period usually is.

[Translation]

However, as we celebrate, we are also thinking of how we can do more to achieve gender equality.

[English]

We also reflect on the ways in which we can build confidence in Canada's judicial system. Too many women and girls do not come forward to pursue justice after being sexually assaulted. That is why I recently introduced the judicial accountability through sexual assault law training act, or the just act, to improve the training of our judges in handling the most sensitive sexual assault cases.

[Translation]

On this International Women's Day, I invite all members to join me and pass this bill.

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INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Mrs. Eva Nassif (Vimy, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today we are celebrating International Women's Day, our annual tribute to women's contributions to society and a reminder that we are working diligently to achieve gender equality.

As a member of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women, I had the privilege of addressing the 338 delegates from Daughters of the Vote, to highlight the achievements of many women pioneers in Canada and to discuss the importance of continuing to lead the way in the fight for equality and women's rights.

Equality matters. The work being done by community organizations as well as Status of Women Canada and its Standing Committee on the Status of Women is of vital importance. Equality is crucial because an inclusive society that strives to make women independent is more prosperous than one that marginalizes them.

I invite everyone to work together to achieve gender equality.

ORAL QUESTIONS

• (1425)

[Translation]

JUSTICE

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I recently introduced a bill on sexual assault law that will help restore confidence in the justice system. The bill seeks to provide training to future judges, among other things. It will also require written reasons to be provided in a greater number of decisions.

Does the Prime Minister agree that we should all work together to expedite passage of this bill?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, all survivors of sexual assault must be treated with compassion and respect, particularly when they are seeking justice before the courts.

It is very important to do everything we can to protect and encourage these women, and sometimes men, to seek justice for the violence they have suffered. I am therefore very happy that this bill will give us an opportunity to discuss this important issue.

[English]

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last week, a Halifax taxi driver was acquitted of sexual assault charges. The circumstances are disturbing, and incredibly, the judge ruled, "Clearly, a drunk can consent". Countless legal experts have pointed out the mistakes in this judgment. I have introduced a very common sense bill to make sure that judges are not making basic errors or, even worse, painful comments that make victims think twice of ever pursuing justice.

Will the Prime Minister support moving my bill to committee this week and help restore confidence in our justice system for victims of sexual assault?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is important that survivors of sexual assault be treated with respect and compassion, particularly before the justice system when they are seeking justice. We need to make sure that we are doing a much better job than we are right now. That is why I look forward to parliamentarians having an opportunity to discuss ways in which we are going to be able to improve it, including with the member's bill as it goes to committee.

Oral Questions

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Shelly Wynn is the widow of Constable David Wynn, who needlessly died because the justice system failed to protect him. His death was preventable. Shelly is in Ottawa today helping us fight to protect others. The Liberals have an opportunity to show Shelly that this will never happen again. We implore those on the other side to see the good that they will do if they vote for this bill.

Will the Prime Minister close this loophole that will save lives and vote in support of Wynn's law today?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was very pleased that Ms. MacInnis-Wynn was able to sit down with the justice minister and have a very constructive conversation on how we can improve our system of bail to do justice in this country. It is important that we keep our communities and families safe. It is important that we protect victims. It is important as well that we uphold the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. That is what we remain committed to and we are going to continue to work hard on that.

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, here in Canada and around the world, human traffickers physically and sexually exploit women and girls. It is a brutal and disgusting crime that deserves to be punished harshly, but when the Liberals introduced their human trafficking law, they weakened the punishments that could be handed out to these criminals. They crafted Bill C-38 to deliberately get rid of back-to-back sentencing for those convicted of multiple crimes of human trafficking.

Why is the Prime Minister unwilling to get tough on human traffickers and will he protect vulnerable women and girls by returning back-to-back sentencing to Canada's human trafficking laws?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this government is extremely serious about cracking down on human trafficking while protecting women and girls from exploitation, from assault. These are things that we take very seriously. We will continue to work very hard to ensure that more women and girls are protected. We also are the party of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and we will always stand up to defend charter rights.

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, research has revealed that when a woman or girl is raped in our country, her chances of being believed or being able to pursue justice are highly inadequate. I volunteered at a rape crisis centre and one of the most difficult decisions that a woman makes is whether or not to go to the police. We need to make that decision much easier.

Will the Prime Minister commit to ensuring that RCMP front-line officers have the training they need to give these women and girls confidence to pursue justice?

• (1430)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, 25 years ago I worked at the Sexual Assault Center of the McGill Students' Society and I know first-hand how devastating sexual assault can be. We need to do much more, even 25 years later, to make sure that we are fighting against it, that we are reducing it, and that we are creating a justice system and a system of policing that actually enable survivors of sexual assault to come forward and

get justice. We still have much more work to do, but we are committed to doing that.

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STATUS OF WOMEN

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Mr. Speaker, New Democrats know it is the federal government's job to eliminate gender inequality. Words are not enough. Women want concrete action, and we have waited far too long.

Pay equity is a fundamental human right. Countries like Iceland not only made pay equity the law, but they are now demanding that corporations prove that they are not paying women less than men.

Can the Prime Minister explain to the women of this country how much longer they will have to wait before you enact pay equity legislation?

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

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are committed to full pay equity.

We know that there are many things that we need to do as a society to improve outcomes for women and girls in our society. That is why we have moved forward on many different measures that will put more money in the pockets of women and families, and by making sure that our most vulnerable seniors, two-thirds of whom are women, will be able to be helped with an increase to the GIS.

We continue to work very hard to empower women and girls to succeed in all areas of success. We know we have much more work to do, and we will do that.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister goes on and on about being a proud feminist. He even voted in favour of a motion stating that pay equity is a basic right. Unfortunately, the government wants Canadian women to wait yet another year. Canadian women have waited long enough for the respect they deserve. The working group on pay equity released its report 12 years ago.

Why is the Prime Minister refusing to recognize that basic right by demanding pay equity now?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada is very aware of progress on the pay equity front and the work we are doing to help women succeed in the labour market. We know there is still a lot of work to do, and I congratulate all of the groups and organizations that continue to demand more measures. We will keep working hard to ensure that, in Canada, all women have the same opportunities as men.

*Oral Questions***CANADA REVENUE AGENCY**

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I did not hear him say that he will be supporting our motion that calls for pay equity immediately.

As we all know, action is much more important than good intentions. My question is quite simple: can the Prime Minister tell us when he intends to present his plan to put an end to penalty-free amnesty deals and renegotiate tax treaties with countries that are known tax havens?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we take tax evasion and tax avoidance very seriously. That is why, in the last budget, we invested \$444 million in the Canada Revenue Agency so that it could go after tax cheats and better combat tax evasion. That is what Canadians expect and that is exactly what we are going to do: continue working hard in order to achieve our objective.

[*English*]

Ms. Tracey Ramsey (Essex, NDP): Mr. Speaker, once again, no answer from the Prime Minister.

Let us try this again. The Canadian government is missing out on \$9 billion in lost tax revenue every single year. Imagine what the government could properly fund with that money. We heard from women this morning about their priorities, pharmacare, child care. These could be realities, and all because the richest would simply be forced to pay their fair share.

I have two very clear questions for the Prime Minister. Will he vote in favour of the NDP motion on tax fairness? Will the Prime Minister end all penalty-free amnesty deals for tax evaders?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we take fiscal avoidance and tax dodging very seriously. This is why we put \$444 million in last year's budget, so that the Canada Revenue Agency could go after tax frauds and tax cheats.

We continue to understand that this is a priority for Canadians. It is a priority for us. Everyone needs to pay their fair share of taxes. That is exactly what we are ensuring happens.

* * *

• (1435)

SENIORS

Hon. Diane Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk, CPC): Mr. Speaker, under the previous Conservative government, we introduced a low-tax plan for seniors that removed almost 400,000 of them from the tax rolls. As part of this plan, we increased the age amount tax credit by \$2,000 for low- and fixed-income seniors.

The Minister of Finance has indicated that everything is on the table to bring in more revenue for the government to waste. Will the Minister of Finance commit to not slash the age amount tax credit, and instead protect our seniors?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very grateful for this opportunity to remind all members of this House of the important agenda that this government has followed in order to help vulnerable seniors, and all seniors in fact. We have decreased the age of eligibility for old age security from 67 years old to 65 years old,

which means that 100,000 vulnerable seniors will not need to enter into severe poverty. We have also enhanced the Canada pension plan so that future generations of seniors will also be able to live decently and adequately.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Diane Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk, CPC): Mr. Speaker, during the election campaign, the Liberals promised to run a modest deficit of only \$10 billion. That was one promise they broke immediately. They also promised that they would not eliminate income splitting for seniors. We all know that the Liberals always break the promises they make to Canadians.

Will the Minister of Finance tell us today that he will not eliminate income splitting for seniors?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased and grateful to have the opportunity to mention two other measures that we have implemented in recent months.

We increased the guaranteed income supplement by up to \$1,000 per senior per year. This will benefit 900,000 seniors in Canada and will lift 13,000 seniors out of poverty. We also transferred \$200 million for seniors' housing in order to help a good many of them escape the appalling housing conditions in which they find themselves. These measures will make our society better.

* * *

[*English*]

SMALL BUSINESS

Hon. Alice Wong (Richmond Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, 2016 was a difficult year for our small business owners. Their hiring credit was axed, their payroll taxes were increased, and they did not get the tax cut the Liberals promised. Small businesses are being targeted by the Liberals for being too small and the Prime Minister accused small businesses of existing solely to avoid tax.

Will the Prime Minister finally listen to our entrepreneurs and cut their taxes in the upcoming budget?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to rise in this House, especially on International Women's Day. I wish everyone the best on this day, especially our women entrepreneurs.

This government has committed to making more opportunities for under-represented groups. We are working better with entrepreneurs, we are listening and engaging with small business owners, we are speaking to their customers so that we can create the opportunities they need. The solutions that our small businesses owners have are not only good for Canada, but they are amazing for export markets. We will continue to open up those markets so that we can encourage our small business owners to export, as well.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association says the Alberta government is breaking its agreement to flow \$300 million of building Canada funds to local municipal projects. Instead, it is going to pay down the Alberta NDP's out-of-control debt. The infrastructure minister keeps falsely repeating that this money is building infrastructure and creating jobs. Municipalities need infrastructure now.

When will the minister tell the premier this is not a slush fund and when will he finally stand up for communities in Alberta?

Hon. Amarjeet Sohi (Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to inform the hon. member that federal infrastructure dollars can only be used for infrastructure projects. We have approved 127 projects for Alberta; 125 of those projects are in municipalities of all sizes, such as Edmonton, Calgary, Red Deer, Grand Prairie, and Lethbridge. All those projects are creating jobs and opportunities throughout the country, including in Alberta's communities.

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AIR TRANSPORTATION

Mrs. Kelly Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for months the Liberals have been quietly preparing to sell off Canada's airports and have refused to answer questions, but they have hired Credit Suisse to study the idea.

Tonight, the Prime Minister is having an exclusive meeting with BlackRock, a meeting that media has been banned from attending.

It is clear that these Liberals have spent the credit card to the limit and are now selling off the furniture. Will the transport minister admit that he is selling our airports and tell us to whom he is selling them?

• (1440)

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to reassure my colleague that what is most important for us is improving service to the air passenger. That is why we are working very hard to lower their costs, to give them more choices, more competition, to reduce the time it takes for them to go through security or through customs. We will even be giving them a bill of rights. That is what is motivating us when we talk about our airports and our airlines.

The Speaker: Order. Earlier today I was able to compliment the Daughters of the Vote delegates on their decorum in the House. They were occasionally rowdy in support of each other and I would love to thank everyone here for the same kind of thing. However, let us all listen to the hon. member for Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek.

Mrs. Kelly Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, CPC): Mr. Speaker, by not answering the question, the Liberals are just trying to hide the fact that the finance minister will put a big “for sale” sign on Canada's largest and most important airports. The Liberals' propensity for spending money they do not have is forcing them to have exclusive meetings with BlackRock to organize a shotgun sale of Canada's airports before the ink of the budget is even dry. Will the minister commit to maintaining Canadian ownership of

Oral Questions

these strategic economic assets, or are the Liberals just that desperate for money?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in terms of concrete measures, I am sure my colleague heard the fact that we made the decision last November to increase the international ownership in our airlines from 25% to 49% in order to increase competition. I also announced at that time a bill of rights or a rights regime to make sure that air travellers' rights would be taken into consideration. We are already beginning to see more competition. The prices are coming down. We are very glad that we are offering more service to our passengers. That is our intention and we are going to continue to do that.

* * *

[Translation]

INFRASTRUCTURE

Ms. Karine Trudel (Jonquière, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this evening, in honour of International Women's Day, the Prime Minister will be in Toronto attending a private dinner with members of the board of directors of BlackRock.

BlackRock currently has \$5 trillion in assets under management around the world and is interested in the Liberals' plan to privatize our public infrastructure.

Can the Prime Minister stand up and explain to us why, of all the possible activities on this International Women's Day, he chose to spend the evening with members of the board of directors of an investment fund? Can he tell us what is on the agenda for this meeting?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again, our primary motivation is to give air passengers better choices. That is what motivates us most. We are working very hard to lower costs, give travellers more choices, and reduce the time it takes for them to go through security or customs. We want to acknowledge that passengers have rights. Improving passenger service is what motivates us when we talk about our airports and our airlines.

* * *

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, with this government, it seems that everything is for sale.

We all know that women do not have equal rights in Saudi Arabia. Nevertheless, Canada continues to export weapons to that country and to others, such as Libya, that have very questionable human rights records. Canada is now the second-largest exporter of arms to the Middle East.

Does the Minister of Foreign Affairs believe that Canada should export military equipment to countries that violate women's rights? Are we now a nation of feminists—

Oral Questions

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for her question.

On June 17, 2016, this government tabled the Arms Trade Treaty in the House of Commons, something that the previous Conservative government failed to do. We are delivering on our commitment to Canadians to promote responsibility, transparency, and accountability. It is the right thing to do, and we will soon be making legislative changes.

* * *

• (1445)
[English]

ETHICS

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday when asked a serious question about his ethical lapses, the Prime Minister said that he will, “continue to demonstrate the kind of openness and transparency Canadians expect”. Let us see if there is even an ounce of truth in that statement because I am going to ask a very direct, straightforward question for the Prime Minister. Let us see if he answers. Has the Prime Minister met with the Ethics Commissioner on the current investigation that she is conducting? If so, how many times?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate once again the opportunity to rise in this House and to remind Canadians exactly what this government has been doing. This government has been responding to the very real challenges that Canadians are facing, and we will continue to advance and do that work, including historic investments on infrastructure to help provinces, territories, and municipalities create the opportunities and growth that they would like to create; and working better with families with children through the Canada child benefit. When it comes to the member's question, the member knows very well that the Prime Minister will answer any questions that the commissioner has.

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I asked the Prime Minister a direct question and he refused to answer it. That kind of arrogant, condescending non-answer is what is giving the Liberals a lot of problems, from their carbon tax cover-up to misleading B.C. seniors, and a prime minister under multiple investigations.

We know he is heading off today to have a private meeting with BlackRock executives. When is he going to start giving Canadians straightforward answers, or does he only meet with people who are lining his party's pockets?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today is a historic day in the House of Commons: 338 women took these seats, and who was available to them? The Prime Minister. The Prime Minister spoke to every single woman—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. It is not the day for this. Most members in all parties are able to sit through question period without

reacting to what they hear. They wait their turn, whether their turn comes today or not.

The hon. member for Sarnia—Lambton.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is clear the Liberals do not care if they break the rules. First the Prime Minister traded cash for access against the ethics rules. Then he broke the law when he boarded a private helicopter for a winter vacation. He is in trouble with the Ethics Commissioner, the Commissioner of Lobbying, and the Commissioner of Official Languages. His ministers are now taking their cue from him. Now we see the innovation minister misleading Canadians about Anbang Insurance.

Will the Prime Minister start following the rules and call on his ministers to do the same?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, every single minister and the Prime Minister work very hard for Canadians every single day. Every single member of Parliament, at least on this side of the House, workshard for their constituents every single day.

I encourage every member to do the work he or she was elected to do. I know we can work better together. When it comes to the question the hon. member poses, she knows very well that the Prime Minister will answer any questions the commissioner has.

The Speaker: Order, please. We know that members on all sides of the House work very hard.

The hon. member for Sarnia—Lambton.

[Translation]

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians expect the Prime Minister and the ministers to act with integrity.

The Prime Minister continues to break his own rules, the rules on ethics and contact with lobbyists.

Will the Prime Minister start leading this country with integrity and tell cabinet members and the people in his office to do the same?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians expect the government to work very hard for them. They are the ones that we work hard for every day.

That is why we lowered taxes for the middle class and made historic investments in infrastructure. We are going to keep working for Canadians every day, and I encourage the member to work with us so that we can get more done together.

[English]

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Ms. Georgina Jolibois (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, families of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls feel they are being left in the dark when in fact they should be properly informed and involved in every step of the inquiry. Worse, northern families do not have access to proper information due to unreliable Internet and other crucial services.

How will the Prime Minister ensure the commitments made to all indigenous families affected by these tragedies, and that they are involved and feel like true progress is being made?

• (1450)

Ms. Yvonne Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one of the strongest commitments our government made was to launch an inquiry into the missing and murdered indigenous women and girls, and we certainly have done that. We have set up an independent commission that is carrying out that process. However, we know we cannot wait for the commission's recommendations before we act on the real root causes of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls in Canada. That is why we have invested \$8.4 billion, historic investments, in women, in shelters, in housing, in children's education on first nations, and in indigenous communities.

* * *

PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Ms. Cheryl Hardcastle (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the DisAbleD Women's Network notes the rates of sexual, physical, and verbal violence across Canada are at least three times higher for young women and girls living with disabilities, and violence prevention agencies are simply not given the proper resources. Women with disabilities have been completely forgotten.

On this International Women's Day, will the government commit to taking leadership to address the enormous gaps in violence prevention policy and program delivery for this vulnerable population?

Hon. Carla Qualtrough (Minister of Sport and Persons with Disabilities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague for her tireless advocacy on behalf of Canadians with disabilities.

I would also like to thank the DisAbleD Women's Network for its advocacy, for pointing out that the majority of people living with disabilities are women and that among women in Canada, women with disabilities live with the highest rates of violence, the lowest incomes, and the highest rates of unemployment. That is why I am very proud of the work done by the current and former ministers of Status of Women on gender-based violence, drawing upon the work of DAWN. I am also very proud of the accessibility legislation we are developing to make sure every Canadian with a disability is included in society.

Oral Questions

STATUS OF WOMEN

Mrs. Salma Zahid (Scarborough Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today is International Women's Day, a day to recognize women's achievements and acknowledge the challenges we continue to face.

As an immigrant, I know how difficult it can be for minority women to integrate fully into Canadian society. While men are the first to go to work and attend language training, women are often isolated, staying at home to care for children without the language skills to venture outside.

Could the Minister of Status of Women tell us what the government is doing to help these isolated women fully join that Canadian family?

[Translation]

Hon. Maryam Monsef (Minister of Status of Women, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to wish everyone a happy International Women's Day. I thank my colleague from Scarborough Centre for her question.

[English]

On International Women's Day, we are reminded that gender equality benefits our society and our economy. We know that a barrier to gender equality is access to child care services. That is why we have introduced the Canada child benefit plan. That is why we are developing a framework for early learning and child care. That is why we are increasing funding for services like child minding, to ensure refugee women can settle and integrate into our communities.

* * *

FOREIGN INVESTMENT

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after discussing the deal at a cash-for-access fundraiser, the Prime Minister agreed to sell B.C. care facilities to a Chinese company with questionable ownership. Yesterday, a Chinese-language media asked if our concern was about state-owned enterprises, to which we responded that we did not know to whom he sold these homes. Is it Chinese billionaires? Is it the Chinese government? Is it simply a friend?

Therefore, again, whatever the answer is, it is unacceptable that the Prime Minister is not sharing it with Canadians. Who owns their homes?

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am surprised again that the Conservative Party, and particularly that member, is opposing global investment into Canada. We understand that we want investments into Canada to grow the economy, to create opportunities for Canadians, and to create jobs.

Oral Questions

This investment and this transaction was following the Investment Canada Act. We did our due diligence. We followed the process and we determined it was an overall net economic benefit. That is the decision we made, and that is why the British Columbia government and the health minister also provided the operating licences for these retirement care facilities, which are managed and operated by Canadians for Canadians.

• (1455)

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, seniors in my riding are writing and phoning my office every day. They simply want to know who is responsible for these facilities. If families and patients have complaints, they are lost in an accountability fog. Either the government does not know the answer, or it knows the answer and it is not willing to tell us.

If he will not stand in the House and tell us who owns the homes, will he table the documents that were done with respect to that due diligence around the ownership of Anbang Insurance?

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have been very clear that we follow the process. We do our due diligence. Under the Investment Canada Act, there are clear criteria to determine that any transaction has to be of an overall net economic benefit for us to proceed. We made that determination based on the facts. The facts are that this transaction will provide additional resources to Retirement Concepts so it can expand and provide better services to seniors, so it can expand and create more jobs. This is good for the health care sector. This is good for the economy. This is good for British Columbia.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Innovation claims to have done a review of the sell-off of seniors care facilities in B.C., but is not capable of telling Canadians who owns Anbang Insurance. Not even Wall Street firms will do business with Anbang because of the murky ownership structure, dominated by the who's who of the Chinese Communist Party.

In the minister's pandering to Beijing, Canadians deserve to know who is pulling the strings and deciding the fate of our seniors. The question is simple. Who owns Anbang Insurance?

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our approach has been very straightforward. Our approach is about the economy and about jobs. We care about our economy. We know that is the number one priority Canadians have expressed to us. Part of that challenge is making sure we attract investments to Canada. We believe in global investment. We believe in the opportunities it presents to our businesses.

Any decision under the Investment Canada Act is taken very seriously. We do our due diligence. We do our homework. We make sure we follow the process. Under the Investment Canada Act, this transaction was in the overall net economic benefit. That is why we approved the project.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister refuses to answer questions about his own ethical breaches. The innovation minister was forced to admit

that he misled Canadians about the people to whom he is selling seniors care facilities.

Canadians do not want to hear any lies or see such a total lack of transparency.

When will the Prime Minister start acting like a leader and clean up his act?

[*English*]

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister and our government have shown leadership when it comes to the economy. We understand that every decision we make must focus on growth and jobs. We need to attract global investment if we are to succeed globally and if we are to create the opportunities for Canadians, for women in particular, and for the youth going forward. That is why we are open to investment.

In regard to this transaction, we followed the process. We made sure the Retirement Concepts deal that was put forward was done in a manner that was in the overall net economic benefit for British Columbians and for Canadians. It is good for the economy and it is good for jobs.

* * *

HEALTH

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister claims to be a feminist, but on International Women's Day, he is content to merely re-announce old promises. If equality truly matters to the government, it should fund women's reproductive health. The best way is to ensure all women have access to birth control. Such access reduces unintended pregnancy, abortion, is cost saving, and a cornerstone to women's human rights.

Will the government take a stand for women and support my motion to make birth control free for women in Canada?

Hon. Jane Philpott (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on International Women's Day, it is an honour to rise and be part of a government that speaks up for women's rights, and speaks up for women's sexual and reproductive rights.

Access to birth control is of fundamental importance to the women and families of Canada, to be able to control their bodies, to be able to control their reproductive rights. We will make sure that medication in our country is affordable, accessible, and appropriately prescribed. That includes access to birth control.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

HOUSING

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conseil des Montréalaises recently issued an opinion on homelessness among women. In Montreal and across Canada, homelessness among women is on the rise, but it remains hidden. This is something that affects indigenous and immigrant women more frequently, and homeless women are much more vulnerable to physical and sexual violence.

The minister announced the creation of an advisory committee to overhaul the homelessness partnering strategy, or HPS. Will a gender-based analysis be done? Will the government invest the sums needed to prevent and eradicate this scourge?

• (1500)

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I first want to thank and congratulate my colleague on her continued efforts on the issue of homelessness, particularly among women. I know she is aware that, in the last budget, back in March 2016, we announced a \$100-million investment to build shelters that serve victims of family violence.

Given that she has advised us in the past, and again I thank her for that, she also knows that we are developing a national housing strategy that will have a significant impact on the living conditions of our Canadian families, especially those who are most vulnerable.

* * *

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Hon. Michelle Rempel (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we know that the funding to help many Syrian refugees resettle runs out this month. We also know that fewer than half of them have found jobs.

Does the government know how much the provinces will have to pay out in social assistance because the Liberals did not come up with a plan to help these refugees fully integrate into the Canadian economy?

[English]

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this year we are providing \$900 million in settlement and resettlement funding to support refugee integration and settlement services, \$664 million of that is for settlement services, and \$76 million more outside of Quebec than in previous years.

We are committed to supporting refugees as they arrive in Canada, and making sure we provide them with language programs, job supports, and other integration programming as we move forward.

We take that commitment seriously, and we have the track record to prove that.

Hon. Michelle Rempel (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I did not ask if the program was expensive and had out-of-control costs, I asked if it got results.

What the minister has failed to say is how many of these refugees have actually found jobs. We have a huge influx of refugees coming

across the American border right now. We will see an influx of refugees coming in with the government's decision to lift the Mexican visa requirement.

My question is very simple. How much will the government pay in Canadian taxpayers' dollars to support its ill-fated refugee plan?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the international community has consistently praised Canada for its compassionate, responsible, and generous refugee program. We will take no lessons from the previous government on issues around refugees and immigrants.

In fact, by lifting the Mexican visa requirement, we have gone a long way to rebuild and strengthen our bilateral relationship with Mexico that was damaged considerably by the previous government.

We addressed those associated with the Mexican visa lift. We worked closely with Mexican officials. Tourism has gone up and other economic benefits have gone up. We will continue to work to make sure the visa lift is a success.

* * *

CANADIAN ARMED FORCES

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our allies in Australia, Britain, the U.S., and Germany have all responded to the cries of their veterans regarding the severe impact that mefloquine is having on their lives.

On Monday, Lieutenant-General Roméo Dallaire testified that he has experienced the devastating effects of this drug. When he was asked if more studies should be done, he interrupted and said, "No, just get rid of it".

When will the Liberal government listen to the heart-wrenching testimony of veterans like General Roméo Dallaire and get rid of this harmful drug?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we take the health of our Canadian Armed Forces members extremely seriously. We make every effort to protect our members from disease through immunization and other preventive measures.

At the request of the chief of the defence staff, the surgeon general is now looking into the use of mefloquine and will report back imminently.

The military member's decision on malaria prevention is made with close consultation with their health care provider based on comprehensive medical screening and education.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

STATUS OF WOMEN

Ms. Linda Lapointe (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on March 2, the Minister of International Development and La Francophonie said, “Sexual and reproductive health and rights are human rights. All women have the right to choose whether and when they want to have children, and how many.”

Since today is the 40th International Women's Day, can the minister tell the House about the commitment the government made today to promote gender equality and advance an international feminist agenda?

• (1505)

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of International Development and La Francophonie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Rivière-des-Mille-Îles for the opportunity to inform the House that the Prime Minister and I made a very important announcement this morning: we will invest \$650 million over three years in sexual and reproductive health in developing countries and fragile states.

This investment will support the sexuality education of girls and boys, family planning, access to contraceptives, access to legal abortion, and the defence of women's rights because women's rights are human rights.

* * *

[English]

TAXATION

Ms. Dianne L. Watts (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Liberals voted against releasing information regarding how much their carbon tax will cost Canadian households. As well, they have not included any information on what sectors will be exempted from the carbon tax.

Can the minister tell the House who will be exempted, and will the government guarantee its national carbon tax will actually be revenue neutral?

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very proud to stand up on International Women's Day as the first woman elected in Ottawa Centre.

Women across Canada are strongly supportive of climate action. They understand it is necessary to tackle climate change for their children and grandchildren, and also because it will mean good jobs for them in the future.

We are committed to taking climate action. We will continue to move forward because it is the right thing to do, and I would encourage the party opposite to join us.

* * *

[Translation]

STATUS OF WOMEN

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Salaberry—Suroît, NDP): Mr. Speaker, over a year ago, the Minister of Status of Women received an application from Justice alternative du Suroît for support to a

project that would enable three large regions of Quebec to develop safety nets for sexually exploited girls and young women.

Out of 4,000 runaways at youth centres in Quebec, 76% are girls, and 30% of them have been sexually exploited or exposed to prostitution. The project could prevent hundreds of women from suffering sexual abuse.

When will the minister sign it and give this project the green light?

[English]

Hon. Maryam Monsef (Minister of Status of Women, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for her advocacy on behalf of women and girls in her communities and across Canada.

Status of Women Canada is committed to empowering organizations across the country to empower women and girls in their communities, and to include men and boys. That is why last year we funded about 300 projects across the country to do that work.

We will be introducing a gender-based violence strategy, the first federal strategy of its kind, to address the challenges that too many women and girls in our communities face.

* * *

SCIENCE

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Toronto—Danforth, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, February 11 was International Day for Women and Girls in Science when we celebrated scientists like Dr. Roberta Bondar, Dr. Victoria Kaspi, and Dr. Barbara Sherwood Lollar from my riding who was named Companion to the Order of Canada for her contributions to geochemistry.

That day I attended an event with the Minister of Science, the Minister of Status of Women, the CEO of Actua, and women scientists who discussed the importance of getting young girls engaged in science, and how to keep women in STEM.

Can the Minister of Science tell the House what our government is doing to encourage women to study science?

Hon. Kirsty Duncan (Minister of Science, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to increasing the representation of women in STEM fields.

In a competitive, globalized economy, Canada cannot afford to leave half its talent on the sidelines. I am delighted to launch a digital campaign to encourage young women to #ChooseScience.

As a former scientist and as Minister of Science, I consider it part of my responsibility to encourage young women to enter careers in STEM. Science needs women. We need their voices. We need their insights.

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Ms. Rachael Harder (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our men and women on the ground and in the air serving in Operation Impact are still in the dark when it comes to whether or not the Liberals plan to pay or cut their danger pay. The deadline is fast approaching, and 300 more members of the Canadian Armed Forces may have their pay completely cut by this minister.

On multiple occasions, the previous Conservative ministers in this role reversed bureaucratic decisions that looked similar to this. Will the minister commit here and now to follow our example, and ensure that full pay is given to our brave men and women in uniform?

• (1510)

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to making sure our men and women have all the right benefits. I have directed the chief of the defence staff to look into this matter.

I would also like to correct the member in terms of the previous government's actions on this. It actually sent troops into Kuwait without the tax-free allowance, something we had taken up. There were rules that were placed in 2014 that resulted in some of the inequities that we see right now.

That is the reason why we are looking into this matter, so we can solve this issue.

* * *

HEALTH

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, in addition to this being International Women's Day, it is also a deadline for the Minister of Health for comments on the federal framework on Lyme disease.

This has been brought into play by the bill I submitted in the 41st Parliament, unanimously supported in the House and the Senate, and continues to be strongly supported by members on all sides of this House. Unfortunately, the draft framework is inadequate. It needs a serious overhaul.

Could the Prime Minister assure us that the time, if it is necessary, will be taken to improve this framework?

Hon. Jane Philpott (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands for her fantastic work on this very important topic, and indeed members from all parties who have been advocating on behalf of people who have been victims of Lyme disease.

I look forward to continuing to work with the member on making sure that we have a strong framework that recognizes the federal role in this, and that includes building national surveillance and annual reporting.

It includes making sure there is adequate research. It includes improving the guidelines for prevention and treatment of Lyme disease, and making sure that we raise awareness and education on how to prevent Lyme disease. I thank the member for her work.

Routine Proceedings

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

CRIMINAL CODE

Hon. Jody Wilson-Raybould (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-39, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (unconstitutional provisions) and to make consequential amendments to other Acts.

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

* * *

[Translation]

INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

Mr. Darrell Samson (Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1), I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian Branch of the Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie, the APF, respecting its participation at the meeting of the Political Committee of the APF, held in New York, United States, from April 11 to 13, 2016.

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COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Mr. Pat Finnigan (Miramichi—Grand Lake, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the fifth report of the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food in relation to its study of the next agricultural policy framework.

• (1515)

[English]

Mr. David Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to be on the agriculture committee representing Canadian producers and our party. We have just finished a report on the next agricultural policy framework. Throughout our hearings we heard some consistent themes: that there is a bright future in Canadian agriculture, that in many areas we are world leaders in agriculture, and that we need to get our world-class products to market.

We do not oppose the government's recommendations in the report. We felt that there was more that needed to be done. This dissenting report does that, specifically in the areas of program funding and operations, market development, trade, research, science, environment, labour, and tax policy.

Hon. Wayne Easter: Could you guys cut? Cut.

Mr. David Anderson: Mr. Speaker, I would encourage members and others to expand their perspective, including the member at the other end who is heckling me, by reading our dissenting report.

*Routine Proceedings***CRIMINAL CODE**

Hon. Jody Wilson-Raybould (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I would like to table, in both official languages, a charter statement with respect to Bill C-39, an act to amend the Criminal Code (unconstitutional provisions) and to make consequential amendments to other acts.

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

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

Mr. Bryan May (Cambridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the fifth report of the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development, and the Status of Persons With Disabilities in relation to Bill C-243, an act respecting the development of a national maternity assistance program strategy and amending the Employment Insurance Act (maternity benefits).

Pursuant to Standing Order 97.1, the committee requests a 30-day extension to consider the bill.

The Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 97.1(3)(a), a motion to concur in the report is deemed moved, the question deemed put, and a recorded division deemed demanded and deferred until Wednesday, March 22, immediately before the time provided for private members' business.

FINANCE

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 14th report of the Standing Committee on Finance in relation to Supplementary Estimates (C) 2016-17.

[*Translation*]

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Orders 104 and 114, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 24th report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs regarding the membership of committees of the House. If the House gives its consent, I intend to move concurrence in the 24th report later this day.

I also have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 25th report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs in relation to its study of the supplementary estimates (C) for the fiscal year 2016-17.

* * *

AERONAUTICS ACT

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau (Berthier—Maskinongé, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-341, An Act to amend the Aeronautics Act (aerodromes).

She said: Mr. Speaker, first of all, I would like to thank my colleague from Trois-Rivières for seconding this bill on aeronautics

and, more specifically, aerodromes. It seeks to improve the assessment process for aerodrome projects.

In Saint-Cuthbert, in my riding, we have a project, but the current process is extremely flawed. The opinions of elected municipal officials, elected members of the Quebec National Assembly, environmental groups, and the UPA are not taken into account. We therefore want to improve the process to make social licence a condition and ensure that projects are in the public interest.

I would also like to thank all the people who took action on this issue and acknowledge their work. We will not give up. I am thinking of the people of Neuville, Terrebonne, and Mascouche. We have work to do, and I hope that the minister will take this bill into account and act quickly to improve the aerodrome project assessment process.

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

* * *

● (1520)

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if the House gives its consent, I move that the 24th report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, presented to the House earlier this day, be concurred in.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

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JUDICIAL ACCOUNTABILITY THROUGH SEXUAL ASSAULT LAW TRAINING ACT

(Bill C-337. On the Order: Private Members' Business:)

February 23, 2017—Second reading and reference to the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights of Bill C-337, an Act to amend the Judges Act and the Criminal Code (sexual assault)—Ms. Rona Ambrose.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to move a very important motion on this International Women's Day.

[*English*]

It is, indeed, very rare in the House for leaders of political parties to support each other's private member's bills, but when the issue is how our judicial system handles cases of sexual assault, we all have to come together and say that we believe survivors.

It is with sincere respect for the Leader of the Opposition that I move the following motion seeking the unanimous consent of the House. I move:

Routine Proceedings

That, notwithstanding any Standing Order or usual practice of the House, Bill C-337, an act to amend the Judges Act and the Criminal Code, requiring sexual assault training for judges, be deemed debated at second reading, deemed read a second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights, and that the name of the member for Sturgeon River—Parkland be withdrawn from the list of private members' business.

[Translation]

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

* * *

[English]

PETITIONS

ORGAN DONATION

Mr. Len Webber (Calgary Confederation, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition in support of my private member's bill, Bill C-316, which was submitted by Teresa DeGusti of Calgary. The petitioners are calling on the House to improve the organ donation system in Canada by making the process to register as an organ donor easier. This would be achieved by adding a simple question to our annual tax returns.

Becoming an organ donor is the easiest way to save the life of a fellow human being. Teresa collected pages and pages of signatures, and these are signatures of Canadians who want our organ donor system to work better so that we can save more lives every day.

[Translation]

LAND LINE TELEPHONE SERVICE

Mr. Marc Serré (Nickel Belt, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition from the community of St. Charles in the riding of Nickel Belt.

[English]

This petition requests that the Department of Innovation, Science and Economic Development engage with Bell Canada to find a solution for the St. Charles community's unreliable land-line telephone service, considering the poor coverage of the area for cell mobiles.

It is an honour for me to present this on behalf of more than 200 residents in St. Charles who signed a petition concerning the unreliable land-line service and the impact this has had on the community, families, and businesses in the area. It is unacceptable in 2017 that residents in Canada do not have a reliable dial tone for land-line service for daily interactions, emergency services, and economic development.

ORGAN DONATION

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am rising to table petition e-642, my first electronic petition, signed by

2,252 people in support of the member for Calgary Confederation's private member's bill, Bill C-316.

I want to take a moment to thank Shauna Rivait, who is the initiator of the petition. She worked extremely hard to get this many people to support her and to support the member for Calgary Confederation by signing this petition. It is very important. She has a personal connection to this, as do many people who signed the petition. Her father lived for 10 extra years thanks to a double lung transplant. Her sister, unfortunately, passed away.

I want to thank Shauna and all those who signed it. I also want to thank the government members for giving consideration to this bill. I will be going back to every single person who signed this petition to thank them for supporting my colleague in this endeavour.

● (1525)

PESTICIDES

Mr. Fin Donnelly (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table this petition in the House. The petitioners are concerned about the use of the herbicidal chemical glyphosate, and they are asking the government to make public all data proving that the chemical is safe for use in Canadian agriculture.

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

The first petition is from residents throughout my constituency as well as a number from Alberta calling for the government to take action on neonicotinoid insecticides, which threaten pollinator populations.

GENETICALLY MODIFIED FOOD

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): The second petition, Mr. Speaker, deals with the issue of genetically modified food, and it comes from petitioners in Toronto. They add that consumers be given the right to know and that GMO products be labelled.

150TH ANNIVERSARY OF CONFEDERATION

Hon. Peter Van Loan (York—Simcoe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, commemorative medals have been issued by the Government of Canada on significant milestones in our country's history to recognize the contributions of everyday Canadians to their communities, contributions that mean so much to so many but too often go unnoticed and unrecognized. A medal was issued for our Confederation in 1867, the Diamond Jubilee of Confederation in 1927, the centennial in 1967, and the 125th anniversary of Confederation in 1992, but as part of the Liberal war on history, there will be no medal honouring the country-building contributions of Canadians on the 150th anniversary of Confederation. The tradition is being ignored, and community-leading Canadians are being forgotten.

Petitioners from Armstrong, British Columbia, call upon the Government of Canada to respect tradition and recognize deserving Canadians and reverse its decision to cancel the commemorative medal for the 150th anniversary of Confederation.

*Government Orders***QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER**

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

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

MOTIONS FOR PAPERS

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

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS**NATIONAL SECURITY AND INTELLIGENCE COMMITTEE OF PARLIAMENTARIANS ACT**

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill C-22, An Act to establish the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians and to make consequential amendments to certain Acts, as reported (with amendments) from the committee.

[*Translation*]

SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: There are seven motions in amendment standing on the Notice Paper for the report stage of Bill C-22.

[*English*]

The Chair has received a letter from the government House leader arguing that Motion No. 6 could not have been presented in committee, as the changes it proposes arose out of a decision of the Supreme Court rendered very shortly before the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security began clause-by-clause consideration of the bill. A similar argument was made in relation to part (b) of Motion No. 3. The court decision in question was rendered on Friday, November 25, 2016, and clause-by-clause consideration began on Tuesday, November 29, 2016. The government House leader contended in her letter that there was not sufficient time to analyze the consequences of the decision and prepare amendments accordingly. For that reason, she has asked that they be selected at report stage.

[*Translation*]

The hon. member for Victoria has also sent a letter to the Chair arguing that these amendments should not be selected, as he believes they should have been presented in committee. He also argues that there are cases in the past where the Chair has refused to select motions presented by the government.

As members know, consistent with the note to Standing Order 76.1(5), the Chair would not normally select motions that could have been presented or were defeated in committee.

[*English*]

However, there have been exceptions. On September 22, 2014, the Speaker was faced with a similar case in relation to a motion at the report stage of Bill C-13, an act to amend the Criminal Code, the Canada Evidence Act, the Competition Act and the Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters Act. The hon. member for Charlottetown submitted a motion arising out of a court decision rendered after clause-by-clause and, in that case, the motion was selected.

[*Translation*]

The circumstances in the present case, although not identical, are sufficiently analogous to satisfy the Chair that the motions in question should be selected for consideration at report stage.

[*English*]

The Chair has examined the remaining motions submitted and is satisfied they meet the criteria spelled out in Standing Order 76.1(5). Motion No. 1 could not have been presented in committee, as it requires a royal recommendation. Part (a) of Motion No. 3 and Motion No. 4 further amend changes made by the committee. Motion No. 5 restores a clause deleted by the committee. Motions Nos. 2 and 7 propose to delete clauses. These motions will all be selected.

● (1530)

[*Translation*]

Motions numbered 1 to 7 will be grouped for debate and voted upon according to the voting pattern available at the table.

[*English*]

I shall now propose Motions Nos. 1 to 7 to the House.

● (1535)

MOTIONS IN AMENDMENT

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

Motion No. 1

That Bill C-22, in Clause 4, be amended by

(a) replacing line 34 on page 2 with the following:

and up to ten other members, each of whom must be a

(b) replacing lines 3 to 6 on page 3 with the following:

(2) The Committee is to consist of not more than three members who are members of the Senate and not more than eight members who are members of the House of Commons. Not more than five Committee members who

Motion No. 3

That Bill C-22, in Clause 13, be amended by

(a) replacing lines 8 and 9 on page 6 with the following:

to sections 14 and 16, the Committee is entitled to have access to

(b) replacing lines 14 and 15 on page 6 with the following:

ed by litigation privilege or by solicitor-client privilege or the professional

Motion No. 4

That Bill C-22, in Clause 14, be amended by replacing lines 21 to 24 on page 6 with the following:

Government Orders

14 The Committee is not entitled to have access to any of the following information:

- (a) a confidence of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada, as defined in subsection 39(2) of the Canada Evidence Act;
- (b) information the disclosure of which is described in subsection 11(1) of the Witness Protection Program Act;
- (c) the identity of a person who was, is or is intended to be, has been approached to be, or has offered or agreed to be, a confidential source of information, intelligence or assistance to the Government of Canada, or the government of a province or of any state allied with Canada, or information from which the person's identity could be inferred;
- (d) information relating directly to an ongoing investigation carried out by a law enforcement agency that may lead to a prosecution.

Motion No. 5

That Bill C-22 be amended by restoring Clause 16 as follows:

16 (1) The appropriate Minister for a department may refuse to provide information to which the Committee would, but for this section, otherwise be entitled to have access and that is under the control of that department, but only if he or she is of the opinion that

- (a) the information constitutes special operational information, as defined in subsection 8(1) of the Security of Information Act; and
- (b) provision of the information would be injurious to national security.

(2) If the appropriate Minister refuses to provide information under subsection (1), he or she must inform the Committee of his or her decision and the reasons for the decision.

(3) If the appropriate Minister makes the decision in respect of any of the following information, he or she must provide the decision and reasons to,

- (a) in the case of information under the control of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, the Civilian Review and Complaints Commission for the Royal Canadian Mounted Police;
- (b) in the case of information under the control of the Communications Security Establishment, the Commissioner of the Communications Security Establishment; and
- (c) in the case of information under the control of the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, the Security Intelligence Review Committee.

Motion No. 6

That Bill C-22, in Clause 21, be amended by replacing lines 27 and 28 on page 8 with the following:

is protected by litigation privilege or by solicitor-client privilege or the

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP), seconded by the member for Bécancour—Nicolet—Saurel, moved:

Motion No. 2

That Bill C-22 be amended by deleting Clause 12.

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP) moved:

Motion No. 7

That Bill C-22 be amended by deleting Clause 31.

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to Bill C-22 as we consider the bill as reported to this House by the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security.

I would like to commend the standing committee for its thorough review of this important bill. The standing committee heard evidence and views from a wide array of stakeholders and experts. I was pleased to testify with the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness and our officials. Others who appeared at the committee included the heads of Canada's national security and intelligence agencies, our existing national review bodies, the Information and Privacy Commissioner, human rights advocates, and leading professionals and academic experts in the area.

With such a diversity of witnesses, it is not surprising that the committee heard differing views on some of the specific provisions of the bill. However, I believe one overriding theme has emerged from the debate on Bill C-22 so far. The national security and intelligence committee of parliamentarians, or NSICOP, is definitely an idea whose time has come.

Our government believes strongly in the importance of a well-functioning and accountable national security system that both protects Canadians while at the same time respects their rights and freedoms. Bill C-22 would fulfill a key commitment made during the last election to create a new national security and intelligence committee of parliamentarians.

The proposed bill would establish a rigorous parliamentary oversight mechanism of national security and intelligence activities. The committee of MPs and senators would have a mandate that is distinctly broader than is the case in most other countries. It would be empowered to examine activities across the entire federal government, including operational matters.

Our government believes in the importance of those powers granted to the committee, while also ensuring that safeguards exist, so that certain classified information is not disclosed that could disrupt government operations or be injurious to national security.

Commentators have been virtually unanimous in commending the government for taking this major step in enhancing the accountability and effectiveness of our national security and intelligence apparatus. They have noted that a genuine capacity for parliamentarians to scrutinize government activity in this area has been a long-time coming in Canada.

It has been over 30 years since the McDonald Commission proposed this type of committee. During the intervening years, Canada has been left as the only Five Eyes partner that has not created a permanent structure to provide parliamentarians with access to classified national security and intelligence information.

[*Translation*]

As one of the witnesses mentioned, this is the first time that there have been hearings before a standing committee with respect to a government bill on this subject. Therefore, this is an important step that has been taken because the government made it a clear priority.

The standing committee heard several witnesses explain how the structure created by Bill C-22 is comparable to those established by other countries. In particular, Bill C-22 was often compared to the intelligence and security committee that was active for a time in the United Kingdom.

[*English*]

The U.K. experience is indeed an informative one, providing a relatively longstanding example of a committee operating in a Westminster system comparable to our own, and one whose mandate and structure has evolved over time. As in the U.K., Bill C-22 would seek to balance the access to highly sensitive classified information that would be afforded to parliamentarians, with protections to ensure that this information and vital ongoing operations would not be compromised.

Government Orders

However, it is important to remember that while its development has been informed in important ways by international comparators, Bill C-22 would be very much a made in Canada approach. In particular, Bill C-22 would reflect our government's commitment to ensuring that all national security and intelligence activities of the Government of Canada would be included within the NSICOP's mandate, regardless of which department or agency is responsible for them; that is, the committee's mandate would not be limited to particular agencies, as is the case in other countries.

● (1540)

On this point, I was pleased to see that one of the amendments reported to us by the standing committee would make it clear that NSICOP's mandate and access to information includes crown corporations. I fully support this amendment as it would further the government's objective of ensuring that the committee could review in totality national security intelligence activities across the whole of government. This is a good example of the constructive discussions that were had around the committee table.

I was also pleased to see the inclusion by the committee of a whistleblower provision which would cause the committee to inform the affected minister and Attorney General of any activity carried out by a department related to national security or intelligence which may not be in compliance with the law.

Another unique aspect of Bill C-22 is that it would provide the new committee with a clear mandate to review any national security and intelligence operation, including operations that are ongoing.

[*Translation*]

The laws of other countries place more restrictions on this type of operational review. For example, some committees cannot examine the operations until they cease or if they obtain the government's approval in advance.

[*English*]

The NSICOP would have the statutory right to access highly classified national security and intelligence information in any department or agency and now any crown corporation as well. Again, this would put Canada at the forefront in terms of international comparators, and certainly no existing review body in Canada has this wide scope of access. Of course, as in other jurisdictions, Bill C-22 would also include some limits to access to information. These are carefully defined to protect the personal information of Canadians, the safety of individuals, the integrity of police investigations, and other important public interests.

The standing committee made some significant changes to the bill in this area, essentially removing all limits. Although I appreciate the spirit in which these amendments were made, I believe we need to consider the potential consequences very carefully. In doing so, we need to keep in mind the unprecedented scope of the NSICOP's mandate and access to information compared to other review bodies in Canada and elsewhere.

I have moved in the House further amendments to these sections, specifically for clauses 13, 14, and 16 of the bill. The proposed amendment to clause 13 is intended to ensure that the work of the NSICOP would proceed in the reasonable manner that is consistent

with its mandate and would not be bogged down in judicial procedures.

My proposal to reintroduce some of the mandatory sections to the NSICOP's access as originally set out in clause 14, would ensure the necessary protections would be in place for the safety and security of individuals, and that active national security-related police investigations would not adversely affected.

Finally, my proposed reinstatement of clause 16, as it appeared when the bill was tabled, is meant, based on a minister's discretion, to protect against the risk of inadvertent disclosure which may cause harm to Canada or Canada's partners' national security interests. These proposed amendments would seek a balanced approach between the original version of the bill and the changes made by the standing committee. We are being responsive to the standing committee's concerns while trying to maintain necessary protections.

Enhanced accountability is not a one-off initiative, but rather an ongoing effort that requires continued commitment and periodic reassessment. The NSICOP would be a major step forward in improving the accountability of the government's intelligence and national security activities. We are starting ahead of where other countries began. The committee would have a broad mandate, and would have access to extensive information. That is the best possible starting point for the launch of this new committee of parliamentarians.

As the committee gains experience and expertise in its years of operation, we would have the opportunity to reassess whether this balance can be further improved. I urge hon. members to join me in supporting Bill C-22 and the accompanying amendments.

● (1545)

Mr. Ted Falk (Provencher, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as far as populating the committee, as it stands today, is the bill consistent with the practices of other Westminster parliaments in their appointments to this particular committee?

Hon. Bardish Chagger: Mr. Speaker, the committee did extensive work bringing in witnesses. There was a diversity of opinions that were shared.

The amendments that we have proposed really find the balance. When it comes to the appointments, the Prime Minister will be making those appointments, and working with leaders of opposition parties to ensure that they have the ability to share who they would like to see on the committee.

This government will always work in the best interests of Canadians.

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in respect of Motion No. 4, which would remove the committee's power to subpoena witnesses and documents, why was this change removed? Why do we no longer have, as we would have had with the public safety committee's report, the opportunity to compel information? This is something that every parliamentary committee has but this one would not.

Government Orders

I understand that this was proposed, the idea of a subpoena power, by a Liberal member on that committee. It was also a feature of a Liberal private member's bill, Bill C-622, which was supported by the current Prime Minister, the current Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, and the future chair of this committee, among other current cabinet ministers.

Why, therefore, did the Liberals feel it necessary to remove such a fundamental power from this committee?

Hon. Bardish Chagger: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his good work, and I hope we can continue to work together in the best interests of all Canadians.

The hon. member knows very well that when it came to experts, they said that this was great the way it was. If anything, these amendments take into consideration the work that the committee did, and make this legislation even better.

When it comes to subpoena powers, the committee's amendment to clause 13 of the bill has created several inconsistencies that will create conflict. For instance, clause 15 clearly states that when the committee is entitled to be provided oral testimony on an issue, the appropriate minister or officials of the department may appear before the committee to provide the information orally.

The committee is amending clause 13 to give the committee the power to send a specific individual of their choosing. Essentially, under section 13 and 15, both the government and the committee would have the power to determine who should appear to provide testimony, and yet there is no recourse mechanism to solve the deadlock.

We are working in the best interests of this committee. We have to remember that it is the first of its kind in this country, and it is important that we take this necessary step. As I said earlier, it is time that we get it done.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. House leader for explaining why the government feels it needs to pull back on the good work done in committee. I do not believe, with all due respect, the government has the balance right.

Why is it that restrictions on access to information for parliamentarians serving on this committee are more extreme and restrictive than those for the people who are appointed to the security intelligence review committee or the CSE commissioner, who do not have the restrictions on information?

Do the Liberals trust SIRC more than parliamentarians?

• (1550)

Hon. Bardish Chagger: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for her important work that she does every day. I look forward to continuing these conversations.

I can assure the member, and I can assure Canadians, that we have struck the right balance. It is important that we be able to actually provide this additional oversight body that has a scope that is unlike any other body that exists today.

This is a committee of parliamentarians, the first of its kind, providing access for parliamentarians to classified information in a

way that has not been seen before. This is a good beginning, and it is further ahead than most other countries have ever started. We were able to see great expert witnesses in the committee's work. It was important that it did. We have taken it into consideration, and there is a three-year review mechanism that has also been provided so that we can continue to improve this legislation, if there be a need.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, it is my honour to rise today to speak to Bill C-22. I had not thought that we would see government amendments at report stage that undo a lot of the good work that has been done by the committee.

I approach this issue by first saying I support the creation of a national security committee of parliamentarians. I learned a great deal about the intelligence business, the security business, and where Canada stands within our Five Eyes partners, in the efforts to fight Bill C-51 in the last Parliament. I still hope that the review that is being undertaken right now by the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness and the Minister of Justice will lead to massive changes in the five different bills, and others, that were amended through that omnibus bill known as Bill C-51, which set up CSIS, for the first time since its creation, as a body that can “disrupt” thoughts, act as having a kinetic function, as the experts call it.

There is nothing right now within our security agencies that ensures that there is any oversight, unlike our other Five Eyes partners, as the hon. government House leader mentioned. We do not have any oversight for a number of the bodies at all. We have no oversight for CSIS. There had been oversight of CSIS up until the moment of omnibus Bill C-38 in the spring of 2012, which eliminated an adviser to the Minister of Public Safety to warn him or her if CSIS was going amok. That position was eliminated, so there is no oversight of CSIS; rather, there is review of CSIS. There is no oversight of the RCMP; rather, there is review of the RCMP. There is neither oversight nor review of the Canada Border Services Agency. For the Communications Security Establishment Canada, which is a very strange body that collects and downloads massive amounts of metadata, there is neither oversight nor review.

Government Orders

We have all of these different intelligence agencies, therefore, it is of critical importance that we do two things. We must rein in and undo the damage and the potential chaos created for security agencies by Bill C-51. I say this parenthetically. I want to get to Bill C-22. However, I need to say that my opposition to what was done in the 41st Parliament in what was known as Bill C-51 was not exclusively with respect to concerns about civil liberties. Those are concerns, but I have heard from security experts in the course of a review of that bill. It is clear to me that, failing to ensure coordination between and among all of these agencies, while giving CSIS the right to be active in kinetic operations, to be able to have CSIS offer people they are surveilling basically a get-out-of-jail-free card, a prospective guarantee that they will never be arrested or put into the judicial system, without any alert to the RCMP that this has happened, the one hand will not know what the other is doing. The creation of the national security committee of parliamentarians will not address that threat, although we will have to address this concern. It has been one that has been well known since the inquiry into the Air India disaster where if there had been coordination enforced between the different security agencies, that disaster, the single largest terrorist act on Canadian soil ever, could have been avoided. That was certainly the opinion of the Air India inquiry.

Coming back to Bill C-22, I support the creation of a committee of parliamentarians. However, I am baffled by the changes that have just taken place. I turn to the leading Canadian experts in this, Kent Roach and Craig Forcese, professors of law, both of whom played a role in the Air India inquiry. They are the authoritative experts to whom I turn. Certainly, Professor Craig Forcese is baffled by the limitation on what parliamentarians will be allowed to know. I mentioned in my question earlier to the government House leader that these restrictions do not apply to the people who serve on the Security Intelligence Review Committee, SIRC, to which civilian non-elected people are appointed. For the purpose of pointing out that the appointment process can have gaps with respect to security, let us not forget that former Prime Minister Stephen Harper appointed the now late committed fraudster Arthur Porter as the chair of SIRC. Arthur Porter did not have the restrictions that Bill C-22 would now put on parliamentarians, who are elected, who take an oath, and who have an understanding of their responsibilities.

● (1555)

My amendment to the bill is to delete section 12, which is the section that limits the MPs' access to parliamentary privilege. It is what Craig Forcese has called the triple lock on what MPs and senators are allowed to know.

Parliamentarians sitting on this committee have already sworn allegiance to Canada. They will go through security checks. The way the bill is currently written, it is not as though there is no check on their access to information or risk of their revealing information. The Canada Evidence Act would apply, section 38. Even as these government amendments are rolling forward, Professor Forcese has noted that it would be probably better to rely on court and the Canada Evidence Act than on these very restrictive moves in terms of what parliamentarians can know, an overly generous discretion on the point of what ministers can withhold, as well as getting rid of what was a very good amendment achieved in committee of giving the committee subpoena powers.

I have to say that it is just simply baffling that the government has taken such a restrictive view on what parliamentarians can be allowed to know. I will just note that this is from an article by Professor Forcese titled, "Stronger Bill C-22 Goes Back to the House". This was before the government amendments came forward. He noted that, "C-22 committee members will be surrendering parliamentary privileges and will be permanently bound by secrecy under the Security of Information Act (and therefore subject to criminal sanction for violating secrecy rules)."

I think the government, with all due respect, has overreacted to very good amendments that were passed by the committee, and this is a larger point as well. We are often told in this place that we should rush legislation through second reading so that it can go to committee where the committee will do the good work. We now have a fair litany of times where the Liberal government, with its majority, has decided to ignore the good work of committees.

The first was, of course, the committee that dealt with medically assisted death. That advice was completely overlooked in the drafting of Bill C-14. We have the committee work, on the committee on which I served, the Special Parliamentary Committee on Electoral Reform, and that is a very sad story because we need to get back to that, but very good work was done.

For the first time since 1867, when the British North America Act said Canada will use the voting system from Westminster until such time as its Parliament chooses its own voting system, we had Parliament recommend a voting system and a way forward, and that was rejected. Now this committee's work has been rejected and, I think, hastily.

There is a way forward here. There is an appropriate balance. I do believe that the parliamentary committee struck that balance, and it is really important to remember that what the committee is looking at is already protected in many ways.

The U.K. parliamentary committee has never had a problem with breaching secrecy. One of the experts who testified in Bill C-51, Joe Fogarty from U.K. MI5, testified that there just simply were not problems. Parliamentarians instructed with the duty to maintain confidentiality have done so.

I also point out the precedent that the New Zealand Parliament has a very similar committee, and the New Zealand members of Parliament who serve on that committee do not have to surrender parliamentary privilege. It is explicitly preserved under the New Zealand model.

It leaves one wondering why the government has chosen to undo the good work of committee, further undermining the proper role of legislated deliberation in committee coming back to this place at report stage, doing serious damage to the work that was done by the committee, leaving, I fear, greater uncertainty as to how the committee will function and still wondering why is it that in taking measures to restrict the information that parliamentarians have, the independent expert national security review bodies, SIRC and the CSE commissioner, are not given the same set of handcuffs.

I do not think it makes sense. I urge the government to reconsider and accept my amendment.

Government Orders

• (1600)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the words the leader of the Green Party has put on the record, and understand her concerns, but I would like to emphasize that this is important. As the government House leader has put on the record, Canada is now going to have this parliamentary oversight committee. The other countries associated with the Five Eyes, U.S.A., England, Australia, and New Zealand, already have a parliamentary oversight committee, so this is a very strong, positive step forward.

Within the legislation there is accommodation for us to review it. Would she not agree it is absolutely critical that as we move forward we get it right? There is always going to be room for improvement in the future. Even though there might be a sense of disappointment from some members of the House, there will be opportunities for us to review it. Would she not agree that the legislation being proposed through amendment is good legislation in its own right?

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, as I said at the outset of my speech, I believe the creation of a national security committee of parliamentarians is a good step forward. I lament that what has been done today with government amendments at report stage undoing good work at the committee is both regrettable and unnecessary.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech.

With regard to the work that was done in committee, it is not unprecedented, but it is still rather rare for such changes to be made when a bill comes back to the House after being examined in committee.

We are talking about a committee with a majority of government members. I assume that they examined the bill in good faith. The committee proposed amendments to the bill to improve it. We expect the committees to improve bills when they examine them. I thought that that was what the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security did. However, when the bill came back to the House, the government undid most of the work that was done in committee.

Does the member think that government will show so little consideration for the work of committees going forward? What message does this send to all of the committees that examine government bills and that will be sending bills on other subjects back to the House?

[*English*]

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, I am afraid it is a very bad signal.

[*Translation*]

I thank my colleague from Sherbrooke. I completely agree. Genetic discrimination is another example, and we are going to be voting on that soon.

[*English*]

It is very lamentable this pattern of changes to bills that have been reviewed by committee. As the member noted quite rightly, with the

exception of the parliamentary committee on electoral reform, all of the committees I have already referenced had a majority of Liberals present. The Liberal members on the committee that studied Bill C-22 must be feeling as cut off at the knees as I was when the mandate letter for the minister of electoral reform was changed.

This is a place of deliberation, and preferably non-partisan, collegial deliberation. I am afraid the amendments to Bill C-22 put forward today at report stage at the larger level of abstraction on how we function as a parliament will be damaged.

• (1605)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, let me give a specific example. Part of the exemption which the member across the way makes an example of is the information described in the Witness Protection Program Act. We want to be able to keep that as a part of the exemption. We believe it is in Canada's best interest and for the safety of Canadians that witnesses under that program are exempt. Why would she oppose allowing them to be exempt? This is absolutely critical for national purpose.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, it depends entirely on how one views the committee. The committee of parliamentarians in other countries, Westminster parliamentary democracies like ours and the United States as has been referenced, have access to more information than this committee would have access to. If its function is to ensure that we have oversight and coordination, that an independent body of experts sworn under the National Secrecy Act has access to information, that is as good as secret and confidential a body as we will find. Why would we trust people who are citizen nominees, like Arthur Porter, more than we trust parliamentarians sworn to secrecy?

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I supported Bill C-22 at second reading because the NDP is firmly committed to finally bringing effective and transparent oversight to our security and intelligence services. I recognized the flaws in the government's first draft, but I had faith that the parties could smooth its rough edges with the help of expert advice at the public safety committee. That faith was rewarded. All parties came together around evidence-based amendments. The bill that emerged from that committee is stronger, now has the endorsement of most experts, and could earn the support of all parties and the trust of Canadians.

That is why it is so very disappointing to see these last-minute proposals. They would roll back the progress made by all parties at committee and, in the words of four leading academic experts, "undermin[e] a new and historic Parliamentary ability". I am firmly opposed to these proposals. We simply cannot reverse the progress made at committee and reject the evidence that guided it. With each passing day, the government's intransigence looks less like prudence and more like the reflexive rejection of contrary evidence that, sadly, became a hallmark of our last government.

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Let me say a word first to the women and men of our security intelligence community, who no doubt are following this debate and wondering how it will affect the critically important work they do for us every day. As a former legal counsel to the Security Intelligence Review Committee, I know that to be effective, we need the trust of Canadians. To support the work, we need an authoritative, security-cleared committee of parliamentarians to bridge the gap between Canadians and their security services. Only when such a committee exists and speaks with authority can we give Canadians not just assurances but proof that their security and their civil liberties are protected.

The first thing we need to set straight about Bill C-22 is the idea that experts support the government's new design. This week, the public safety minister answered my criticism of these regressive amendments with a single brief quotation from a piece that Professor Craig Forcese wrote a year ago entitled "Knee Jerk First Reaction". What has he said since? In November, Professor Forcese testified at the public safety committee as follows: "I would strongly urge...full access to information". He warned that anything less would "give the appearance of accountability without the substance". Calling for three key parts of the bill to be radically amended, he said, "These are all means to deny access to the committee." He also said, "It is this triple lock on parliamentary reviews that I feel could well make the committee of parliamentarians stumble."

What did the other experts say at the committee? The Information Commissioner of Canada rejected cabinet's ability to shut down investigations, saying it turned the committee's mandate into "a mirage". Craig Forcese, Professor Kent Roach, and Ron Atkey, the founding chair of the Security Intelligence Review Committee, the Information Commissioner of Canada, the Privacy Commissioner of Canada, the Canadian Civil Liberties Association, the Canadian Bar Association, and Parliament's own Interim Committee of Parliamentarians on National Security all recommended lifting restrictions on access to information and giving this committee full access. After all, people get 14 years in jail if they break a secret and leak information. After all, being cleared top secret is not good enough, apparently, for the government. The public safety committee implemented this expert recommendation, but now the government seeks to reverse it.

With that expert testimony in mind, let us consider the government's new proposals. First, the government wants to remove the oversight committee's power to subpoena witnesses and documents. I would remind Canadians that this is a power that is enjoyed by every single statutory standing committee of Parliament, every one of them. It would be truly bizarre if our public safety committee could compel a witness to give testimony on the theory of subpoena powers, but this new top secret cleared committee could not wield the same power to fulfill the national security mandate.

• (1610)

The government's second proposal is to allow cabinet ministers to withhold information from the oversight committee. It is interesting that these two features, full access to information and the power to call witnesses, were proposed in a Liberal bill in 2014, Bill C-622. At that time, the current Prime Minister, the current public safety minister, and nine other members of today's Liberal cabinet voted for exactly what they now oppose.

Third, the government wants to add a senator and another government MP to the committee so that the votes of the government MPs will always outnumber those of non-government MPs.

The government's fourth proposal is to stop the committee from receiving information about all active law enforcement investigations all of the time. As Professor Forcese testified, the 1985 Air India bombing remains an active investigation some 30 years later. A more recent example might be the October 2014 attack on Parliament. In the aftermath of such an attack, would the proposal prevent the intelligence oversight committee from receiving necessary information about investigations?

As with many of the government's proposals on this bill, I do understand the intent. Oversight functions should not inadvertently impede operations, but the solution is a judgment and discussion, not clumsy statutory roadblocks. Remember that the Security Intelligence Review Committee has full access to any information held by CSIS, and yet the heads of both organizations testified that they have no concerns about this arrangement. They resolve issues through negotiation, not legislation. As the founding chair of the Security Intelligence Review Committee testified, "Sometimes, as in Bill C-22, there is a tendency to over-legislate".

However, there is still hope. It is vital for Canadians to understand that Parliament now has a choice between two paths. The first path is to impose these last-minute changes, reverse the work of the all-party committee on public safety, and reject the expert evidence it listened to. The second path is to withdraw these rollbacks, accept the evidence, respect the work of all parties on that committee, and pass the bill we already have. The current bill could still earn the unanimous support of this place and would give Canada a world-class oversight body worthy of the respect of our allies and the trust of Canadians. That is what the government throws away if it insists on undoing the progress made so far.

Let me address one of the government's favourite arguments, and we heard it here today, which is that we must scale back our ambitions and accept minimal progress on the theory that something is better than nothing. In response, I would cite one last piece of expert testimony, and that is the recommendation of the last parliamentary committee to study this issue. In 2004, the Interim Committee of Parliamentarians on National Security recommended the creation of an oversight body with complete access to information. It explained as follows:

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Though this arguably goes further than the legislation enacted by some of our allies, it is in line with developing practice... We strongly believe that a structure which must rely on the gradual evolution and expansion of access, powers, and remit would be inappropriate for Canada.

The British had a committee like this one and in 2013, after public criticism, they completely overhauled that committee, strengthening its powers and its independence. Why do we have to reinvent the wheel?

Since the government seems to insist on such a course, I have one last solution to offer and that is my Motion No. 7 on the Notice Paper, which calls for removing clause 31 from the bill. That is the clause that would block judicial review of a cabinet minister's decision to withhold information or shut down an investigation. If the government insists on hobbling this committee from the start, then the least we can do is remove our restriction whose sole purpose is to prevent the committee's powers from maturing over time. I would ask all members of this place to support that amendment as a counterbalance to the government's proposals here.

In closing, I regret that the government has chosen this course, but I cannot endorse the rejection of good all-party committee work and the rejection of expert evidence. I hope that some members on the government side will join us in opposing these sadly regressive amendments.

•(1615)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, more expert witnesses have given a great deal of credit to the government for Bill C-22.

Let me quote another witness, Ronald Atkey, a former SIRC chair and former parliamentarian. He stated that the proposed review body “represents a major and welcome change” in Canada. He explained that he meant welcomed in the sense that, in his view, in the last three decades, Canada had fallen behind our parliamentary cousins in the United Kingdom and Australia with respect to accountability to Parliament.

Also, he told the standing committee that Bill C-22 “will help to ensure Canadians that their elected representatives will play a key overview role in accountability” regarding the serious “powers granted to some 17 departments and agencies” that contributed to Canadian national security measures.

Will the member not recognize that this is a significant step forward? It was a commitment given by this government in the last election, and it is being maintained by having the legislation go through the House at this time.

Mr. Murray Rankin: Mr. Speaker, this is the government's first and only response to date to Bill C-51, which it supported.

Ron Atkey was referenced just a moment ago by the member. However, on January 27, he, along with three other experts, wrote the following in *The Globe and Mail*:

Should the government choose to force a return to the restrictive original bill, it risks potentially undermining a new and historic Parliamentary ability that it has enthusiastically championed. Failure to reach agreement with Parliament on this issue also imperils non-partisan support for future national-security reforms and changes to other elements of the review system for national security.

It is a shame that for something so central as this, we cannot find common ground, that the government wants to revert to a time before the expert evidence was heard and before the committee did its good work to a time when we had an inadequate bill. The experts supported that. The NDP, for what it is worth, supported the bill as amended by committee. Now the government wants to roll it back and say that we should be happy with a half a loaf. This is not even 20% of a loaf, I am afraid.

Ms. Tracey Ramsey (Essex, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Victoria for his excellent work on this.

I want to go back to a moment in time when I was one of the new class of 2015. I remember having a new lunch for all the parliamentarians, 187 of us, which was a historic number. The new Prime Minister bounded into the room, took to the stage and gave us a wonderful, heartfelt speech about how he promised he would respect the autonomy of committees. He promised that he would respect parliamentarians and the hard work they did in committees and that he would ensure that work was reflected in the House of Commons.

Here we find ourselves today, 16 months away from that very optimistic promise of the Prime Minister. That promise is being broken, yet again, by the government, by the Liberals. Therefore, we have a deep slide backward on the work of committees, and the government is ignoring the hard work and recommendations of the committee members from all sides of the House.

Could the member for Victoria speak to the impact on the committee of not having adequate access to information for the important work this committee will be tasked to do?

•(1620)

Mr. Murray Rankin: Mr. Speaker, that same Prime Minister was in favour of broader access before but now it has changed.

I want to remind Canadians that this committee is unlike any other. All committees of Parliament have the ability to compel information and get the witnesses they need to do their job, but this one does not. We have to rely on the Prime Minister's Office. It is essentially an advisory committee of parliamentarians, senators and MPs to the Prime Minister. It is very different. The Prime Minister chooses the chair, which he already has. One might wonder why that is a problem. I would point out that England went through same process. Now it is the members of the committee who choose the chair. Germany alternates between an opposition and a government member.

The Liberals did not need to do this. They have hobbled the committee. The member asked what the consequences are. It is the lack of trust that Canadians must have in our security and intelligence services and the excellent work they do to protect us each and every day. We need to have that trust. This committee will not do the job.

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Ms. Pam Damoff (Oakville North—Burlington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we promised Canadians that we would establish an all-party national oversight committee. Bill C-22 shows Canadians that important commitment has been kept.

As a reminder to the House, a committee of parliamentarians able to review classified security and intelligence documents has been a long time in coming. A special joint House/Senate committee was struck in mid-2004 to provide recommendations on how such a committee would function in a Canadian context. That report was followed by the tabling of Bill C-81 in 2005. That bill died on the Order Paper during the dissolution of the 38th Parliament.

Over the course of the next decade, two private members' bills were tabled that sought to create a committee of parliamentarians to review national security and intelligence matters, the second of which was defeated by the previous government at second reading shortly before it introduced Bill C-51.

As a member of the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security, I heard witnesses tell us that the formation of an all-party national oversight committee had been anticipated for a long time. Let me read some of their testimony.

Wesley Wark said:

I fully support Bill C-22. I think it represents a necessary and timely experiment in parliamentary democracy and activism. I give full credit to the Liberal government for seeing the importance of parliamentary scrutiny of security and intelligence and for making this a centrepiece of its response to the previous government's anti-terrorism legislation, Bill C-51, and for making it a promise in their election platform.

Suzanne Legault, the Information Commissioner of Canada, said:

First, I wish to commend the government on tabling legislation to create a parliamentary oversight body of our national security agencies. The recommendation to create such an oversight committee dates back many years. The Committee could, with a properly designed legal framework, do much to increase public trust in our national security agencies

The Hon. Ron Atkey said, "I believe this represents a major and welcome change within our Canadian parliamentary system."

Alex Neve, Secretary General of Amnesty International Canada said that finally after the Arar inquiry and Justice O'Connor recommendations, we had Bill C-22, which was very welcomed.

Special advocate Anil Kapoor said of Bill C-22, "This piece of legislation is crucial to public trust in our security intelligence apparatus."

One of the most important obligations of a government is the responsibility to protect the safety and security of its citizens both at home and abroad. Equally important, in a country such as Canada, is the obligation to uphold the Constitution and to ensure that all laws respect the rights and freedoms we enjoy as people living in a free and democratic society.

These two obligations do not necessarily have to compete with each other. It does not have to be a question of security or rights and freedoms.

Bill C-22, and the future national security and intelligence committee of parliamentarians, will help to ensure that we achieve that balance. The committee will have a mandate to both confirm that our security and intelligence agencies have the resources and

powers they need, as well as to ensure that those agencies do not exceed their authorities and respect the rights and freedoms of Canadians.

While supportive of the creation of an all-party national oversight committee, witnesses did share with our committee ways that we could make the legislation better. I am glad that we were able to reflect a number of these suggestions in our amendments.

Also, while the Conservatives were adamantly opposed to the creation of such a committee during their time in government, I am glad to see that during their time in opposition, they are much more supportive of the concept.

In fact, during clause-by-clause consideration of Bill C-22 at the standing committee, many amendments received multi-party support. For instance, Liberals amended the bill to broaden the committee's mandate in clause 8. This was further subamended by the NDP and agreed to by all sides. The chair's double vote was removed from clause 19, ensuring that the chair would only cast a deciding vote in the event of a tie.

Clause 21 was also amended so that if something was redacted from one of the committee's reports, the revised version must be clearly identified as a revised version and it must indicate the extent of and the revision.

The NDP proposed a whistleblower clause that would require the committee to inform the appropriate minister of any activity it discovered that may not have been conducted in compliance with the law.

All of these are now a part of Bill C-22.

I will now turn to some of the report stage amendments, which are the focus of the debate before us today. The government has moved a motion to reintroduce some of the automatic exemptions that were originally in clause 14.

● (1625)

The original bill contained seven such exemptions, including: one, confidence of the Queen's Privy Council; two, information respecting ongoing defence intelligence activities supporting military operations; three, information, the disclosure of which is described in section 11(1) of the Witness Protection Program Act; four, the identity of individuals who are human intelligence sources for the government; five, information relating directly to an ongoing investigation carried out by a law enforcement agency; six, information that is considered privileged under the Investment Canada Act; and seven, certain information that was collected by FINTRAC and not reported to another department. This usually occurs when FINTRAC determines that the transaction has no flags.

One of today's report stage amendments put forward proposed to put three of those back into the bill.

Information relating to specific individuals protected under the witness protection program and the identities of confidential sources are not required for the committee to perform its mandate. The mandatory exceptions relating to this information are designed to avoid risks to the safety of individuals that may result from inadvertent disclosure.

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The mandatory exception relating to active police investigations is also being reinserted. This exemption is designed to ensure that criminal investigations and prosecutions are not tainted by even the perceived influence of political actors.

This is a very important division of powers that has a very long tradition in Canada. The exemption is time limited to the period when the investigation is active, thus allowing the committee to review the information once the investigation is concluded.

The other three exemptions would not be reinserted by the amendment. This represents a responsible compromise that takes into account the spirit and intent of the standing committee's changes. It would allow the committee to be provided with access to as much information relevant to its mandate as possible, with restrictions applied only where necessary to prevent harm to individuals or police investigations. The amendment should be supported.

A second report stage amendment would see the reintroduction of clause 16, which provides a minister the discretionary authority to prevent the release of information that constitutes special operating information, as defined by the security of information act, when it could be injurious to national security. When a minister declines to provide such information, he must notify the committee as well as the relevant review body and provide reasons for not disclosing the information. The committee of parliamentarians annual report would also inform Parliament of all the times this discretionary power was used.

This is very comparable to how countries, such as the United Kingdom, Australia, and New Zealand, operate in terms of providing information to their respective committees of parliamentarians. For instance, Australia's parliamentary joint committee on intelligence and security cannot compel the government to provide operationally sensitive information, including intelligence sources and operational methods of information about particular operations. The government can also withhold anything it deems injurious to national security or foreign relations.

In New Zealand, the prime minister actually sits on the security and intelligence committee, which has existed since 1996. The New Zealand act allows the heads of agencies to determine sensitive information that cannot be disclosed to the committee.

In the United Kingdom, the intelligence and security committee may consider any particular operational matter, but only so far as it and the prime minister are satisfied that the matter is not part of an ongoing intelligence or security operation and is of significant national interest.

In many respects, the future Canadian version of the committee would have far greater access to information than the equivalent committees of our Five Eyes allies from Commonwealth countries.

It is important to note that after five years of working experience, the House of Commons would have the opportunity to review the legislation and amend it at that time if we believed it were then necessary.

It will be a tremendous step forward for Canada, one that will help to ensure that while our security and intelligence agencies are

working to protect the safety and security of Canadians, they are fully respecting the rights and freedoms of the Canadians they serve.

● (1630)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech.

I would like to ask her a question regarding the message this government is sending with these amendments at report stage, not only to the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security, but also to other parliamentary committees that are tasked with studying government bills.

Acting in good faith, committees study bills and propose amendments. When amendments are passed in committee, one would have to assume it is because they improve the bill. The committee then sends the bill back to the House with amendments. Now, suddenly, the government is back pedalling. In fact, it is renegeing on several amendments at report stage and removing them from the bill.

What message does this send to the other committees that will be called upon to examine other government bills and that might face the same tactic when the bills are returned to the House?

What message does this send about the important work that committees do, and not just the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security?

[*English*]

Ms. Pam Damoff: Mr. Speaker, as a member of the committee who listened to testimony, I heard what witnesses had to say, and I listened to opposition members when they proposed amendments to the bill.

I think the government has done a very good job of representing what we recommended, applying it against the witness testimony, and presenting a reasonable compromise with what the committee recommended at the end of its clause-by-clause consideration. I think the government did a very good job of reviewing what we proposed and taking that into consideration when it brought back these amendments.

Mr. Ted Falk (Provencher, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member mentioned in her speech being consistent with our Five Eyes partners with this bill. I wonder if the member would also agree with giving our security agencies threat-diminishing powers, as our Five Eyes partners have?

Ms. Pam Damoff: Mr. Speaker, I think it is important to remember that we are new to this game. We have not had a committee of parliamentarians, as our partners have had. This committee is being informed by our Five Eyes partners. As I mentioned in my speech, in five years it will be or can be reviewed if there are changes that need to be addressed.

Certainly, it has been informed by what our partners are doing, but we have made a Canadian version, and in some ways, it is stronger. I am very proud of what our government has done by creating this committee.

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Mr. Frank Baylis (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is an interesting challenge, because this is a bill that has to balance public interests, privacy, and security. I understand that our allies, the Five Eyes, have similar committees. Can the member speak to how the balance has been reached between public security and privacy?

• (1635)

Ms. Pam Damoff: Mr. Speaker, it is important that our security agencies have the resources and support to perform their jobs well, but the privacy of Canadians is also important.

We had the Privacy Commissioner appear before the committee, and he said the following:

Let me say up front that the Office of the Privacy Commissioner of Canada is supportive of parliamentary oversight for security and intelligence activities, which has been proposed many times in the past. While we applaud this as a long-overdue development, some amendments could be considered to ensure this new committee will be as effective as possible

After hearing that testimony, we looked at what amendments needed to be made to ensure that we were having that effective balance between security and privacy.

Hon. Tony Clement (Parry Sound—Muskoka, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to join in the debate on this very important bill as the public safety critic for the Conservative Party of Canada, the official opposition. Let me state at the outset what should be obvious, but in this place, sometimes one has to state the obvious. As Conservatives, we support the review and accountability of our national security bodies. That is a position that took a few twists and turns over the years, because obviously, prior to the last election, the previous prime minister was not enthusiastic about a parliamentary oversight committee, perhaps. There were other means by which he wanted to ensure that there was accountability.

The election is over, of course. There is a new government. The Liberals are purporting to follow through on their promise to create a parliamentary oversight committee, but here is where we get to, as Shakespeare would put it, all sound and fury signifying nothing.

We have gone through this whole process of creating a new parliamentary oversight committee. Heck, they even hired the chairman, via the PMO, before the bill was even passed. We have gone through this whole process. We had all the committee hearings. We listened to the experts, and the government is not listening to the experts. This is a government that says the experts are always right, except when the experts disagree with the government. Then we do not listen to them. That is exactly what has happened in this case.

I want to make it clear that the devil is not only in the details; the devil is in the fundamental misappropriation of the bill to promise something to the electorate and then not deliver. That is my problem with the bill. It is the same problem the member for Victoria has with the bill. The legislation before us has some key flaws, and it makes it impossible for us on this side of the House to support it.

What is more, and this was alluded to by the member for Victoria as well, my NDP friend, some of the amendments introduced by the government House leader weaken this legislation even further. The committee proposed by this legislation, evidently chaired by the member for Ottawa South, through an announcement by the PMO,

places far too much control in the Prime Minister's Office and far too little control with Parliament and parliamentarians.

First of all, the Prime Minister picks all the members of the proposed committee. Yes, there is some consultation with the leaders of the opposition parties, but ultimately, the membership is dictated by the PMO. What is more, not only is the membership dictated by the Prime Minister, but the information the proposed committee will receive is also dictated by the party in power. The Prime Minister, the relevant minister, can decide that information is too sensitive to be shared with the proposed committee, despite the fact that the members of this committee are all hon. members and are sworn to secrecy. How can the committee review the actions of our security services if the information they receive is heavily redacted and is vetted and approved by the political masters, the political actors?

The second problem is in the nature of the committee. This is not the usual parliamentary committee. By virtue of the way the legislation is structured, it does not have the authorities and the privileges of a parliamentary committee. In fact, the Minister of Public Safety or the Prime Minister can edit the reports of the committee, or indeed block them entirely. This is very disturbing, to say the least. If problematic information were to come to light during an investigation by the proposed committee, the minister or the Prime Minister could bury that information, and the committee would have no recourse.

This seems to me obviously to defeat the purpose of enacting this legislation in the first place. If there is any sort of serious problem, Canadians ought to know about it. Even if some details need to be kept classified, and I acknowledge that fact, Canadians need to know what their government is doing in their name. This is a major concern. This is not a minor quibble.

• (1640)

If we are going to implement parliamentary oversight, we need to do it right. It needs to be real and substantial oversight. It needs to be parliamentary. Otherwise, this is simply a Liberal Party communications exercise, and this is not something the Conservative Party can support.

This brings me to the consideration of the report stage motions before us today. Some of these motions are innocuous. One might question why they were brought forward, but quite frankly, the result is benign. I am thinking of Motions Nos. 1 and 2, in particular.

However, there are other motions that are far more disturbing. For example, Motion No. 4 adds to the classes of information that are inaccessible to the proposed committee. This particularly relates to subclauses 14(c) and 14(d). Removing information directly relating to law enforcement investigations that may lead to a prosecution essentially removes all RCMP participation in this committee. Quite literally, any action taken by RCMP National Division may lead to a prosecution. That is the reason it exists, yet this could be removed from the committee's purview.

Government Orders

My hon. friend from Victoria mentioned the concerns raised at the committee in the testimony of the Information Commissioner, Professor Kent Roach, and Ron Atkey, from the Canadian Civil Liberties Association, about how the flow of information would be subject to what they call the triple lock. They coined the phrase. There would be not one lock on the information, not two locks on the information, but three locks on the information by virtue of successive clauses that would make it impossible for this committee to do its job. This is, indeed, a very problematic piece of legislation.

Of course, there have been discussions at committee, and I believe that the threats are still very real. CSIS recently released a report that concluded that radical Islamic terrorism remains a serious threat to Canada. It said that ISIS and al Qaeda are still recruiting Canadians and are still threats. Therefore, engaging in political posturing on an issue as important as national security is simply not appropriate. We need to make sure that CSIS, the CSE, and the RCMP have the tools they need to keep Canadians safe, and one of these tools is ensuring that there is public confidence that these brave women and men are doing their jobs appropriately.

If we are going to be debating national security issues, then let us debate the issues. Let us not have this debate, where this bill is being gutted by the government that proposed the bill in the first place. I would rather be talking about issues such as border crossings and all the other issues that face this country.

It is for this reason that I must say, more in sorrow than in anger, that Conservatives will be opposing the amendments that further weaken this bill. Therefore, if the will of the House is that those amendments pass, we must oppose the bill in general.

• (1645)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am somewhat disappointed. The member across the way was in the House during the great debate on Bill C-51, which went beyond the House of Commons. It was debated in virtually every region of our country. What became very clear was that there was a fundamental need for what Bill C-51, Stephen Harper's bill, did not have, and that was a parliamentary oversight committee. If the Conservative government had been proposing that, there probably would have been a lot more buy-in by Canadians. The Liberals made a commitment to Canadians that if we formed government, we would bring in parliamentary oversight.

I listened to the member's comments. I was of the opinion, when I was in opposition, that it was more a personal thing with the former prime minister. I am somewhat disappointed, because it would seem that it is now, in fact, the position of the Conservative Party. That is what I would like a direct response to. Putting all the explanations to the side, I would ask the member to be very clear on this issue. Does the Conservative Party support a parliamentary oversight committee? Does it fundamentally support it?

Hon. Tony Clement: Mr. Speaker, I will repeat again. If we are going to go through the trouble of creating a parliamentary oversight committee, which was, one could argue, the will of the people as a result of October 2015, then make it work. We want it to work.

We accept the will of the people. We are democrats on this side of the House. We accept the democratic will. We are saying to the hon.

member and his party, "Fulfill your promise." Do not get into this Potemkin village parliamentary oversight committee, which does not have the powers it needs to do its job. What is the point?

That is the point I am trying to make as the Conservative Party critic. I am saying this not only for myself and not only for our caucus but that was the testimony we heard at committee from the experts that the hon. member and his colleagues seem always to agree with and want to be subservient to, unless they disagree with the government's proposal, in which case they ignore the experts.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his intervention in the debate. In light of what we heard from the government side, I was wondering whether the hon. member thinks this is nothing more than a smokescreen or a charade. The government claims it is keeping an election promise, but it is creating a committee that could not be weaker or less independent from the government.

Although the government promised a committee of parliamentarians, this is just a half measure. This is just an attempt to keep an election promise to the extent possible. However, it seems like the government is not really interested in moving in this direction and truly creating an independent committee that can do its work properly, given the amendments the government proposed today in order to revert to the first version of Bill C-22, which was too weak in the opposition's view.

Hon. Tony Clement: Mr. Speaker, I agree with the hon. member. During the election campaign, the government promised a national security oversight process. However, under this bill, the committee will not have all the necessary powers to ensure the security of our country and protect the interests of our citizens.

[*English*]

My hon. colleague, the NDP critic, and I face a very difficult situation together where we want to support the legislation, but the amendments that are being proposed here further weaken the legislation. We cannot abide by that and we do not support that.

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Before resuming debate, it is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Nanaimo—Ladysmith, Status of Women; the hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, Poverty; the hon. member for Sherbrooke, Canada Revenue Agency.

• (1650)

[*English*]

Mr. Ted Falk (Provencher, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to Bill C-22, the national security and intelligence committee of parliamentarians act.

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I want to thank my colleagues in this place who have already taken the opportunity to contribute to this important conversation. I have appreciated hearing all of the different perspectives they have raised.

The Conservative Party has always made the safety and security of Canadians a top priority. Our previous Conservative government understood that our ultimate responsibility was to protect Canadians from those who would do us and our families harm.

Providing law enforcement and national security agencies the necessary tools to prevent and detect national security threats ensures Canadians would be protected from the threats that are, unfortunately, today's reality. At the same time, it was paramount that we stood up for the Canadian values of freedom, democracy, and the rule of law. This was and is the right thing to do as parliamentarians, to consider this delicate balance between freedom and security, and this is still our view in opposition today.

We cannot be so naive as to pretend that there are no credible threats against Canada today. There are real concerns that we must pay attention to, and to do that we have to create effective national security policies. It is critical that we treat public safety and the security threats that our country faces with clear, sober minds.

While I hate to say it, we live in a world that necessitates our constant watchfulness and vigilance. Unfortunately, Canada has been targeted by those who hate us, and who hate our most cherished values, values like freedom and democracy. They want us to feel unsafe in our own homes.

Indeed, we have seen in recent history examples of threats posed by these individuals on Canadian soil in Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu, Quebec, here on Parliament Hill, and also in Strathroy, Ontario. Canada is clearly not immune to security threats, and it is critical that we take steps to counter threats at home and abroad. Horrendous attacks in Europe and the United States have shown that no country is immune to security risks.

Government has a large role to play when it comes to protecting Canadians, and the safety of our citizens is too important to be politicized. I know the member for Durham wrote the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness in advance of the introduction of this bill to indicate that the Conservative Party was willing to work with the government to make this truly an effective and functional committee. The goal on this side of the House was to work collaboratively with all parties in the House to ensure that Bill C-22 is a sound piece of legislation. That is why I am extremely disappointed to learn that none of the meaningful amendments proposed by the Conservatives were adopted.

While this legislation provides a necessary framework for parliamentary oversight of our national security apparatus, it is far from perfect. Bill C-22 ignores some of the key areas where success has been so clearly pronounced in the U.K.'s experience. There are some serious holes in the legislation that have been pointed out in debate and at committee. Unfortunately, these were not addressed in the form of meaningful amendments during the committee process.

One of the issues with this bill is that it positions the Prime Minister to have ultimate control over the national security and intelligence committee of parliamentarians. Subsections 5(1) and 6

(1) of the bill would effectively give the Prime Minister full control over the direction of the committee. The Prime Minister would choose the committee members and the committee chair. It is designed to be an arm of the Liberal government rather than a non-partisan committee that can function based on the facts. This legislation would go forward to create a committee that acts according to the wishes of its political masters. The Prime Minister should not have full control over this committee. This committee was intended to be independent and non-partisan, and to provide oversight, as the committee should. The Prime Minister already has control over all of our security agencies through his ministers. The way this bill is designed, he would also have control over this committee as well.

It was unfortunate that months before this bill was even introduced, the Prime Minister had already selected and appointed a chair for the committee. In addition, to the Prime Minister already designating a chair, he would be paying him an additional \$42,000-a-year for the privilege. The bill has not even received royal assent yet. Who does that? Who pays someone for a job that does not even exist? The Liberal government does.

● (1655)

A more congenial approach would have been to let a candidate or candidates stand before this House, or even just before the members of the committee to seek their consent on who should lead the committee. Again, this shows that there was no intention to collaborate with the opposition parties in any meaningful way.

The Liberal platform talked a good game about increasing accountability, strengthening the role of committee chairs, which included a commitment to their election by secret ballot, but when the rubber meets the road, we see that the Liberals' words are hollow. The best structure for this committee would be one in which it is appointed by and reports to Parliament.

It is clear, after the study of the bill, that the Liberals wish to continue the facade of collaboration and co-operation while they continue to pull the strings behind the scenes. This cuts at the heart of what I believe is the intent behind the bill, creating an oversight mechanism that would be independent of partisanship. We should expect nothing less from a committee which would, in effect, ensure the security and safety of the security and intelligence community. I believe as it stands, the safety of our security intelligence personnel is jeopardized by the partisan nature of this committee.

I also must raise concerns regarding the effectiveness of this committee going forward. Bill C-22 would provide for numerous exceptions and permits government agencies and ministries to opt-out of providing information for the NSICOP review. The committee cannot access information about ongoing defence intelligence activities supporting military operations, information related to ongoing law enforcement investigations that may lead to prosecutions, and other notable exceptions that would really limit this committee's ability to do its job.

Government Orders

Section 16 would allow ministers to simply refuse to share information with the committee. The Prime Minister would control who is on the committee, who chairs the committee, and as if that was not enough, his ministers would decide what the committee is able to see. Control by the Prime Minister's Office is woven throughout this entire bill. This is unfortunate because this legislation could have truly been an effective tool for Parliament and be supreme in the equation rather than the Prime Minister.

An effective committee, like that of our U.K. allies, is supposed to have a cabinet-like level of secrecy where there is a reasonable, free flow of information to all of its members. Unfortunately, this committee has been left with no teeth, weakening oversight, and preventing the committee's mandate from being fulfilled.

For these reasons, I will not be voting for Bill C-22 in its present form.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened to the comments from across the way, and I cannot help but think to what degree members are really familiar with the amendments and what the government has put forward.

For example, the member talked about the power that the Prime Minister would have. Yes, the Prime Minister would have power, there is no doubt about that, and the Prime Minister would work with opposition parties.

One of the most important things is the membership of the committee itself. The government members would be a minority on the committee. When we get opposition parties having all this concern about the Prime Minister and the authority, let us not forget that the number of government members of Parliament on the committee would be a minority.

How does that equate to the government having all the power, when in fact it has a minority membership on the committee itself?

Mr. Ted Falk: Mr. Speaker, the power in this particular piece of legislation we are studying and discussing still lies in the PMO. It starts with the Prime Minister appointing the chairperson, and the Prime Minister directly appointing all committee members.

The Liberals say they will consult opposition parties, but it is the Prime Minister who would ultimately make those appointments. The Prime Minister, through his ministers, would be able to control the access of information to this committee throughout the bill. The Prime Minister's influence, authority, and power is just interwoven throughout the whole bill.

• (1700)

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague and member of the justice committee for his thoughtful speech.

I wonder if he could comment on the government's assertion we have heard over and over today that it is a good first step, it will be reviewed in three years, and we should be satisfied with the bill, notwithstanding that five of the eight MPs now, contrary to what I think I heard, are government members of Parliament, and the Liberals have another senator they have agreed they want to put on there. The chair would be appointed by the Prime Minister, not as it

happens in England, or elsewhere where the committee chooses who its chair will be.

It is, of course, an advisory group to the Prime Minister's Office rather than a committee of Parliament as in other countries. With all of those changes that the Liberals want to bring in today, does the member believe that this is an approach we should accept, that this is good enough for Canada right now?

Mr. Ted Falk (Provencher, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for Victoria, my friend, for that question. It was a great honour and privilege to work with him the last year and a half on the public safety committee. I have a great deal of respect for his opinion and his insight into security matters and issues, although we did not always agree. One good example would have been Bill C-51. My NDP friend from Victoria did not agree Bill C-51 was a good balance between security and freedom. Of course, I think Bill C-51 struck a very good balance.

The government has the opportunity today to build on the good work that we did as Conservatives through Bill C-51, which provides assurance to Canadians that we will keep them safe and gives our law and security agencies the right tools to keep them safe. The government had the opportunity to build on that through Bill C-22 and through the committee establishing oversight of our security agencies. Contrary to what the Liberal member said before, the proposed committee is actually disproportionately represented by Liberal members. It is appointed by the Prime Minister. The prime minister would have full oversight of the committee, even through the access to information the committee has by the prime minister having control over the ministers. No, I do not think this is a good balance.

The Liberals keep comparing the bill to what our Five Eyes partner nations have struck, and many of them have experience with this. Instead of gaining from that valuable experience our partners have in establishing their oversight review committees, the Liberals have decided to go it alone and say it is their first opportunity, their first kick at the can, that they will come up with this and review it. That is absolutely not acceptable. When we have methods that are proven with our partner nations, we should be looking at those structures and taking seriously what they have done and what works.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, before I get under way, I will comment on the last statement from my colleague across the way. Regarding New Zealand where the prime minister sits on the committee, is that something the Conservatives would want to see happen here on our parliamentary oversight committee?

It is important that we recognize that there has been a great deal of work on this. Let me start off my speech, though, by recognizing International Women's Day today, to applaud everyone who is participating in it, and to give a special call-out to my daughter, who is the youngest member of the Manitoba legislature. Her dad is very proud of all the wonderful work that she does.

Government Orders

I wanted to be able to put this thing into perspective. Let us put it into perspective in regard to a couple of points. One is that the Conservatives were out of touch with Canadians prior to the last election and today they demonstrated that they are still out of touch with Canadians. I say that because we know within the Liberal caucus that when the Conservatives introduced Bill C-51 there was a fundamental piece that was missing. We knew that. We understood that. We knew that because we were working and connecting with Canadians, listening to what Canadians actually had to say.

I understand that the prime minister at the time, Stephen Harper, had a bias. His bias was possibly that he did not trust; I do not know. All we know is that at the end of the day he did not want to have a parliamentary oversight committee and have parliamentarians take responsibility in terms of being able to ensure things such as rights and freedoms of Canadians were in fact being protected. We disagreed back then and I stood up across the way on many occasions and talked about how important it was that the government actually bring in parliamentary oversight. I believe the record will show that we pushed that consistently. The Prime Minister, during the last federal election, in addressing the issue of Bill C-51, made a commitment to Canadians, because we were listening, that if we were to form government we would bring in parliamentary oversight.

The concept is not new. As has been pointed out, there are other countries. Canada is part of a group of nations called the Five Eyes dealing with security and national security issues. We were the only country that did not have a parliamentary oversight committee. This Prime Minister recognized that, and even though our first priority was to deliver on that middle class tax cut and for those who are aspiring to be a part of Canada's middle class and the many other nice things that came out of the budget, I can say we did not lose sight of the parliamentary oversight committee. We recognized that this too was important to Canadians. We are a party that brought in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and we stand by that on all occasions.

I started by saying that the Conservatives were out of touch with Canadians, and we saw that in terms of not incorporating it into Bill C-51. I was amazed when the critic for the Conservatives said they accepted the results of the last federal election. If the Conservatives really did accept the results of the last federal election, they would be supporting this bill. However, we heard today that the Conservatives will not be supporting the bill. What did they base their arguments on? They said that we could have improved it here, we should have improved it there.

Let me read some of the things that were said at the committee stage, and this is Bill C-22 as it was in the committee room.

Noted academic Professor Wesley Wark credited the “government for seeing the importance of parliamentary scrutiny of security and intelligence and for making [the committee of parliamentarians] a centrepiece of its response to the previous government's anti-terrorism legislation”. He also told the standing committee that the new committee of parliamentarians “represents a necessary and timely experiment in parliamentary democracy and activism”. He is not alone. There are others. I made reference to Ronald Atkey, a former SIRC chair and former parliamentarian. He stated that the proposed review body “represents a major and welcome change” in

Canada. He explained that he meant “welcome” in the sense that, in his view, “Canada in the last three decades [has fallen] behind our parliamentary cousins in the United Kingdom and Australia in terms of accountability to Parliament”.

● (1705)

He also noted, in the standing committee, that Bill C-22 will help to reassure Canadians that their elected representatives will play a key overview role in accountability regarding the serious powers granted to some of the 17 federal departments and agencies that contribute to Canadian national security measures.

The good news is that this is a commitment that was given by the Liberals when we were going through that last election, and that commitment is being materialized in a very tangible way.

Members, who are New Democrats, Conservatives, or even the Green Party, are saying that they did not listen to the committee and that the Prime Minister said we would be changing attitudes in the standing committee.

I was here for a good number of those years when Stephen Harper was the prime minister, and I participated in some of those committees. The opposition never gained anything.

If we look at this particular piece of legislation, amendments were brought forward, and even with these amendments that we have brought forward today, that are still in place. Let us take a look at it in terms of some of those things.

We have had a lot of discussion this afternoon about the exemptions. When the legislation was here, before it went to committee, that is during the same time in which we had professional experts saying how good the legislation was, the committee wanted some more exemptions. There were four exemptions that the government wants to keep, and we are doing that through the amendments.

At the committee stage, the exemptions were reduced down to one. We are putting three of them back in. In my books that means it is better legislation, because we actually accepted some of those exemptions that came from the standing committee. That means the government was listening to what the standing committee was saying. That is another promise that has been kept by this Prime Minister. When the committees and standing committees do good work and put in the effort, we recognize that.

What are the things that we are actually putting in? One of the things that we are putting back in that the committee took out, for example, was information described in the Witness Protection Program Act. I am not a security expert. I am not going to try to convince members that I am security expert. However, I do know that the witness protection program is an essential program here in Canada. We need to go all out in terms of protecting those individuals in that program.

I do not believe it is irresponsible of the government to bring that clause back in, because we need to protect the names of those individuals. Those individuals' lives are at risk. I believe that is a positive measure. This legislation is better today than when it was in second reading in part because of some of the work that was done in the standing committee.

Government Orders

The NDP members in particular are saying that we have too many exemptions. Let me talk about something that has come out in the New Zealand act, and maybe New Democrat members could respond to it. New Zealand is part of the Five Eyes. Its act allows the government to inform the committee that those documents or that information cannot be disclosed because, in the opinion of the chief executive or the relevant intelligence and security agents, those documents or that information is sensitive.

I would argue our legislation is far more effective at getting the badly needed information to our committee members. New Zealand is not alone. What about the U.K.? What is their exemption clause? Let us look at it. It says: inform the intelligence and security committee that the information cannot be disclosed because the secretary of state has decided it should not be disclosed.

I would argue that this is Canada's first, and this is somewhat historic. We have a great piece of legislation here. This is good news for Canadians. It is protecting rights and freedoms. We have gone further, in many ways, than other jurisdictions.

As opposed to trying to come up with excuses as to why members might not want to support it, I would suggest that members should get on board, listen to what Canadians are saying, and vote in favour of Bill C-22.

• (1710)

Mr. Ted Falk (Provencher, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I always appreciate listening to the member. I do not need to use my earpiece as everything is nice and clear. I am always intrigued by the hon. member for Winnipeg North because he knows something about everything, and I actually appreciate that. However, I do want to help him a bit with his facts on this bill.

I am going to read from subclause 4(2), about the committee makeup. It states:

The Committee is to consist of not more than two members who are members of the Senate and not more than seven members who are members of the House of Commons. Not more than four Committee members who are members of the House of Commons may be members of the government party.

He said that the government party would have a minority of members on this committee. That is absolutely false. The assumption is, and that is if the Prime Minister would actually appoint a full committee, and it does not say he has to; it just says "not more than". He could appoint four Liberal members from the House of Commons to that committee. He could appoint two Liberal senators to sit on that committee. Of course, we know they are not really Liberal senators, there are just senators who are Liberals, but he could appoint both of those. He has also indicated that he is going to appoint a Liberal chair, as he has already done. He has appointed a chair to a job that does not exist.

That means that on a committee of 10, there are actually seven members who could conceivably be Liberals, which in all likelihood will be Liberals, providing he actually appoints another three members who might be from the Conservative Party or other opposition parties.

I am going to give the member an opportunity to clarify his comments.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, clarity can be found in *Hansard*. I made it very clear that the government members of Parliament are a minority on the committee and everything that the member across the way has read off reinforces exactly what I said.

The other place, whether the Conservatives want to believe it or not, is moving more toward an independent Senate, and within the Liberal caucus we think that is a positive thing. I know many of my colleagues within the caucus, and I suspect those who will be participating on this, recognize the importance of it.

On another note, members will recall that, generally speaking, chairs get involved when there is a tie vote.

I think that the member across the way and possibly the Conservative Party underestimate the good work that will be done by this committee. I believe that because of the calibre of the members of Parliament and the senators who will be representatives on this committee it will in fact do a fantastic job in protecting Canadians' rights and freedoms.

• (1715)

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member referred to Professor Wesley Wark who, along with three other experts, on January 27 of this year, wrote as follows in *The Globe and Mail*:

What united us was a concern that the government, in pursuing a laudable objective, had simply gone too far in restricting access by the Committee to secret information and in attempting to control the kind of reporting it could do.

He goes on to support the committee recommendations that, of course, we supported, as well.

A Liberal bill a few years back, Bill C-622, allowed the committee, in its oversight capacity, to subpoena witnesses and documents and get the information it thought it would require. That was supported by the current Prime Minister, the current public safety minister, the future chair of this committee, and many other current cabinet ministers. Does the member think they were wrong?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, there are issues on which some have much more knowledge than I, and we have these experts who come forward. I cited a quote directly from Mr. Wark. Having said that, what I do know is that if we do a comparison between Canada and the other four eyes, Canada being the fifth eye, we will find that in certain areas there might be an argument that we might be able to improve and do better. In other areas, I would argue that we are doing better than other members of the Five Eyes.

What is nice about the legislation, and even the government House leader, if members listened to what the government House leader had to say, said this is something which we are starting. It is historic here in Canada. It is the first time we are having a parliamentary oversight committee to be able to protect our freedoms and our rights. We are not saying there is no way in which it cannot be improved in the future, but I can tell members that I believe that Canadians as a whole will support not only the bill but the amendments that are being brought forward. This government demonstrated that it is very sensitive and it listened to what was being said at committee and what other experts had to say about the legislation.

Government Orders

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Resuming debate, the hon. member for Perth—Wellington.

I just want to inform the member that time might be a bit short. He will have time to make his full 10-minute presentation and only have about two minutes for questions, but that will come up again when this item comes back to the House.

Mr. John Nater (Perth—Wellington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise in the House today to debate this important issue.

Listening to the debate thus far today in the House and hearing the parliamentary secretary talk about the amendments that his government is bringing in at report stage and the amendments that it rejected at committee made me think of one of the great orators that the House has ever heard, the Right Hon. Arthur Meighen, one of this country's prime ministers, a relatively short-lived prime minister but a prime minister nonetheless, who was actually from my home area of Perth County.

Arthur Meighen once gave a speech and his words are valuable to the debate we have at hand. He was speaking of Edmund Burke, one of the great British thinkers, when he said:

...a ministry must yield to Parliament and not contrive that Parliament be new-modelled until it is fitted to their purposes. If the authority of Parliament...is to be upheld as long as it coincides in opinion with His Majesty's advisers, but to be set at nought the moment it differs from them, then the House of Commons will shrink into a mere appendage of administration and entirely lose its independent and effective character.

I get the impression from the structure and the makeup of this committee that is exactly what the government is trying to do.

Throughout the history of our great parliamentary democracies, the supremacy of Parliament has been well established. As a nation-state, there is no question our country owes a duty of care to the security and safety of our citizens.

Parliament has a duty to ensure that our laws are properly in place and that they protect our citizens. We must also be sure that we do not overstep the boundaries that are set out for us, which is why we are not entirely opposed as such to the creation of a parliamentary oversight committee, one that may be similar to that of the United Kingdom. The challenge though is that the government of this day has refused to listen to the important input of not only the committee but of members from this side of the House and from members down the way in the NDP as well. The government has refused to take the advice of our former public safety critic, the member for Durham, and the member for Victoria, both of whom have brought important contributions to this debate, but nonetheless, the government has refused to go about amending this bill and creating this bill in a way that would truly protect the rights of our citizens.

One specific element of the bill that I find troubling is subclause 4 (3), which reads:

The committee is not a committee of either House of Parliament or of both Houses.

As such, the committee is called the security and intelligence committee of parliamentarians. It would be a misnomer to call it a parliamentary committee because it is not and the government has structured it as such, very deliberately, I would say.

I would suggest it has been done so to exempt the committee from some of the normal practices that parliamentary committees of the House operate under. The government in effect, I would argue, is creating the committee to be a branch of the executive branch rather than the legislative branch of Parliament, and the government has failed to truly justify this approach.

Upon further examining the details of Bill C-22 it becomes clear the Liberal cabinet is not looking to enhance parliamentary oversight but rather to expand its own power. In fact, clause 21 of the bill gives the Prime Minister and the Prime Minister alone, in consultation with the Prime Minister's appointed chair, the ability to revise sections of these reports. In other words, it would give the Prime Minister the opportunity to force a redaction of the reports before they are tabled in Parliament. This allows the Prime Minister to decide what Parliament can and cannot see. So much for a parliamentary committee.

I would remind the Liberal government of the words of one of our former Speakers who, on April 27, 2010, said, and I quote from the Speaker's ruling on that date:

The insinuation that Members of Parliament cannot be trusted with the very information that they may well require to act on behalf of Canadians runs contrary to the inherent trust that Canadians have placed in their elected officials and which Members require to act in their various parliamentary capacities.

In fact, it was members on that side, members of the now Liberal government, who argued vehemently at that time for the release of sensitive information. Now they have constructed a committee which would, in effect, give the Prime Minister, in consultation with his own appointed chair, the ability to redact and keep information from this chamber.

● (1720)

A committee of parliamentarians, or what should be a parliamentary committee, should be the master of its own domain. It should, in effect, be able to decide how to act within its own jurisdiction.

[*Translation*]

I am also concerned that Bill C-22 authorizes cabinet to not disclose certain information to the committee. According to the rules established by clause 15 of the bill, the committee does not receive information directly from the departments. The committee must instead submit a request to a minister.

Clause 15(3) states:

After the appropriate minister receives the request, he or she must provide or cause to be provided to the Committee, in a timely manner, the requested information to which it is entitled to have access.

The expression "in a timely manner" is difficult to interpret. The ministers can put off complying with the request. My experience with how ministers can delay responding to committees' requests indicates that this clause is highly problematic. The bill should establish strict deadlines for the departments' response.

What concerns me the most is the fact that after stating that it wants to strengthen the role of Parliament by enhancing the independence of committees, cabinet chose the chair of the committee. We learned from the media that the member for Ottawa South will chair the committee.

Business of Supply

• (1725)
[English]

I have no particular opinion on the performance of the member for Ottawa South as a parliamentarian. I am certain he is an exceptionally adequate parliamentarian and representative of his riding, but the fact is that this chair was appointed by the Prime Minister. He was not elected by fellow committee members, who, in fact, have not even been appointed yet and may not be appointed for several months to come, but the Prime Minister has already appointed his preferred choice as chair of the committee, likely a year and a half before the committee is fully established.

I would remind the Prime Minister and the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness that they ran on a platform of being open, accountable, and transparent, but they appointed a member with really no particular experience in the field of public safety or national security organizations to provide oversight of Canada's covert security and intelligence activities. The Prime Minister chose such a member to serve as chair. Why? Could it perhaps be that the member for Ottawa South has a particular skill set, particular experience, in one very precise area, and that is being a long-time Liberal? He comes from one of the most famous Liberal families in Ontario.

Mr. John Barlow: Infamous.

Mr. John Nater: Mr. Speaker, I would not say “infamous” as that would be unparliamentary, but it is a very famous Liberal family. Could it just be that he is being rewarded for his long-time dedication to the Liberal Party, or could it perhaps be that it is simply a reward for having been left out of cabinet when the cabinet was formed?

[Translation]

Finally, the bill states that the committee chair will receive an annual allowance of \$42,200. This amount is over three times the usual allowance of \$11,900 given to chairs of standing committees.

In my riding of Perth—Wellington, \$42,000 is a good annual salary. The chair of this committee will receive the equivalent of a Canadian worker's salary, in addition to the \$170,400 parliamentary salary he already receives.

[English]

There is no question in my mind that Parliament and we as parliamentarians are open to a degree of parliamentary oversight of our national security agencies. This is something that our party is not opposed to. The challenge the Conservative opposition has, as members of this august chamber, is the way in which the Liberals have structured this committee. The way in which they have imposed their self-appointed chair on this committee and the way in which they have introduced amendments at report stage and rejected some of the amendments of the all-party committee simply go to show that this is more window dressing than actually an effective oversight committee of the House.

For these reasons and so much more, this bill simply does not reflect the international examples that have been provided in the past of effective parliamentary oversight activities.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): We will have to stop. The next time Bill C-22 comes up the hon. member will have five minutes of questions coming his way. I am sure he will do a wonderful job with it.

* * *

[Translation]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION — TAX FAIRNESS

The House resumed from March 7 consideration of the motion.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): It being 5:30 p.m., the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion of the hon. member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie relating to the business of supply.

• (1805)

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

(Division No. 207)

YEAS

Members

Aldag	Alghabra
Amos	Anandasangaree
Arseneault	Arya
Ashton	Aubin
Ayoub	Badawey
Bagnell	Bains
Barsalou-Duval	Baylis
Beaulieu	Beech
Bibeau	Bittle
Blaikie	Blair
Blaney (North Island—Powell River)	Boissonnault
Bossio	Boudrias
Boulerice	Boutin-Sweet
Bratina	Breton
Brisson	Brousseau
Caesar-Chavannes	Cannings
Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)	Casey (Charlottetown)
Chagger	Chan
Chen	Choquette
Christopherson	Cormier
Cullen	Cuzner
Dabrusin	Damoff
Davies	DeCoursey
Dhaliwal	Dhillon
Di Iorio	Donnelly
Drouin	Dubé
Dubourg	Duclos
Duguid	Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)	Dusseau
Duvall	Dzerowicz
Easter	Ehsassi
El-Khoury	Ellis
Erskine-Smith	Eyking
Eyolfson	Fergus
Fillmore	Finnigan
Fonseca	Foote
Fortin	Fraser (West Nova)
Fraser (Central Nova)	Fry
Garneau	Gill
Goldsmith-Jones	Goodale
Graham	Grewal
Hajdu	Hardie
Harvey	Hehr
Housefather	Hughes
Hussen	Hutchings
Iacono	Johns
Jolibois	Joly
Jones	Jordan
Jowhari	Julian
Kang	Khera

Private Members' Business

Kwan	Lametti
Lamoureux	Lapointe
Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)	Laverdière
LeBlanc	Lebouthillier
Lefebvre	Lemieux
Leslie	Lightbound
Lockhart	Long
Longfield	Ludwig
MacGregor	MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Malcolmson	Maloney
Marcel	Masse (Windsor West)
Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)	
Mathysen	
May (Cambridge)	May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
McDonald	McGuinty
McKay	McKenna
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)	McLeod (Northwest Territories)
Mendès	Medicino
Mihychuk (Soeurs)	Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Morrissey)
Monsef	Murray
Mulcair	Nassif
Nantel	Oliphant
O'Connell	O'Regan
Oliver	Paradis
Ouellette	Peschisolido
Pauzé	Petitpas Taylor
Peterson	Picard
Philpott	Poissant
Plamondon	Qualtrough
Quach	Rankin
Ramsey	Rioux
Ratansi	Romanado
Rodriguez	Rudd
Rota	Rusnak
Ruimy	Sahota
Saganash	Sajjan
Saini	Sangha
Samson	Sarai
Sansoucy	Schulte
Schiefke	Sgro
Serré	Sheehan
Shanahan	Sidhu (Brampton South)
Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)	Simms
Sikand	Sorbara
Sohi	Stewart
Ste-Marie	Tassi
Tan	Trudel
Thériault	Vandenbeld
Vandal	Virani
Vaughan	Whalen
Weir	Wilson-Raybould
Wilkinson	Young
Wrzesniewski	
Zahid — 205	

NAYS

Members

Aboulttaif	Albas
Albrecht	Allison
Ambrose	Arnold
Barlow	Bergen
Berthold	Brassard
Brown	Calkins
Carrie	Chong
Clement	Cooper
Deltell	Diotte
Doherty	Dreeshen
Egliniski	Falk
Fast	Finley
Généreux	Genuis
Gladu	Godin
Gourde	Harder
Hoback	Jeneroux
Kelly	Kent
Kitchen	Kmiec
Lake	Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Leitch	Liepert
Lobb	Lukiwski
MacKenzie	Maguire
McCauley (Edmonton West)	McColeman
McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)	Motz

Nater	Nicholson
Nuttall	Poillievre
Rayes	Reid
Rempel	Richards
Saroya	Scheer
Schmale	Shields
Sopuck	Stanton
Stubbs	Tilson
Trost	Van Kesteren
Van Loan	Vecchio
Viersen	Wagantall
Warawa	Warkentin
Watts	Waugh
Webber	Wong
Yurdiga — 77	

PAIRED

Members

Moore — 2

Fragiskatos

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.**PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS**

● (1810)

[English]

CRIMINAL CODE

The House resumed from February 22 consideration of the motion that Bill S-217, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (detention in custody), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at the second reading stage of Bill S-217.

Before the Clerk announced the results of the vote:

● (1815)

Mr. Anthony Rota: Mr. Speaker, I am rising on a point of order. There was a bit of confusion when it all started. The votes came zipping by and I missed my opportunity to vote for Bill S-217. I would like my vote to be registered in favour of Bill S-217.

● (1820)

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

(Division No. 208)

YEAS

Members

Aboulttaif	Albas
Albrecht	Allison
Ambrose	Arnold
Arya	Ashton
Aubin	Ayoub
Badawey	Barlow
Barsalou-Duval	Baylis
Beaulieu	Bergen
Berthold	Bittle
Blaikie	Blaney (North Island—Powell River)
Block	Boudrias
Boulerice	Boutin-Sweet
Brassard	Bratina
Brosseau	Brown
Calkins	Cannings
Carrie	Chan
Chong	Choquette

Private Members' Business

Christopherson
 Cooper
 Damoff
 Deltell
 Doherty
 Dreeshen
 Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)
 Duvall
 Erskine-Smith
 Fast
 Fortin
 Fraser (Central Nova)
 Genuis
 Gladu
 Gourde
 Hardie
 Hoback
 Hughes
 Johns
 Jordan
 Julian
 Kelly
 Kitchen
 Kwan
 Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
 Lefebvre
 Lemieux
 Lobb
 MacGregor
 Maguire
 Marcil
 Mathysen
 McCauley (Edmonton West)
 McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
 Motz
 Nantel
 Nicholson
 Pausé
 Poilievre
 Ramsey
 Rayes
 Rempel
 Ritz
 Ruimy
 Samson
 Saroya
 Schiefke
 Shanahan
 Sikand
 Stanton
 Stewart
 Thériault
 Trost
 Van Kesteren
 Vecchio
 Wagantall
 Warkentin
 Waugh
 Weir
 Wrzesnewskyj

Clement
 Cullen
 Davies
 Diotte
 Donnelly
 Dubé
 Dusseault
 Eglinski
 Falk
 Finley
 Fraser (West Nova)
 Gagnéux
 Gill
 Godin
 Harder
 Harvey
 Housefather
 Jeneroux
 Jolibois
 Jowhari
 Kang
 Kent
 Kmiec
 Lake
 Laverdière
 Leitch
 Liepert
 Lukiwski
 MacKenzie
 Malcolmson
 Masse (Windsor West)
 May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
 McColeman
 McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)
 Mulcair
 Nater
 Nuttall
 Plamondon
 Quach
 Rankin
 Reid
 Richards
 Rota
 Saganash
 Sansoucy
 Scheer
 Schmale
 Shields
 Sopuck
 Ste-Marie
 Stubbs
 Tilson
 Trudel
 Van Loan
 Viersen
 Warawa
 Watts
 Webber
 Wong
 Yurdiga — 154

Fergus
 Finnigan
 Foote
 Gameau
 Goodale
 Grewal
 Hehr
 Hutchings
 Joly
 Khera
 Lamoureux
 Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)
 Lebouthillier
 Lightbound
 Long
 Ludwig
 Maloney
 McDonald
 McKay
 McLeod (Northwest Territories)
 Mendicino
 Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Soeurs)
 Monsef
 Morrissey
 Nassif
 Oliphant
 O'Regan
 Paradis
 Petitpas Taylor
 Picard
 Qualtrough
 Rioux
 Romanado
 Rusnak
 Saini
 Sangha
 Schulte
 Sgro
 Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)
 Simms
 Sorbara
 Tassi
 Vandenbeld
 Virani
 Wilkinson
 Young

Fillmore
 Fonseca
 Fry
 Goldsmith-Jones
 Graham
 Hajdu
 Huszen
 Iacono
 Jones
 Lametti
 Lapointe
 LeBlanc
 Leslie
 Lockhart
 Longfield
 MacKinnon (Gatineau)
 Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)
 McGuinity
 McKenna
 Mendès
 Mihychuk
 Murray
 O'Connell
 Oliver
 Ouellette
 Peschisolido
 Philpott
 Poissant
 Ratansi
 Rodriguez
 Rudd
 Sahota
 Sajjan
 Sarai
 Serré
 Sheehan
 Sidhu (Brampton South)
 Sohi
 Tan
 Vandal
 Vaughan
 Whalen
 Wilson-Raybould
 Zahid — 128

PAIRED

Members

Fragiskatos

Moore — 2

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried. Accordingly the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights.

(Bill read the second time and referred to a committee)

* * *

[Translation]

FEDERAL FRAMEWORK ON POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER ACT

The House resumed from March 6 consideration of the motion that Bill C-211, An Act respecting a federal framework on post-traumatic stress disorder, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at second reading stage of Bill C-211 under private members' business.

● (1825)

[English]

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

NAYS

Members

Aldag
 Amos
 Arseneault
 Bains
 Bibeau
 Boissonnault
 Breton
 Caesar-Chavannes
 Casey (Charlottetown)
 Chen
 Cuzner
 DeCoursey
 Dhillon
 Drouin
 Duclos
 Duncan (Etobicoke North)
 Easter
 El-Khoury
 Eyking

Alghabra
 Anandasangaree
 Bagnell
 Beech
 Blair
 Bossio
 Brison
 Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)
 Chagger
 Cormier
 Dabrusin
 Dhaliwal
 Di Iorio
 Dubourg
 Duguid
 Dzerowicz
 Ehsassi
 Ellis
 Eyolfson

*Private Members' Business**(Division No. 209)*

YEAS

Members

Aboultaif
 Albrecht
 Alghabra
 Ambrose
 Anandasangaree
 Arseneault
 Ashton
 Ayoub
 Bagnell
 Barlow
 Baylis
 Beech
 Berthold
 Bittle
 Blair
 Block
 Bossio
 Boulerice
 Brassard
 Breton
 Brosseau
 Caesar-Chavannes
 Cannings
 Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)
 Chagger
 Chen
 Choquette
 Clement
 Cormier
 Cuzner
 Damoff
 DeCoursey
 Dhaliwal
 Di Iorio
 Doherty
 Dreeshen
 Dubé
 Duclos
 Duncan (Etobicoke North)
 Dusseault
 Dzerowicz
 Eglinski
 El-Khoury
 Erskine-Smith
 Eyolfson
 Fast
 Fillmore
 Finnigan
 Foote
 Fraser (West Nova)
 Fry
 Généreux
 Gill
 Godin
 Goodale
 Graham
 Hajdu
 Hardie
 Hehr
 Housefather
 Hussen
 Iacono
 Johns
 Joly
 Jordan
 Julian
 Kelly
 Khera
 Kmiec
 Lake
 Lamoureux
 Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
 Laverdière
 Lebouthillier
 Leitch
 Leslie
 Lightbound
 Lockhart

Albas
 Aldag
 Allison
 Amos
 Arnold
 Arya
 Aubin
 Badawey
 Bains
 Barsalou-Duval
 Beaulieu
 Bergen
 Bibeau
 Blaikie
 Blaney (North Island—Powell River)
 Boissonnault
 Boudrias
 Boutin-Sweet
 Bratina
 Brisson
 Brown
 Calkins
 Carrie
 Casey (Charlottetown)
 Chan
 Chong
 Christopherson
 Cooper
 Cullen
 Dabrusin
 Davies
 Deltell
 Dhillon
 Diotte
 Donnelly
 Drouin
 Dubourg
 Duguid
 Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)
 Duvall
 Easter
 Ehsassi
 Ellis
 Eyking
 Falk
 Fergus
 Finley
 Fonseca
 Fortin
 Fraser (Central Nova)
 Garneau
 Genuis
 Gladu
 Goldsmith-Jones
 Gourde
 Grewal
 Harder
 Harvey
 Hoback
 Hughes
 Hutchings
 Jeneroux
 Jolibois
 Jones
 Jowhari
 Kang
 Kent
 Kitchen
 Kwan
 Lametti
 Lapointe
 Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)
 LeBlanc
 Lefebvre
 Lemieux
 Liepert
 Lobb
 Long

Longfield
 Lukiwski
 MacKenzie
 Maguire
 Maloney
 Masse (Windsor West)
 Mathysen
 May (Saanic—Gulf Islands)
 McColeman
 McGuinty
 McKenna
 McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)
 Mendès
 Mihychuk
 Soeurs
 Monsef
 Motz
 Murray
 Nassif
 Nicholson
 O'Connell
 Oliver
 Ouellette
 Pautz
 Peterson
 Philpott
 Plamondon
 Poissant
 Qualtrough
 Rankin
 Rayes
 Rempel
 Rioux
 Rodriguez
 Rota
 Ruimy
 Saganash
 Saini
 Samson
 Sansoucy
 Saroya
 Schiefke
 Schulte
 Sgro
 Sheehan
 Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)
 Sikand
 Sohi
 Sorbara
 Ste-Marie
 Stubbs
 Tassi
 Tilson
 Trudel
 Van Loan
 Vandenbeld
 Vecchio
 Virani
 Warawa
 Watts
 Webber
 Whalen
 Wilson-Raybould
 Wrzesnewskyj
 Yurdiga

Ludwig
 MacGregor
 MacKinnon (Gatineau)
 Malcolmson
 Marcil
 Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)
 May (Cambridge)
 McCauley (Edmonton West)
 McDonald
 McKay
 McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
 McLeod (Northwest Territories)
 Mendicino
 Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-
 Morrissey
 Mulcair
 Nantel
 Nater
 Nuttall
 Oliphant
 O'Regan
 Paradis
 Peschisolido
 Petitpas Taylor
 Picard
 Poilievre
 Quach
 Ramsey
 Ratansi
 Reid
 Richards
 Ritz
 Romanado
 Rudd
 Rusnak
 Sahota
 Sajjan
 Sangha
 Sarai
 Scheer
 Schmale
 Serré
 Shanahan
 Shields
 Sidhu (Brampton South)
 Simms
 Sopuck
 Stanton
 Stewart
 Tan
 Thériault
 Trost
 Van Kesteren
 Vandal
 Vaughan
 Viersen
 Wagantall
 Warkentin
 Waugh
 Weir
 Wilkinson
 Wong
 Young
 Zahid — 284

NAYS

Nil

PAIRED

Members

Fragiskatos

Moore — 2

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried. Accordingly, this bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Health.

Private Members' Business

(Bill read the second time and referred to a committee)

* * *

[*Translation*]

GENETIC NON-DISCRIMINATION ACT

The House resumed from March 7 consideration of Bill S-201, An Act to prohibit and prevent genetic discrimination, as reported (with amendment) from the committee, and of the motions in Group No. 1.

The Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at report stage of Bill S-201 under private members' business.

The question is on Motion No. 1. A vote on this motion also applies to Motions Nos. 2 to 8.

• (1835)

(The House divided on Motion No. 1, which was negatived on the following division:)

(Division No. 210)

YEAS

Members

Alghabra	Bains
Barsalou-Duval	Beaulieu
Beech	Bibeau
Blair	Boissonnault
Boudrias	Brison
Caesar-Chavannes	Casey (Charlottetown)
Chagger	Comier
Cuzner	DeCoursey
Duclos	Duguid
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Foote
Fortin	Garneau
Gill	Goldsmith-Jones
Goodale	Hajdu
Hehr	Hussen
Hutchings	Joly
Jones	Khera
Lamoureux	LeBlanc
Lebouthillier	Leslie
MacKinnon (Gatineau)	Marcil
McKenna	Mendicino
Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Sœurs)	
Monsef	
Murray	Paupé
Peschisolido	Petitpas Taylor
Philpott	Plamondon
Poissant	Qualtrough
Rodriguez	Rudd
Sajjan	Simms
Sohi	Ste-Marie
Tassi	Thériault
Wilson-Raybould— 59	

NAYS

Members

Aboultaif	Albas
Albrecht	Aldag
Allison	Ambrose
Amos	Anandasangaree
Arnold	Arseneault
Arya	Ashton
Aubin	Ayoub
Badawey	Bagnell
Barlow	Baylis
Bergen	Berthold
Bittle	Blaikie
Blaney (North Island—Powell River)	Block
Bossio	Boulerice
Boutin-Sweet	Brassard

Bratina	Breton
Brosseau	Brown
Calkins	Cannings
Carrie	Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)
Chan	Chen
Chong	Choquette
Christopherson	Clement
Cooper	Cullen
Dabrusin	Damoff
Davies	Deltell
Dhaliwal	Di Iorio
Diotte	Doherty
Donnelly	Dreeschen
Drouin	Dubé
Dubourg	Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)
Dusseault	Duvall
Dzerowicz	Easter
Eglnski	Ehsassi
El-Khoury	Ellis
Erskine-Smith	Eyking
Eyolfson	Falk
Fast	Fergus
Fillmore	Finley
Finnigan	Fonseca
Fraser (West Nova)	Fraser (Central Nova)
Fry	Généreux
Genius	Gladu
Godin	Gourde
Graham	Grewal
Harder	Hardie
Harvey	Hoback
Housefather	Hughes
Iacono	Jeneroux
Johns	Jolibois
Jordan	Jowhari
Julian	Kang
Kelly	Kent
Kitchen	Kmieciak
Kwan	Lake
Lametti	Lapointe
Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)
Laverdière	Lefebvre
Leitch	Lemieux
Liepert	Lightbound
Lobb	Lockhart
Longfield	Lukiwski
MacGregor	MacKenzie
Maguire	Malcolmson
Maloney	Masse (Windsor West)
Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)	
Mathysen	
May (Cambridge)	May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
McCauley (Edmonton West)	McColeman
McGuinity	McKay
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)	McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)
McLeod (Northwest Territories)	Mendés
Mihychuk	Morrissey
Motz	Mulcair
Nantel	Nassif
Nater	Nicholson
Nuttall	O'Connell
Oliphant	Oliver
O'Regan	Ouellette
Paradis	Peterson
Picard	Poilievre
Quach	Ramsey
Rankin	Ratansi
Rayes	Reid
Rempel	Richards
Rioux	Ritz
Romanado	Rota
Ruimy	Rusnak
Saganash	Sahota
Saini	Samson
Sansoucy	Sarai
Saroya	Scheer
Schiefke	Schmale
Schulte	Serré
Sgro	Shanahan
Sheehan	Shields
Sikand	Sopuck
Sorbara	Stanton
Stewart	Stubbs
Tan	Tilson

Private Members' Business

Trost
Van Kesteren
Vandal
Vaughan
Viersen
Wagantall
Warkentin
Waugh
Weir
Wilkinson
Wrzesnewskyj
Yurdiga

Trudel
Van Loan
Vandenbeld
Vecchio
Virani
Warawa
Watts
Webber
Whalen
Wong
Young
Zahid — 218

PAIRED

Members

Fragiskatos

Moore — 2

The Speaker: I declare Motion No. 1 defeated.

I therefore declare Motions Nos. 2 to 8 defeated.

[*English*]

Mr. Robert Oliphant (Don Valley West, 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?

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 will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Speaker: In my opinion the yeas have it.

And five or more members having risen:

• (1845)

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

(*Division No. 211*)

YEAS

Members

Aboultatif
Albrecht
Allison
Amos
Arnold
Arya
Aubin
Badawey
Barlow
Bergen
Bittle
Blaney (North Island—Powell River)
Boissonnault
Boulerice
Brassard
Breton
Brown
Cannings
Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)
Chen

Albas
Aldag
Ambrose
Anandasangaree
Arseneault
Ashton
Ayoub
Bagnell
Baylis
Berthold
Blaikie
Block
Bossio
Boutin-Sweet
Bratina
Brosseau
Calkins
Carrie
Chan
Chong

Choquette
Clement
Cullen
Damoff
Deltell
Di Iorio
Doherty
Dreeschen
Dubé
Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)
Duvall
Easter
Ehsassi
Ellis
Eyking
Falk
Fergus
Finley
Fonseca
Fraser (Central Nova)
Généreux
Gladu
Gourde
Grewal
Hardie
Hoback
Hughes
Jeneroux
Jolibois
Jordan
Julian
Kelly
Kitchen
Kwan
Lametti
Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Laverdière
Leitch
Liepert
Lobb
Longfield
MacGregor
Maguire
Maloney
Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)
Mathysen
May (Cambridge)
McCauley (Edmonton West)
McDonald
McKay
McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)
Mendès
Morrissey
Mulcair
Nassif
Nicholson
O'Connell
Oliver
Ouellette
Peterson
Poilievre
Ramsey
Ratansi
Reid
Richards
Ritz
Rota
Rusnak
Sahota
Samson
Sansoucy
Saroya
Schieffe
Schulte
Sgro
Sheehan
Sikand
Sorbara
Stewart
Tan
Trost
Van Kesteren
Vandal
Vaughan

Christopherson
Cooper
Dabrusin
Davies
Dhaliwal
Diotte
Donnelly
Drouin
Dubourg
Dusseault
Dzerowicz
Eglinski
El-Khoury
Erskine-Smith
Eyolfson
Fast
Fillmore
Finnigan
Fraser (West Nova)
Fry
Genius
Godin
Graham
Harder
Harvey
Housefather
Iacono
Johns
Jones
Jowhari
Kang
Kent
Kniec
Lake
Lapointe
Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)
Lefebvre
Lemieux
Lightbound
Lockhart
Lukiwski
MacKenzie
Malcolmson
Masse (Windsor West)
May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
McColeman
McGuinity
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
McLeod (Northwest Territories)
Mihychuk
Motz
Nantel
Nater
Nuttall
Oliphant
O'Regan
Paradis
Picard
Quach
Rankin
Rayes
Rempel
Rioux
Romanado
Ruimy
Saganash
Saini
Sangha
Sarai
Scheer
Schmale
Serré
Shanahan
Shields
Sopuck
Stanton
Stubbs
Tilson
Trudel
Van Loan
Vandenbeld
Vecchio

Private Members' Business

Viersen
Wagantall
Warkentin
Waugh
Weir
Wilkinson
Wrzesnewskyj
Yurdiga

Virani
Warawa
Watts
Webber
Whalen
Wong
Young
Zahid— 222

● (1855)

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

(Division No. 212)

NAYS

Members

Alghabra
Barsalou-Duval
Beech
Blair
Brison
Casey (Charlottetown)
Cormier
Dhillon
Duguid
Foote
Garneau
Goldsmith-Jones
Hajdu
Hussen
Joly
Lamoureux
Lebouthillier
MacKinnon (Gatineau)
McKenna
Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Sœurs)
Monsef
Murray
Peschisolido
Philpott
Poissant
Rodriguez
Sajjan
Sidhu (Brampton South)
Sohi
Tassi
Wilson-Raybould— 59

Bains
Beaulieu
Bibeau
Boudrias
Caesar-Chavannes
Chagger
DeCoursey
Duclos
Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Fortin
Gill
Goodale
Hehr
Hutchings
Khera
LeBlanc
Leslie
Marcil
Mendicino

Pauzé
Petitpas Taylor
Plamondon
Qualtrough
Rudd
Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)
Simms
Ste-Marie
Thériault

PAIRED

Members

Fragiskatos

Moore— 2

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

When shall the bill be read a third time? By leave, now?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Translation]

Mr. Robert Oliphant moved that the bill be read the third time and passed.

The Speaker: 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 will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Speaker: In my opinion the yeas have it.

And five or more members having risen:

YEAS

Members

Abouttaif
Albrecht
Allison
Amos
Arnold
Arya
Aubin
Badawey
Barlow
Bergen
Bittle
Blaney (North Island—Powell River)
Boissonnault
Boulerice
Brassard
Breton
Brown
Cannings
Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)
Chen
Choquette
Clement
Cullen
Damoff
Deltell
Di Iorio
Doherty
Dreeschen
Dubé
Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)
Duvall
Easter
Ehsassi
Ellis
Eyking
Falk
Fergus
Finley
Fonseca
Fraser (Central Nova)
Généreux
Gladu
Gourde
Grewal
Hardie
Hoback
Hughes
Jeneroux
Jolibois
Jordan
Julian
Kelly
Kitchen
Kwan
Lametti
Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Laverdière
Leitch
Liepert
Lobb
Longfield
MacGregor
Maguire
Maloney
Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)
Mathysen
May (Cambridge)
McCauley (Edmonton West)
McDonald
McKay
McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)
Mendès

Albas
Aldag
Ambrose
Anandasangaree
Arseneault
Ashton
Ayoub
Bagnell
Baylis
Berthold
Blaikie
Block
Bossio
Boutin-Sweet
Bratina
Brosseau
Calkins
Carrie
Chan
Chong
Christopherson
Cooper
Dabrusin
Davies
Dhaliwal
Diotte
Donnelly
Drouin
Dubourg
Dusseau
Dzerowicz
Eglinski
El-Khoury
Erskine-Smith
Eyolfson
Fast
Fillmore
Finnigan
Fraser (West Nova)
Fry
Genius
Godin
Graham
Harder
Harvey
Housefather
Iacono
Johns
Jones
Jowhari
Kang
Kent
Kmicc
Lake
Lapointe
Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)
Lefebvre
Lemieux
Lightbound
Lockhart
Lukiwski
MacKenzie
Malcolmson
Masse (Windsor West)

May (Saaneich—Gulf Islands)
McColeman
McGuinty
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
McLeod (Northwest Territories)
Mihychuk

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Mulcair	Nantel
Nassif	Nater
Nicholson	Nuttall
O'Connell	Oliphant
Oliver	O'Regan
Ouellette	Paradis
Peterson	Picard
Poillievre	Quach
Ramsey	Rankin
Ratansi	Rayes
Reid	Rempel
Richards	Rioux
Ritz	Romanado
Rota	Ruimy
Rusnak	Saganash
Sahota	Saini
Samson	Sangha
Sansoucy	Sarai
Saroya	Scheer
Schiefke	Schmale
Schulte	Serré
Sgro	Shanahan
Sheehan	Shields
Sikand	Sopuck
Sorbara	Stanton
Stewart	Stubbs
Tan	Tilson
Trost	Trudel
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Leslie	MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Marcil	McKenna
Mendicino	Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Soeurs)
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Pauzé	Peschisolido
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The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

(Bill read the third time and passed)

[English]

The Speaker: It being 6:58 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business, as listed on today's Order Paper.

* * *

● (1900)

[Translation]

SUPREME COURT ACT

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP) moved that Bill C-203, An Act to amend the Supreme Court Act (understanding the official languages), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is truly an honour for me to rise today to introduce and speak to Bill C-203, an act to amend the Supreme Court Act, understanding the official languages. I am very proud to do that today, and I will explain why in a moment. I am following in the footsteps of many others who came before me and fought for Supreme Court judges to be bilingual. I will talk about who the biggest champion of this cause has been. It is quite the challenge for me to continue this fight, but it is also an honour and a privilege to do so.

I am speaking today about my bill, Bill C-203, which has to do with the bilingualism of Supreme Court judges. In short, this bill amends the Supreme Court Act and introduces a new requirement for judges appointed to the Supreme Court to understand French and English without the assistance of an interpreter. I will explain why this is so important.

This legislation would provide everyone with better access to justice in the official language of their choice. I will come back to that to explain other aspects of this bill.

First, I will say that access to justice in both official languages is an important concept that affects every official language community across Canada. Ever since I was appointed official languages critic for the NDP, I have had the opportunity to travel all over Canada and meet representatives of official language communities. They tell me how important it is to have access to justice. Access to health care in one's language is also very important. Nonetheless, access to justice is one of the most important issues.

This issue has long been championed by the NDP. In fact, I followed with interest the work of an NDP legend. Of course I am talking about the former NDP member for Acadie—Bathurst, Yvon Godin.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. François Choquette: Yes, Mr. Speaker, let us applaud him. The work that Yvon Godin did for this bill is incredible. For over 15 years, he fought and travelled across Canada to explain it, defend it, and to ask people to support it.

I hope the House will support this extremely important bill, which the Liberals have already supported on two separate occasions. Some hope remains. Unfortunately, there seems to be a little sand in the gears at the moment. I do not really understand why. I will explain this to the House a little later.

What I wanted to say is that Yvon Godin was a proud standard-bearer for the NDP. He was always proud to stand up for official languages and for the Acadian people. We owe him a great deal. With regard to the bill before us today, I owe him everything for all the hard work he did.

I would like to take a moment to quote a great passage from one of Mr. Godin's most impassioned speeches on this important matter. He said the following regarding everything that had been said previously:

That's troubling. The Supreme Court is the court of last resort in Canada. It is the last stage of the justice process for Canadians. For those who are judged, it's their future that can be ruined. That's why we [need] a justice system [that respects both official languages].

While Yvon Godin is synonymous with this fight, a number of other stakeholders have defended bilingualism in the Supreme Court. I am thinking of people like Justice Michel Bastarache, who is also a fierce defender of linguistic rights in Canada, and Michel Doucet, a legal expert and director of the International Observatory on Language Rights. The former commissioner of official languages, Graham Fraser, who also did a huge amount of work on this and whose first term was renewed, spent about 10 years defending official languages. He should be commended for his work. I am also thinking of other official language commissioners across Canada. There are also a number of francophone associations that represent communities.

• (1905)

[*English*]

I must salute, encourage, and say thanks for its support to the Quebec Community Groups Network. When I remember that, I think again about Yvon Godin, who worked here and who expressed himself so well. He turned red because he was passionate. He shouted and expressed himself.

[*Translation*]

He was very dedicated to the cause and I must thank him for his support, as I thank everyone who supports this bill. That shows why it is so important. Yvon Godin calls me from time to time, gets me going, and gives me an earful. In fact, he is still very passionate because he knows what he wants to achieve. He knows what it is like to defend the official languages. We need to agree, but we also have to fight to defend the official languages across the country. We do not have a choice.

Why did we introduce this bill concerning the equality of access to justice? Why introduce a bill that requires Supreme Court justices to understand both official languages? It is to ensure equal access to justice in both official languages. The bill promotes this equality. It is important to understand that the Supreme Court is the highest court in the country, as Yvon Godin said. It is the court of last resort for all Canadian jurisdictions. The judges hear cases that can be very important and very complex. As I mentioned, the court's decision can have serious consequences for the parties involved. Yvon Godin

Private Members' Business

said that it could even ruin the life of the person appearing before the Supreme Court. That is why the decisions can have very serious consequences.

Unilingual judges depend on a third party to understand the oral arguments and written submissions, which has negative consequences. Simultaneous interpretation and translation have limitations. We understand that when people provide simultaneous interpretation, they are not translating word for word. That would be impossible. They are interpreting what is said. They do excellent work. I commend all the interpreters and translators who work here in the House of Commons. It is a big and very complex job that requires a lot of skill. However, the interpreters cannot render all the nuances and subtleties of the arguments, and that is to be expected.

The ability of judges to understand both official languages thus promotes the equality of francophones and anglophones and is essential to ensuring that Canadians have access to justice in both official languages.

A document written by Sébastien Grammond and Mark Power provides a good explanation of why bilingualism and an understanding of both official languages is an essential requirement. The ability of Supreme Court judges to understand both official languages is not an asset; it is an essential qualification.

In fact, the oral arguments, being able to understand what is being said, that is not the only problem: there is also all the supporting documentation that is submitted in one language or the other. These documents are not translated. At the Supreme Court of Canada, how can a judge make such important and crucial decisions if he or she does not have access to all the documents pertaining to the case?

Furthermore, certain decisions were made in certain provinces where the cases are heard in French. Some judges therefore do not read these documents that refer to previous cases that sometimes have become jurisprudence, in one language or the other. One cannot do without understanding both official languages, such expertise is essential.

We must also keep in mind that in Canada both official languages are equal. There is not just one that is English and the other that is translated French. Both languages are equal. This is important to remember. The Canadian Constitution, the Official Languages Act and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms ensure this equality between the two languages. It is important to remember that.

As I mentioned, this bill has already been tabled several times. In the past, we had the support of the Liberals. We hope to have their support once again. I hope we have it again this time. This bill is the result of all the work that the NDP has already done on respect for the official languages.

Private Members' Business

•(1910)

We are also very proud of our former colleague Alexandrine Latendresse, who represented the old riding of Louis-Saint-Laurent in Quebec City. She has done excellent work on the bill on the bilingualism of officers of Parliament. The NDP worked very hard on this issue, given that there were unilingual appointments to key parliamentary positions, such as the auditor general, the chief electoral officer, and the privacy commissioner. There are 10 key positions of this type. We have worked very hard to protect the official languages and to make sure that the people appointed to these 10 positions can speak both official languages and have the required language skills. We need to avoid repeating the past mistake of appointing unilingual judges.

The current Chair once told a judge that he was presenting his arguments too quickly and that the unilingual judge could not understand him. This is what we are talking about when referring to the equality of both languages. No one would ask an English-speaking judge to speak more slowly. Why then would we ask that of a French-speaking judge? Judges have a limited amount of speaking time to make their case. A judge cannot be put at a disadvantage relative to another. Both languages need to be equal in this regard.

As I said, many stakeholders support this bill. Earlier, I mentioned a number of official languages commissioners, including Graham Fraser; the Barreau du Québec; the FCFA; the president of the Fédération des associations de juristes d'expression française du common law; Serge Rousselle, former law professor at the Université de Moncton; Michel Doucet, law professor at the Université de Moncton; Sébastien Grammond, dean of the civil law section at the University of Ottawa; Claude Provencher; and Jean-Marc Fournier, Quebec's minister for Canadian relations. I could go on. This bill has the unanimous support of official language communities.

The Liberal government recently tried to throw a wrench into the works by saying that there is already a policy, that only bilingual justices will be appointed under the current government and so there is no need for a bill, and that the Nadon reference could mean that no new judicial appointment criteria can be introduced without opening up the Constitution.

I will address all of those points. First, the Liberal government will not be around forever. We hope its time will pass. We hope it will be replaced by a government that represents not only the interests of the very wealthy, but also those of all Canadians. That government, one that may be in power soon, is an NDP government.

Second, the Nadon reference focused exclusively on the requirement for a Quebec judge. There have in fact been changes to requirements for Supreme Court appointments. For example, there never used to be a requirement for 10 years of experience as a member of a bar, but it was added, and nobody said it was unconstitutional. That means it would not be unconstitutional to add a requirement to understand both official languages without an interpreter. That is what one expert, Sébastien Grammond, told us on Tuesday. People need to understand that.

In closing, I realize that legislative and judicial bilingualism are still a challenge in Canada. However, significant strides have been made, while more remains to be done. We need strong legislation in order to ensure that only judges who understand both official languages are appointed to the Supreme Court. That is why I am asking everyone to support my bill.

•(1915)

[English]

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Madam Speaker, I congratulate my colleague and friend from Drummond for his passionate speech.

I understood him to say that the Liberals have twice supported a bill of this sort. It is, of course, long been a policy of the NDP, which he alluded to in his remarks.

I am proud that I was involved when we appointed Mr. Justice Rowe of the Newfoundland and Labrador Court of Appeal to be our first Supreme Court judge from that province. The member also said the requirement that the Liberals imposed upon him, albeit by policy, was that he be functionally bilingual, and of course they demonstrated that clearly during the appointment process.

Why could it be that the Liberals, with this policy that we support requiring functional bilingualism as a condition for appointment to the Supreme Court, might be reluctant to follow-through on the support that they have provided to similar bills in the past?

[Translation]

Mr. François Choquette: Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for that great question and for the excellent work he has been doing for several years now with the NDP. I am very pleased to work with him and to see him meeting all these challenges.

Indeed, it is ridiculous that the Liberals are even considering voting against this bill. They already have a policy that requires people appointed to the Supreme Court to understand both official languages without an interpreter. We are simply asking that that policy be enshrined in law. This is no different than what has already been done.

Also, this is not unconstitutional, as shown by legal expert Sébastien Grammond in his most recent appearance before the Standing Committee on Official Languages. He said that the only thing that was determined in the Nadon reference was the condition whereby there must be judges from Quebec. That was all. Everything else is the purview of Parliament. It is not a constitutional matter. Sébastien Grammond even said that a condition was added to require 10 years of experience as a member of the bar. No one said it was unconstitutional.

Therefore, adding to the act a condition requiring the person to understand both official languages would be well received, and a credit to Parliament.

Mr. Michel Picard (Montarville, Lib.): Madam Speaker, my colleague opposite just showed that the bill is not required because, as he said himself, there already exists a policy on the ability of judges to function in both official languages.

Private Members' Business

Aside from that, I am also wondering how he can evaluate the judges' level of bilingualism. What is his definition of the ability to function in both official languages?

Expertise is an important quality we look for in candidates, because we must safeguard the rule of law.

How does my colleague reconcile these two aspects?

• (1920)

Mr. François Choquette: Madam Speaker, the Liberals might think that they will be in power forever, but that is not true.

They can say that judges will be bilingual as long as they are in power, but one day, you will be defeated and we may perhaps have a government that—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order, please.

I would remind the member to address his comments to the chair and not directly to another member.

Mr. François Choquette: Madam Speaker, I apologize. In the heat of the moment I completely forgot this very important rule.

I would like to come back to the important points. At present, this policy is not enshrined in legislation. A policy can be followed one day and not the next because there are no consequences. However, a bill provides for regulations, its implementation, and important standards to be followed.

Everyone is asking for a bill because they are saying that a policy is not enough. We need to go further and enshrine it in law.

Mr. Marco Mendicino (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak to Bill C-203, an act to amend the Supreme Court Act (understanding the official languages).

The purpose of this bill is to ensure that Supreme Court justices are able to understand both of Canada's official languages, French and English, without the assistance of an interpreter. The bill proposes to amend the Supreme Court Act to make the capacity to understand both official languages an additional statutory requirement for eligibility for appointment to the court.

We believe in the purpose behind Bill C-203. The esteemed judges who serve on Canada's Supreme Court, a national judicial institution and the highest appellate court in the land, should be functionally bilingual, so that litigants appearing before the court are able to use the official language of their choice. It is how best to achieve that laudable purpose which we are debating today.

Our government made it clear that we would only appoint Supreme Court justices who are functionally bilingual. The Liberal Party electoral platform of 2015 regarding Supreme Court appointments reads as follows, "We will ensure that all those appointed to the Supreme Court are functionally bilingual."

This commitment is also clearly set out in the mandate letter of the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada. In that letter, the Prime Minister indicated that it was imperative that the process of appointing Supreme Court Justices be transparent, inclusive and

accountable to Canadians, and that those appointed to the Supreme Court be functionally bilingual.

What is more, our government publicly reaffirmed this position many times. I would like to emphasize that our commitment to that goal is not simply a matter of words. Our government has taken positive and concrete steps towards achieving that end. Following the Prime Minister's announcement in August 2016, this government established the independent advisory board for Supreme Court of Canada judicial appointments.

The Prime Minister gave that advisory board the mandate to make a list of three to five functionally bilingual candidates and asked it to submit the list for review in order to fill the vacancy left when Justice Cromwell retired.

[*English*]

Furthermore, enacting expeditiously upon the shortlist of potential candidates drawn up by the board, and in consultation with the Minister of Justice, the Prime Minister recommended for appointment to the court Justice Malcolm Rowe. Justice Rowe is not only a highly respected jurist, he is also, we are proud to emphasize, the first judge ever to be appointed from the province of Newfoundland and Labrador. As Justice Rowe demonstrated during his appearance before parliamentarians gathered at the law faculty of the University of Ottawa before he was sworn in, he is evidently functionally bilingual, thereby satisfying our government's selection criteria for this most important position.

This government's policy of appointing functionally bilingual judges to the Supreme Court will ensure in the future that eventually all of the nine judges on the court will be able to understand counsel pleading cases before them in the official language chosen by each party without the aid of an interpreter. To the extent that any of the current justices on the court, who were appointed before the new policy was put in place, are not yet functionally bilingual, I believe that all of the judges are personally committed to learning, achieving, and maintaining fluency in both official languages, and they have language training and resources available to assist them in that regard.

• (1925)

[*Translation*]

It is a constitutional right for everyone to use either English or French in hearings, pleadings, and any other process before federal courts established by Parliament, including the Supreme Court of Canada. The court makes every effort, as a federal judicial institution, to facilitate and encourage litigants and counsel to use either official language. Our government's policy will enhance that institutional effort and responsibility by ensuring that, over time, all of the judges of the Court are functionally bilingual.

Indeed, the government intends to consider the place of functional bilingualism in the judicial appointments process more broadly in response to the recommendations of the Commissioner of Official Languages for federally appointed superior court judges. This is something the government will undertake in consultation with the provinces and territories as well as the provincial and territorial bar associations and the courts themselves.

Private Members' Business

[English]

In other words, the composition of the Supreme Court, including the eligibility requirements for appointment, may very well be constitutionally entrenched and thus beyond the reach of legislative measures enacted by Parliament acting alone.

[Translation]

Under the circumstances, to proceed with Bill C-203 at this time, in light of the evident constitutional concerns its enactment would raise, would be, in the government's respectful view, unwise and ill-advised. If enacted, Bill C-203 would provoke needless controversy and very probably, protracted litigation.

It might also undermine the efforts this government has made, in consultation with this House and its committees, to advance the policy of functional bilingualism to which this government is committed.

I urge all members to support the government's strategic approach and to take note of its commitment to applying this policy to future appointments. The government's approach will ensure the appointment of functionally bilingual candidates to the Supreme Court.

[English]

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to rise and address Bill C-203. I understand that the government is going to be opposing the bill, which means it will likely pass, given tonight's precedent. Nonetheless, I will be speaking against the bill. I have a number of concerns about the bill that I would like to discuss, and I will go through them one by one.

First, I do not see the necessity of this legislation. Of course, it is desirable to have Supreme Court judges and public officials who can speak in both official languages, but in places like the House of Commons, the Supreme Court, and elsewhere, we do have access to translation. This ensures that whatever arguments are being made can be heard and responded to and that those who are participating in those discussions can hear as well. We have not heard complaints about things that are happening at the court, given the availability of these kinds of facilities.

It is not clear to me what problem the bill seeks to solve. Again, in this age, with the availability of the technology for that, it is not necessary to impose this additional requirement. However, as I will discuss, I think there are some definite downsides associated with the imposition of those requirements.

Right out of the gate, I do not see the argument for the necessity of the bill, in part because of the availability of translation and also because there is certainly an availability of training and intensive training. I think it would be important and valuable for those who are appointed to the court, as well as members of Parliament, to take the opportunities that are available to improve our proficiency in the language that we may not have grown up with. Many of my colleagues take advantage of the opportunities to learn French while we are here. There are many members of Parliament who may come here not knowing another language at all but after a few years are very proficient in it.

● (1930)

[Translation]

I speak a little French and I believe that I have improved my French in the year that I have been an MP. Obviously, it is not perfect, but it is good to have an opportunity to speak French in this place. It is the same for the court. There are opportunities for judges to practice and improve their language skills by putting them to use.

[English]

Given those opportunities and given the availability of translation, I do not see the necessity to introduce this additional requirement. There are some real practical problems with it.

Of course, it is no secret that the use of language varies widely, depending on where we are. There are some regions of the country which are more bilingual. There are other regions of the country where there may be languages other than French or English that we hear used quite commonly and more commonly than one of Canada's official languages. I come from the province of Alberta. There is a great deal of use of other languages other than English and French, and that is part of our history of having settlement by people from all over the world.

There might be a person who had mastered a number of languages, who had not yet mastered French but was open to learning it, who was an appropriate person to be appointed. This provision would prevent that person from being appointed as a Supreme Court judge.

If there were a vast pool of available people, and we were excluding a few of them on the basis of this requirement, that would be one thing. However, the reality is that from some regions of the country, there would not be a very large pool of people available who would also meet the other kinds of requirements that we would like to see from a Supreme Court judge.

We would really be narrowing that pool and forcing the government to make an appointment. Putting that emphasis on language would make it much more difficult to weigh out a full range of other criteria. Perhaps proficiency in both languages should be part of that criteria, but it should not be a deal breaking criteria that would prevent the appointment of the most eminent legal scholar who was also prepared to undertake the necessary studies after appointment in order to improve his or her knowledge of a different language.

I just do not think that would make sense. What, after all, are we aiming for? We are aiming for an effective justice system, the best possible judges, and certainly that to exist in an environment where discourse can occur in both languages. That can be facilitated through translation. However, this requirement really limits the ability to appoint the person any particular government may view as the best applicant, the most appropriate applicant to put in place.

Private Members' Business

There is another point I want to make around this as we consider the weighing of different criteria, which is that inadvertently the ability to create a more diverse Supreme Court may be restricted through this legislation. When we are talking about diversity, there is a range of different criteria that might be looked at. If we are looking to have a more ethnically, culturally, and regionally diverse Supreme Court, there might be a very strong applicant who had been an immigrant or who had studied what was for them the language of their parents or grandparents, or had focused their efforts on learning other languages that were perhaps more likely to be used in the region in which they find themselves.

To exclude that kind of a person from a Supreme Court appointment on the basis of this criteria actually limits the diversity of our court. It actually means that we could not have a person who had that kind of experience. That is not to say there are not people who come from the full range of possible countries to this country who do become bilingual, but it is a matter of how this bill effectively narrows the pool. It means choosing from a much smaller group of available applicants, which makes it that much more difficult to look for that kind of diversity that I think a lot of people here would like to see reflected on our court.

Again, this just speaks to different regional realities. In Vancouver, we are probably much more likely to hear Cantonese or Mandarin spoken than to hear French spoken, although of course there are French speakers there. That reality varies depending on where we are in the country. While there may be a great deal of available people who are appropriate to a point and who are bilingual, in some regions of the country, we are looking at a much smaller pool of people where French is less likely to be used.

Certainly, it is important that we encourage the use of both official languages, that we encourage people to learn both official languages, if they are able to. I think my daughter Gianna is watching, and we are already trying to teach her French, even though she is only four, and she is doing a great job, but this is not necessarily reflective of everybody's experience, that everybody has had the opportunity to learn to speak both official languages.

I congratulate the member on bringing this bill forward, but I have to be frank about these concerns that we need to think about as we proceed with this discussion. The reality, again, that we have the availability of translation, that it is certainly possible to have the discourse proceed, as it proceeds in this House, with translation, and as well the availability of training opportunities makes it easier for judges to learn French or English, whatever language they may be less proficient in after their appointment. These opportunities exist. Certainly, members of Parliament take advantage of them, and judges can take advantage of them and I am sure do, as well.

Also, the limiting of the pool of available appointees that comes with this proposal is particularly concerning. It raises significant questions in specific regions of the country where there just may not be that many people available to appoint who have the kinds of qualifications we want to see and also meet the language test that this bill would establish.

Those are some concerns I have. I look forward to following the rest of the debate.

● (1935)

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am so pleased to rise in support of Bill C-203, an act to amend the Supreme Court Act. I salute my colleague from Drummond for his tireless work in this regard, following in the footsteps of, I dare say, the famous Yvon Godin, who was passionate about this in many Parliaments in the past.

I want to talk about what the bill would and would not do. The bill does not even require technically functional bilingualism. All it requires is that a justice understands the other official language without the assistance of an interpreter.

I congratulate the Liberals sincerely for their current policy, which requires functional bilingualism as a condition. When former prime minister Kim Campbell was asked to chair the advisory board that led to the appointment of our first justice from Newfoundland and Labrador, I was pleased to see that process in action. The committee could only consider those who were functionally bilingual, and Mr. Justice Rowe demonstrated that aptitude very clearly.

This issue has long been championed by the New Democratic Party. We introduced similar bills in 2008, 2010, and 2014. This is our fourth time trying to see this legislation pass. Each iteration of the bill has aimed to promote positive measures to protect official languages through legislation.

The government representative today quite properly pointed out, with pride, that the functional bilingualism requirement was merely a matter of policy, and perhaps with unintended arrogance said that was fine so long as the Liberals were in power. Things change even in Canada. Sometimes we have other governments and therefore no longer would this be something we could point to with the pride that the Liberals obviously take in the initiative they passed in the last while. The policy is good, but it does not mean it will necessarily be in force in the future.

It was also pointed out by our colleagues opposite that the decision of the Supreme Court of Canada in the Nadon judgment was somehow an excuse, dare I say a smokescreen, for not proceeding with legislation. I point out that Professor Sébastien Grammond of the University of Ottawa has written persuasively, at least to this lawyer, that if we have requirements, as we do for number of years at the bar before eligibility for appointment, there is no reason why we cannot have requirements for language proficiency for that appointment.

We are talking about six people in Canada. Three of those judges are required by law, for understandable excellent constitutionally relevant reasons, to come from the province of Quebec where there is a civil law system. I can assume that three of those nine will speak both languages or certainly be proficient in the French language. There has never been a justice on the Supreme Court who only spoke French. The six left of the nine are all the people we are talking about.

Private Members' Business

I taught law at the University of Victoria for over 12 years, the farthest west one can get in our country. I can assure the House that students understand the reality of the country. They understand, since bilingualism and biculturalism a generation ago, that we have a commitment as Canadians to respect each other's official languages. That is why we have an Official Languages Act and a commissioner. It is high time we have our courts at the highest level reflect that reality as well.

I had many students whose first language was Punjabi or Mandarin. Some even spoke indigenous languages. They understand that in this day and age, being one of those six people drawn from predominantly English speaking provinces, that speaking the other official language is not exactly a radical step in 2017.

To their credit, the Liberals understood that with their policy of functional bilingualism. For reasons I cannot fathom, they somehow are afraid to put that commitment into law. That is all this bill would do. I could even argue that the bill does not go as far as the Liberals' current policy. Their current policy requires functional bilingualism, which to me connotes being able to speak and understand the other language. All Bill C-203 would do is require that a judge understand both official languages without the assistance of an interpreter. It seems to me a necessary first step to do this, and the Liberals' reluctance is quite frankly disturbing.

● (1940)

It has also been said that somehow this is inconsistent with the rights of indigenous people. We can certainly ensure at committee that there is no such intent or effect in the law. This law would confirm that indigenous rights that are guaranteed under section 35 of the Constitution Act of 1982 remain in full force and effect and are in no way derogated by the legislation that would be enacted should the bill proceed.

I do not believe therefore that there is a practical problem with a bill of this sort. My colleague from Drummond made reference to a number of organizations that have supported this over the years. I did not hear the Canadian Bar Association protest when the Liberals brought in a functional bilingualism requirement. It is a *fait accompli* in the 21st century that people would understand this reality of our country.

It is particularly relevant for Canadians who are members of language minority communities that they feel comfortable using the official language of their choice before our highest court of the land. Professor Grammond and Mark Power captured this conundrum in a paper they provided to the Institute of Intergovernmental Relations at Queen's University. They wrote, "Francophone litigants before the Supreme Court face a challenge that is not shared by their Anglophone counterparts: to attempt to persuade judges who do not understand the language in which arguments are presented."

It is crucial that the Supreme Court serve all Canadians, and that they believe their arguments were truly understood by the justice who heard them. It is not acceptable that they would argue that they lost a particular case on the basis that they were not truly understood. That cannot be right in a country committed to bilingualism and biculturalism, such as ours. That cannot be just. We all feel when we lose a case in the court that it must be because we were not understood. I understand that argument. However, that a number of

senior scholars and lawyers would go in print and say they are concerned about this should be of concern to all Canadians.

The time has come for us to essentially go beyond policy and do what has been sought so many times in previous parliaments, by Mr. Godin, and now by the member for Drummond. It is something that the late Jack Layton, leader of the NDP, was passionate about and made many speeches about. It is something that has been the subject of resolutions at conventions in our party, and of course in platform commitments we have made over the years.

It is time for the government to re-evaluate its position, not hide behind a smokescreen of a Supreme Court decision, and decide that it truly is committed to bilingualism at the highest level of our courts so justice can truly be done for all Canadians from coast to coast to coast.

● (1945)

[Translation]

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Madam Speaker, I humbly admit that having the opportunity to speak to such an important bill is truly an honour.

However, when we do so many times, we have to wonder if there isn't something seriously wrong with this country. I will always remember the first responsibility given me by the late Jack Layton when I was first elected, and that was official languages. I was from Quebec, and I tapped into all the energy and motivation of francophones living in minority communities across Canada to defend their rights. French is relatively well established, although we still worry it may not be secure enough. I then discovered a double standard against which I have always wanted to fight.

I will seize this opportunity to acknowledge the work of my colleague from Drummond, who will continue the fight led by Yvon Godin, the former member for Acadie—Bathurst, for 17 years in the House, if memory serves. The member for Drummond is working to ensure that this bill finally passes.

The NDP has always led this fight. I do not hesitate to call it a fight, because after so many failed attempts to appeal to common sense, we need to make it a real fight so that both official languages of this country get the respect they deserve. The NDP has introduced no fewer than three other bills before this one to include the understanding of both official languages as part of the selection criteria for judges in the Supreme Court Act.

I would like to express my own personal opinion. This proposal falls short of my personal expectations. I believe that, for a position as critical to Canadian democracy and our justice system, no less, much more than simple understanding is required. I believe that the standard should be perfect bilingualism.

Let us say, however, that if every Supreme Court judge could hear arguments with all their subtleties, that would already be a great start; three bills later, however, and still no consensus. In 2008 and 2010, the bills died on the Order Paper when an election was called. Some might say that this was fate, although we know that elections are sometimes called specifically so that certain bills will die on the Order Paper, but I am not here to judge this evening.

In 2014, however, it was the Conservatives who did not see the merits of this bill and who simply rejected it. Let us hope that this time everyone will end up seeing the light.

Bill C-203 is nothing less than a matter of respect because behind the language is the people who speak it, people across Canada who live in a minority situation, except in Quebec, as I was saying. Needless to say, requiring a judge to understand both official languages means requiring knowledge of French.

Could we find a francophone judge who does not understand English? Good luck. The question answers itself.

Just imagine anglophones having to defend themselves before a Supreme Court whose justices are for the most part unilingual francophone. Then people would understand the struggles francophones in this country face when they appear before the Supreme Court.

Some will say that there is simultaneous interpretation. That is true. We have experience with that type of interpretation in the House of Commons and in committee on almost a daily basis. In fact, allow me to take this opportunity to emphasize the quality of the services provided in the House and in the various committees.

However, we can also attest to the limits of this practice when it comes to getting across the subtleties of French or English. Sometimes we complain about a poorly translated book that does not at all reflect the subtleties of the original. We say that the translation was bad and that the book was much better in the original language. A translator translating a book has time on their side. Our interpreters work in real time.

● (1950)

It is not unusual for members of the House to use common expressions in either of the two official languages just to see how the interpreters will render their remarks. It is done in a joking way. It is nothing serious, but it allows us to see the commonalities between expressions in both official languages.

However, when it comes to the highest court in the country, I think that the time for joking is past. Although the things we talk about here are important, there is not the same sense of finality as there is with an appeal to the Supreme Court, which, it is important to remember, is the final court of appeal in Canada.

When the Supreme Court renders a unanimous decision, nine judges to zero, regardless of whether it is in favour of the appellant or not, it is clear that translation was not a problem and that everyone had the same understanding of the events in question.

However, let us now imagine that a decision is rendered with five judges to four. If five judges ruled against the defendant and he felt as though he was not heard and understood in his mother tongue, that is a major problem. French is one of the two official languages, not the second official language. Both official languages are equal.

What is more, Canada's legal system is *bijural*, which means that each law is written in both official languages, and each version has its own separate context. Laws are not written in one official language and then translated into the other. The French and English

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versions are drafted side by side, the drafter drawing on the strengths of each language.

Given that the principle of bilingualism was recognized and imposed on officers of the House of Commons, thanks to the hard work of former NDP member Alexandrine Latendresse, it seems to me, and with good reason, that the House lacks conviction and is being inconsistent by not adopting that same principle for judges in the highest court of Canada.

Let us hope that, this time, we will all speak with one voice and recognize that we have been slow to act and that it is high time this problem was solved.

I just want to say that times sure have changed. Gone are the days when we made a point of highlighting bilingualism in our résumés to stand out from the crowd. In Canada, speaking two languages is a basic skill. Most employers agree that, when they are going over résumés to find the best candidate, they know that speaking multiple languages is an asset. Employers ask candidates which languages they speak in addition to English and French. That is an asset. Being bilingual in Canada is a basic skill.

Bilingualism is now a basic tool for everyone. Being multilingual is still special, and there is a growing demand for people who speak several languages. Claims that it might be impossible to find competent bilingual judges in certain provinces and territories do not hold water. The way I see it, that claim never did hold water because bilingualism is an essential qualification for Supreme Court jobs.

How many jobs have I myself dreamed of having one day but given up on because I did not have the necessary skills or the desire to work hard to acquire those skills? Anyone who dreams of capping their law career with a seat on the Supreme Court bench has to realize that this skill is now indispensable in Canada.

In closing, I would like to once again thank the member for Drummond for keeping up the fight.

● (1955)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Resuming debate.

The hon. member for Sherbrooke has one minute to begin his speech, but he will be able to continue the next time the bill is before the House.

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to rise to speak to the bill sponsored by my colleague from Drummond, whom I know well and really like.

I know how well-intentioned he is when it comes to the initiative that he has brought before the House and that we are debating here today. I will have a chance to discuss it in more detail at a later date.

Nevertheless, I want to commend him on his extremely important bill. This initiative was previously led by our colleague, Yvon Godin, whom we have all commended, just as I wish to do now, because he did extraordinary work and passionately defended this call for bilingualism in the Supreme Court.

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I think it is time to enshrine in law the requirement that Supreme Court judges be bilingual. If we can do so for officers of Parliament, as we did in the 41st Parliament, I do not see why Supreme Court justices, the judges of the highest court in the land, should not also be required to be bilingual, and I do not see any good reason the government could possibly give to disagree.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for Sherbrooke will have nine minutes the next time the matter is before the House.

The time provided for the consideration of private members' business has now expired, and the order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the Order Paper.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

[English]

STATUS OF WOMEN

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Madam Speaker, the last time we addressed this issue, we were talking about the New Democrats' hope that the government would implement a national action plan to end violence against women. This week there was a major push by women's organizations for a national action plan to end violence against women. The same front-line women's organizations in Canada have been leading the way on gender equality.

Here are a couple of updates for the House. This week, in the *Vancouver Sun*, Janice Abbott, the CEO of Atira Women's Resource Society, a women's anti-violence organization, said:

If Canada has a role to play, globally and locally, in the protection and improvement of women's rights, it is this: We need, as noted in Amnesty International's 2017 Human Rights Agenda, for Canada to develop a "comprehensive, coordinated, well-resourced national action plan on violence against women, with specific measures to end violence against indigenous women and girls."

This week, Oxfam issued a report card, a feminist scorecard 2017, and it noted, "What is now needed is a comprehensive national action plan to end violence against women". Oxfam noted, "Much to the disappointment of women's organizations across the country, the Liberal government has not committed to developing a national action plan on violence against women".

The absence of a national action plan is making responses largely fragmented, often inaccessible, and inconsistent across our country.

The Oxfam report card went on to say that this government's decision to go with a narrower strategy is a "disappointment to women's organizations across the country. This strategy will only apply to federal institutions and therefore lacks the depth and scope of a national action plan, which would have responded to the need for women to have access to comparable levels of services and protection across the country".

This falls again on Canada's commitment to the United Nations around a national action plan to end violence against women. The United Nations called in 1995 and again in 2008. Canada signed on to that commitment to have a national action plan by the year 2015. Last year, in November, the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women turned its attention to the government's track record. The UN CEDAW said this government is failing to act on "The continued high prevalence of gender-based violence against women...particularly against indigenous women and girls;...the lack of a national action plan, bearing in mind that the strategy will only apply at the federal level;...the lack of shelters, support services and other protective measures for women victims of gender-based violence, which...prevents them from leaving their violent partners".

The year before, in 2015, a network of dozens of organizations across the country submitted a blueprint for Canada's national action plan on violence against women and girls.

The government has all the tools, all the commitments, and all the incentives, given its stated platform to take leadership, but that leadership is missing. Why will the government not adopt a national plan? Why such a narrow federal plan to end violence against women?

● (2000)

Mr. Terry Duguid (Parliamentary Secretary for Status of Women, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Nanaimo—Ladysmith for the question, and for the opportunity to discuss the federal government's approach to addressing gender-based violence.

It is fitting that we are here for this debate on International Women's Day, because across Canada this day is about celebrating the contributions that women and girls make to our country, and about saying that equality matters. One of the critical barriers we need to eliminate on the path to equality in Canada is gender-based violence in all its forms.

The Government of Canada fully understands the profound damage to a woman's life caused by gender-based violence. It is unquestionably a violation of her right to live a violence-free life, which is a basic human right. It takes a terrible toll on her family, her career, and her community.

We also know gender-based violence is often closely linked to poverty. Each can exacerbate the other. Without the right interventions and supports, gender-based violence can make it impossible for a woman and her family to leave poverty behind.

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That's why the federal government is committed to taking a number of bold actions to address all forms of gender-based violence, including violence against women and girls. The federal government established a national inquiry into missing and murdered indigenous women and girls. It will examine and report on the systemic causes behind the violence that indigenous women and girls experience, and their greater vulnerability to that violence by looking for patterns and underlying factors that explain why higher levels of violence occur.

Over the summer, the Minister of Status of Women consulted with service providers, researchers, academics, and survivors from across the country that will inform the development of a federal strategy to address gender-based violence. This strategy will also build on the important work already under way in the provinces and territories on this critical issue.

These concrete actions underscore the federal commitment to reducing and preventing all forms of gender-based violence.

On International Women's Day 2017, let us renew our commitment to equality in all aspects of Canadian life, including the right of women and girls to live lives that are not only free of violence itself, but the threat of violence. That is the only way we will build a diverse and respectful Canada that serves all of our citizens equally.

• (2005)

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: Madam Speaker, on International Women's Day, let us hear some good news from the government that will actually honour its commitment to the United Nations and implement a national action plan to end violence against women.

I still have not heard anything from the member that explains why the Liberals are not honouring their commitment. A federal strategy is very narrow. It does not get at the actions that the government committed to when it said it would do a national plan.

For months, we have been hearing heartbreaking testimony at the status of women committee about how this country is failing women.

There is disparity of access to service across the country. Some 500 women and children are turned away from shelters every night. There is no excuse for the government not living up to its United Nations commitment.

Why not a national plan?

Mr. Terry Duguid: Madam Speaker, I want to remind the hon. member that in budget 2016 there were a number of measures which underscored the federal government's commitment to reducing and preventing gender-based violence.

This included \$90 million over two years for shelters, beginning in 2016-17, for the construction and renovation of shelters, and transition houses for victims of family violence. This investment is expected to support the construction or renovation of over 3,000 shelters spaces over the next two years.

We have also allocated \$10.4 million over the next three years to support the construction of new shelters in first nations communities. Budget 2016 also provided \$33.6 million over five years, and \$8.3

million ongoing funding to better support shelters that will serve victims of family violence living in first nations communities.

[*Translation*]

POVERTY

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Madam Speaker, on November 15, I asked the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development if the Liberal majority would support Bill C-245, which I introduced in the House to develop a poverty reduction strategy. The bill responded in every respect to the mandate letter that the minister received from the Prime Minister.

The minister told me that the government was in the process of creating a poverty reduction strategy in Canada. What we did not realize is that the Liberals were going to vote against Bill C-245, shutting down what could have been a real policy to fight poverty, one that would help us avoid delays and improve quality of life for the less fortunate in our society more swiftly.

In that question, I also talked about the report from Canada's food banks. They had just tabled their report stating that one million people in Canada needed to use food banks. The Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities is currently studying poverty. The study began in September and will wrap up in June. Representatives from Canada's food banks came to committee and told us that they would like to see a poverty reduction strategy by October 2017.

With the protracted consultations, I am not sure we will meet that deadline. However, adopting Bill C-245 would have made it easier. When we say one million people in Canada, we are talking about one in eight families. That is a lot of people who often have to choose between eating or paying rent.

As part of this study on poverty, we went to Medicine Hat, in Alberta. Two directors of a food bank told us that they were working every day to ensure that one day their food bank would not be needed. We all want a society where we no longer need food banks to feed families.

We will also remember that Statistics Canada just told us that the two richest men are as wealthy as 30% of all Canadians combined. As the gap between rich and poor grows, it is high time to establish a real poverty reduction strategy.

When I go back to my riding of Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, I meet with organizations that do excellent work such as La Chaudronnée sponsored by the Centre de bénévolat d'Acton Vale, the Accueil fraternel of the Centre de bénévolat de Saint-Hyacinthe, and the Comptoir-partage La Mie or the Moisson maskoutaine, which are our food banks. I see people who are working very hard, but they alone will not be able to alleviate poverty.

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In a country as rich as ours, we cannot tolerate the fact that people suffer every day because of the government's ongoing lack of action on this file. A few months ago, this chamber had the opportunity to get down to work on attacking the problem of poverty, but the Liberals seem to have decided that this issue is not a priority. The Liberals have been in power for 17 months, but nothing has been done outside of consultations.

The days that I am in my riding, I can talk to the people of Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, and it is at these times that I can really see that the fight against poverty must be a priority and that it is high time that the government wait no longer and that it take action.

My question is simple. Will the fight against poverty become a government priority and, most importantly, when?

● (2010)

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing and Urban Affairs), Lib.): Madam Speaker, first of all, I would like to congratulate my colleague for the work she has done on Bill C-245. I know how important reducing poverty in Canada is to her. It is also important to us.

[English]

This government is committed to reducing poverty and improving the economic well-being of all Canadian families so they can have a real chance to succeed. Our government is working on its first-ever Canadian poverty reduction strategy. The strategy will provide alignment with, and add to, the initiatives this government has already launched in the last budget and the strategies that already exist at both the provincial and municipal levels, as well as within our first nations communities and governments.

As part of the Canadian poverty reduction strategy, we launched two important initiatives that will support this development. These include a national consultation process and the implementation of an advisory committee on poverty. Through the consultation process, Canadians have the chance to share their opinions and their suggestions for more effectively tackling poverty. They can do this through an online consultation, which also includes discussion forums.

We are also holding in-person round tables with businesses, community organizations, academic experts, and, most important, Canadians with a lived experience who have come through or championed themselves as they succeed despite the poverty they may have endured.

We will also collaborate with indigenous organizations to ensure that the voices of first nations, Inuit, and Métis people are heard through this process.

For the advisory committee on poverty, I invite all Canadians with experience in poverty and with poverty reduction strategies to share their views and apply online at Canada.ca to take part in the selection process. This committee will help identify the best ideas resulting from the public consultations and will also provide expertise and independent advice to the minister.

There is more. Our government has also launched the tackling poverty together project that was done earlier this year in Saint John,

New Brunswick. This is an important research project that is currently under way. It is dedicated to understanding poverty and identifying what can be done to lift Canadians out of poverty from coast to coast to coast. The results from the project, which will also involve case studies in six distinct communities across Canada, will help us better understand the impact that poverty is having and opportunities for poverty reduction programs in different communities that have identified poverty as an important issue.

Furthermore, our colleague knows that we have already announced important measures, for example, in budget 2016, that will reduce poverty among children, seniors, indigenous peoples, and all Canadians in need.

These measures are not limited to, but include the following: increasing the guaranteed income supplement with a top-up of almost \$947 annual for the lowest-income single seniors, most of whom are women; cancelling the Conservative increase in the age of eligibility for OAS, changing it from 67 back to 65, again helping hundreds of thousands of Canadians; introducing the tax-free Canada child benefit, which is better targeted to those who need it most, low- and middle-income families and, most important, poor families across this country, to prevent them from falling into poverty. We have also doubled the investment in affordable housing funding, bringing the total federal investment to over \$1 billion over the next two years, with the promise of a national housing strategy on the horizon.

Once again, I would like to congratulate my colleague for raising this important issue in this House and across this country and for the tremendous work she does and the focus she brings to the goals that she and I and our government share. She has raised awareness that reducing poverty can be done in Canada. She has put this on the table for us to debate. We will deliver on these issues because they matter to all of us as Canadians, all of us as parliamentarians.

● (2015)

[Translation]

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy: Madam Speaker, even so, I am not completely satisfied with the parliamentary secretary's answer. The measures taken by the Liberal government are woefully inadequate. We need a large-scale plan to fight poverty. By voting against the NDP's bill, Bill C-245, the Liberals deprived all those who are living in poverty of a much-needed plan.

When I asked my question, the minister answered that the government was committed to reducing poverty, but proposing consultations and studies rather than addressing the root causes of poverty is not a viable option. The means and opportunities are there. The only things that are missing now are the Liberals' will and political courage.

Will we finally have the opportunity to get to work and eliminate poverty once and for all, or will we have to once again settle for the half measures proposed by the Liberals, which, in my opinion, are just smoke and mirrors?

When will the government propose real solutions to finally get to the root of the problem?

Adjournment Proceedings

[English]

Mr. Adam Vaughan: Madam Speaker, this government shares the values and the principles expressed by the member opposite. However, when the choice comes between action and words, this government will always choose action. The investment in the child benefit, the investment in seniors, the investment in the housing sector, and the promise to negotiate and create the national housing strategy, a framework for early childhood education, as well as make sure we deliver on a whole series of issues as they relate to aboriginal, Métis, and first nations peoples, including the historic investments in those communities, combine with historic investments in making sure that we sustain a pressure against those forces that create poverty in this country. That is action.

While that constitutes a budget response to the issues raised by the member opposite, we are also in the position of putting together a national strategy right across the country, relying on evidence, lived experience, and expertise. It is studying specific communities, and is going to deliver a strategy that will put an end to poverty as best we can in the term of this government, and I hope we can do it forever for this country.

[Translation]

CANADA REVENUE AGENCY

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House this evening. I want to begin by congratulating my colleague on her appointment as Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue. I hope to have frank, honest, and unscripted discussions with her in the House, and that we will be able to exchange ideas and come up with solutions to the problems Canada has been trying to fix for some time, although they have gotten even worse lately and have been in the news, specifically, tax evasion, the use of tax havens, and aggressive tax avoidance.

Not so long ago, I asked the Minister of National Revenue a question about an extremely important file regarding the Swiss bank UBS. That bank made headlines a lot in the mid and late 2000s, and I also raised the issue with one of my colleagues.

What happened was that a whistleblower tipped off the U.S. government and other governments about a fraudulent scheme orchestrated by Swiss bank UBS and wealthy individuals including Canadians and Americans. Rich people around the world were hiding vast sums of money there to avoid paying taxes and grow their money. They were turning a profit with that money, which was invested all over the world but primarily in Switzerland. They did not declare those profits to Canadian or U.S. tax agencies.

It was similar to the KPMG scheme, which was discovered later. The U.S. meted out harsh penalties, but Canada was more lenient with the fraudsters. That is why the cases are similar if not exactly the same. The United States recovered millions of dollars in taxes from those rich American clients in addition to imposing very severe penalties on UBS totalling some \$800 million U.S.

However, when the whistleblower gave the Canada Revenue Agency a list of names of Canadians who were involved in the scandal, nothing was done. The CRA turned a blind eye to those documents and later, in 2013, it finally received 3,000 voluntary

disclosures from Canadians who decided themselves to report the amounts that they had hidden in previous years. That is how the government recovered approximately \$270 million. However, the whistleblower said that Canada could have recovered up to a billion dollars since nearly \$6 billion in assets were being held by UBS.

Why then is preferential treatment being given again, this time to UBS clients, when the Americans took the lead and cracked down on tax frauds and those who helped them, like banks and tax experts? Why is the government being so nice to fraudsters?

● (2020)

[English]

Ms. Kamal Khera (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I also look forward to working with my hon. colleague, and I would like to thank him for giving me this opportunity to address this very important subject.

Most Canadians pay their fair share of taxes, but there are some wealthy individuals who buy their way out of paying their share by using aggressive tax avoidance schemes. This is why, as members may already know, our government's action on offshore tax evasion and aggressive tax avoidance has been quite decisive since we announced an unprecedented investment of \$444 million for the Canada Revenue Agency in budget 2016.

Our government and the CRA have taken actions on several fronts to reflect a more proactive approach on tax cheats. Using intelligence gathered through a variety of tools, the CRA has developed a robust system to tackle tax fraud and aggressive tax avoidance. We are seeing the results. By increasing the number of auditors for promoters and large multinational corporations, we now have more people, tools, and technology at our disposal than ever before. This year's audit activities are on pace to raise assessments of over \$13 billion this fiscal year alone.

Even if offshore tax evasion has become more and more complex, the agency is working very hard and is getting results by implementing new tools and refining those already at our disposal. Furthermore, we continue to build on our ability to collect and share information with our international partners to crack down on tax cheats that place an unfair burden on the tax system.

As my hon. colleague is fully aware, the CRA has been tracking international electronic fund transfers of over \$10,000. So far, because of these efforts, a total of 41,000 transactions have been analyzed, equalling over \$12 billion in funds being transferred to offshore jurisdictions. The CRA plans to expand its efforts this year by reviewing over 100,000 transactions between Canada and four additional jurisdictions of concern.

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With respect to offshore-related files, the CRA is currently conducting audits on over 820 taxpayers and criminally investigating over 20 cases of tax evasion. Over the last five years, the work of the CRA's criminal investigations directorate resulted in the conviction of 42 Canadian taxpayers for tax evasion, of over \$34 million in evaded taxes and court fines of \$12 million, as well as 734 months of jail time for fraud. Over the same period, total domestic and offshore related criminal convictions have resulted in 508 convictions involving approximately \$120 million in evaded federal taxes, leading up to \$40 million in court fines, and a number of months of jail time.

Our government is increasing its efforts and seeing signs of success. Thanks to concrete actions on several fronts, the CRA is on track to identifying an additional \$2.6 billion in revenue over the next five years. I do not see that as preferential treatment for fraudsters, but rather protecting Canadian taxpayers who work very hard to pay their fair share of taxes.

This is a commitment that we made to Canadians. This is what Canadians expect us to do, and this is exactly what we will do.

● (2025)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her reply, but I did not once hear the name of the Swiss bank UBS, which I referred to in my question.

I said that, as part of its scheme in Switzerland, UBS helped rich multimillionaires hide their money from the tax man. In Canada, no one even got a slap on the wrist, whereas in the United States, UBS and the rich Americans who hid their money from the tax man were given harsh penalties.

My question was very simple. I know that my time is almost up, but I will ask the question again. In the specific case of UBS, why did we ignore the information provided by a whistleblower? The result is that only 3,000 Canadians made voluntary disclosures, and none of them were even prosecuted for their illegal activity.

[*English*]

Ms. Kamal Khara: Madam Speaker, as I have previously stated, the Canada Revenue Agency is getting concrete results by cracking down on tax cheats on many fronts, but we also understand that there is still much more to be done and additional improvements are also under way.

As the independent Offshore Compliance Advisory Committee recommended in its report earlier this winter, the CRA is currently reviewing the voluntary disclosure program. The CRA is committed to ensuring that the program continues to promote the right taxpayer behaviour. The agency is building on its successes and has developed new approaches and expanded its capacity to detect fraudulent activities.

In addition, our government continues to sign tax treaties with other jurisdictions. This will help provide information to Canada and its partners to crack down on tax cheats worldwide, fulfilling our government's commitment to crack down on tax evasion and aggressive tax avoidance in Canada and abroad.

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 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 8:28 p.m.)

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