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(HANSARD)

Wednesday, February 7, 2018

—

Speaker: The Honourable Geoff Regan

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, February 7, 2018

The House met at 2 p.m.

Prayer

• (1405)

[English]

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

[Members sang the national anthem]

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[Translation]

TRANS-PACIFIC PARTNERSHIP

Mr. Simon Marcil (Mirabel, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal Party loves to go on and on about how it is such a staunch defender of supply management, but it had no problem leaving our dairy producers out in the cold in the trade agreement with Europe. It had no problem leaving our producers high and dry with a makeshift, inadequate compensation plan.

With the new trans-Pacific partnership, the Liberals are once again turning their backs on our producers by breaking their promise not to compromise on supply management.

The Bloc Québécois strongly condemns the supply management concessions in the TPP. We also condemn the Liberals' carelessness as they rush to finalize agreements but take their sweet time compensating the people who get shortchanged.

In 2015, they said they were re-evaluating the TPP compensation plan. Now they have finished re-evaluating it and are holding consultations.

We do not need never-ending consultations to know that Quebec producers are once again being taken for a ride.

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[English]

YOUNG WOMEN IN ENERGY AWARDS

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Young Women in Energy is an organization founded to champion the interests of young women working in the energy sector.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Maude Ramsay, one of an impressive group of 2017 Young Women in Energy award winners. As senior supervisor for environment and regulatory affairs at Devon Canada, Maude leads a multidisciplinary team responsible for air, water, land, and regulatory management. She and her team pursue new and innovative approaches to monitoring and improving environmental performance at her company, including in the areas of carbon reduction, wetland restoration, and the protection of water quality.

Maude was nominated for her role as a mentor who actively seeks to develop her employees and to provide them with opportunities for growth.

Why am I making specific mention of Maude among this year's award winners? In the spirit of full disclosure, Maude is my sister-in-law, and needless to say, our family is extremely proud of her.

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TAXATION

Hon. K. Kellie Leitch (Simcoe—Grey, CPC): Mr. Speaker, childhood obesity continues to be a major health concern for Canadian kids. Report after report uses language like “epidemic” when describing the problem. Healthy eating is important, but physical activity is as well. Health Canada's own website even says so. Kids need to be active.

For many hard-working families, the cost of putting a child in sports is a challenge. In 2006, I was appointed chair of the expert panel on the children's fitness tax credit to help offset the cost of putting kids in activities. The Conservative government implemented it. After 2011, the credit became a subsidy.

Our trust fund Prime Minister, though, campaigned on a pledge to help middle-class families. As soon as he took power, he instructed his trust fund finance minister to cut the one program that was helping kids get active.

Rich Liberals may not have a problem paying these costs for their kids, but many Canadians do. Will the government bring back excellent initiatives like the children's fitness tax credit so that kids can be active and healthy?

*Statements by Members***ROYAL CANADIAN NAVY**

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in mid-December I and three other MPs were fortunate to participate in the Canadian leaders at sea program through the Department of Defence.

Upon boarding the submarine HMCS *Windsor* and sailing out of Halifax, the *Windsor* submerged in the Atlantic, and we experienced life on a submarine under the sea. Remarkable is how I would describe the crew as they avoided detection from surface vessels and helicopters and performed various other military exercises.

After surfacing and being transferred to the frigate HMCS *Toronto*, we enjoyed some of that famous navy food, defended against mock night boarders, and had to be belted into our bunks to prevent being tossed onto the floor. On the *Toronto* we participated in and observed fire drills, the prevention of boarders, mock damage, electronic and air attacks, and general surveillance.

The highlight was getting to know the men and women on board and their expertise. There is no doubt that we are in good hands with our navy. We thank them for their dedication.

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[Translation]

LAC-MÉGANTIC

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the end of the Lac-Mégantic disaster trial closes a sad, unfortunate, and painful chapter in history that Quebecers and Canadians will never forget.

Although an important page has been turned in the justice system, there is still a great deal of work to be done to ease the psychological pain of Lac-Mégantic residents. A good start would be to remove the constant source of anxiety that passes through downtown Lac-Mégantic on a daily basis.

Unfortunately, the end of this chapter also brings to light the fact that someone else should have been among those held responsible for this terrible accident: the Government of Canada. Deregulation, self-regulation, underfunding of inspection activities, general neglect, blind faith in private companies, and exemptions granted to carriers known to be negligent all contributed to this tragedy.

The government got off easy, but I hope that it has learned an important lesson from this event and will never again turn a blind eye to the dangerous and negligent practices of private companies that value profit above safety.

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● (1410)

[English]

CANADA 150 CITIZENSHIP AWARDS

Mr. Nick Whalen (St. John's East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, to conclude Canada 150 celebrations in St. John's East, I hosted a Canada 150 citizenship ceremony. Based on nominations from the towns in my riding as well as from constituents, we nominated and recognized 20 groups and citizens who have made exceptional contributions to northeast Avalon.

[Translation]

The winners had to demonstrate qualities associated with one of the major themes of Canada 150, namely diversity and inclusion, reconciliation with indigenous peoples, the environment, and youth.

[English]

Please join me again in congratulating Susan Arns, Nora Boone, Jananne Dawe, Christopher Dredge, Geoff Eaton, Dr. Brett Favaro, Dr. Andrew Furey, Dr. Joel Heath, Linda Hickey, Gerry Marshall, Marion McCarthy, Michael O'Keefe, Patrick O'Rourke, Daniel Pottle, William Parsons, Josh Smee, Bruce Tricco, Sterling Willis, Bradley, Rachel and Julianne Moss, and the medical professionals at the Refugee Health Clinic. Their achievements will be detailed in my next householder.

[Translation]

Congratulations.

* * *

[English]

BOB MORROW

Mr. David Sweet (Flamborough—Glanbrook, CPC): Mr. Speaker our nation and my city, Hamilton, Ontario, lost a statesman and a leader this week with the passing of our longest serving mayor, Mr. Robert Morrow. He was immediately hailed as a kind-hearted man, and that he most certainly was. As Hamiltonians have recounted their stories and memories, including my parliamentary colleagues, it is clear that Bob Morrow was an extraordinarily selfless person in so many ways. He was also a relentless promoter of Hamilton. That is what I want to focus on in the celebration of his life.

A strong proponent of revitalizing Hamilton's waterfront, Mayor Morrow famously plunged into the Hamilton Harbour for a swim on a media dare to prove that the water was clean enough. Never missing a single opportunity to boost Hamilton, he often travelled back from his vacation cottage in Muskoka to attend a store opening or a community event, and then he would drive back all night. As a citizenship judge in the last decade, he welcomed thousands of new Canadians to the city he loved so much.

Bob Morrow was one of the most truly honourable people I have had the privilege of knowing. Bob is and will be sorely missed by all. Rest in peace.

*Statements by Members***EAST COAST GREENWAY**

Ms. Karen Ludwig (New Brunswick Southwest, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to talk about an amazing new project in New Brunswick Southwest. The East Coast Greenway will soon come to life, creating the longest international trail in the world. This trail will travel from Key West, Florida, all the way to the Trans Canada Trail in Saint John, totalling over 4,800 kilometres of pristine trail.

New Brunswick is a province of adventure, and now hikers, cyclists, and explorers can come and see our beautiful province and help contribute to our booming tourism industry, which already employs 42,000 people and contributes \$520 million to our GDP.

New Brunswick truly has something for everyone. I would like to invite all members in the House and Canadians from coast to coast to come and experience our beautiful new trail. They never know where the trail may lead them.

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2018 WINTER OLYMPICS AND PARALYMPICS

Mr. Peter Fonseca (Mississauga East—Cooksville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with hours to go until the opening ceremony of the Olympic Games, I can assure the House and all Canadians, without hesitation, that our Canadian Olympic and Paralympic teams are ready for the upcoming games in Pyeongchang.

Our government is working with the Canadian Olympic and Paralympic Committees, the national sports organizations, and our valued partners, such as Own the Podium and the Coaching Association of Canada, to support our athletes and coaches as they push for the podium against the world's best.

Team Canada plans to build on its previous successes and to contend for the peak positions with the planet's finest athletes. I want to encourage all Canadians, the team behind the team, to make sure that our athletes feel our collective support. As a former Olympian, I can assure members that the feeling of having a whole country behind them makes a difference.

Canadian athletes do their best. We are already proud of them. Go Canada Go.

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● (1415)

BRITISH HOME CHILDREN

Mr. Guy Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC): This evening, hon. members of the House will have the opportunity to vote on my private member's Motion No. 133, which aims to establish a British home child day in Canada, to be celebrated yearly on September 28.

Until recent years, very few Canadians knew about the British home children. Their stories of hardship, courage, determination, and perseverance are not part of Canadian history books. This needs to change.

Eleanor McGrath, a constituent of mine, has released a wonderful documentary called *Forgotten*. I encourage everyone to watch it on TVO this coming February 22, at 9 p.m.

We owe a great deal to these children for their contributions to our country. So far, we have been failing them. I encourage all members to make an effort to learn more about the story of the British home children, to share that knowledge with their constituents, and to do all they can to ensure that this chapter of their collective story is never forgotten.

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[Translation]

ARMAND-FRAPPIER MUSEUM

Mrs. Eva Nassif (Vimy, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on January 22, we announced that the government was investing money in relocating the Armand-Frappier Museum, Biosciences Interpretation Centre, to the Cosmodôme site. The \$2.7 million investment will not only help the museum expand and welcome more visitors, but it will also help update the exhibits, acquire new ones, and install high-tech equipment.

I am proud that our government supports this project in Laval and that it is engaging in joint efforts to raise the profile of culture and science in our society.

I invite everyone to join me in Laval 2020, with my colleagues and museum staff, for the reopening of the Armand-Frappier Museum, Biosciences Interpretation Centre, at the Cosmodôme site.

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[English]

MONA PIPER

Mr. Robert Oliphant (Don Valley West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for 43 years, Mona Piper, Toronto's longest-serving school crossing guard, helped generations of students cross the road on their way to and from Maurice Cody Junior Public School. Mona loved the children she helped. She knew them all by name. Even after she retired last September, she would sit on her front porch at the corner of Cleveland Street and Millwood Road to wave at them as they made their way to school.

On January 31, Mona died at the age of 88. She will be remembered for her infectious smile, loving personality, words of encouragement, and quick wit.

Mona's memory and her contribution to our community will live on. Just a few blocks from where she lived, construction has begun on a new children's park. Thanks to Councillor Josh Matlow, when it opens in the spring, a new generation of children in Don Valley West will begin to play at the Mona Piper playground.

Please join me and the member for Toronto—St. Paul's in recognizing Mona's legacy, more than four decades of kindness and service to the community and the children she loved.

*Statements by Members***CANADA SUMMER JOBS PROGRAM**

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, all of us are hearing the outrage of our constituents about the Liberal summer jobs values test attestation. We have heard from many groups in Liberal-held ridings that are past recipients, groups that have received money from their Liberal MPs to feed the homeless, help refugees, and support kids, but will now be denied because of this values test.

Even municipalities are impacted. One letter I read said:

For [years] our Town has hired students under the student employee program. This year, that will not be getting the chance to receive summer students this summer based on the new policy....

Another letter reads:

I am a Pastor at a local church here in Brampton, and it is very disheartening knowing that we will not be getting the chance to receive summer students this summer based on the new policy....

I read in an article one of the liberals said "just check the stupid box". My response is that if it's just a stupid little box, then why is it there?

This values test attestation is wrong, un-Canadian, and a violation of the charter. Canadians can count on the Conservatives to oppose this values test every step of the way.

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TAIWAN EARTHQUAKE

Hon. Judy A. Sgro (Humber River—Black Creek, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, like many others, I was shocked to learn of the horrific earthquake that struck the east coast of Taiwan yesterday, leaving at least four people dead and several hundred injured. Armed forces and government agencies are responding as quickly as possible in the hopes of assisting those in need.

As a Canadian parliamentarian representing a city with a large and active Taiwanese population, and as the chair of the Canada-Taiwan Friendship Group, I, like many others, have had the opportunity to travel to Taiwan and have made many friends who call Taiwan home.

May our hopes and prayers be with them all at this terrible time and in this disaster.

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● (1420)

[*Translation*]

DORIS NOLET

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Mr. Speaker, a number of brave women are working hard every day across the country to break the glass ceiling in male-dominated fields that still, in 2018, are not welcoming to women.

Fortunately, we have determined and inspiring women like Doris Nolet, of Normétal. She is barely five feet tall, and she knew she wanted to be a firefighter back in 1986. She had to wait until 2004 to be accepted to her city's fire department.

Today, thanks to her determination and perseverance, Doris Nolet is the new fire chief of the 21 volunteer firefighters in Normétal. This is a source of pride and quite an achievement, if you consider that fewer than 3% of Canadian firefighters are women.

Volunteer firefighters are needed to keep our communities safe, and the staffing shortage could be resolved in part by bringing in female firefighters and better legislative protection for all of these volunteers.

Congratulations and thank you, Doris, for showing young girls that they can become firefighters and fire chiefs.

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[*English*]

YOUTH ACHIEVEMENTS

Mr. Alexander Nuttall (Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my honour to stand today and speak about our country's greatest resource, our youth. I, too, was young when I got into politics as a student mayor, and still a youth when I was first elected to Barrie City Council at the age of 21. People would say, "You're going to be a great leader one day." That is the biggest lie that we tell our young people.

They are leading us to be more environmentally conscious, to protect our lakes, streams, and rivers. They are leading us to ensure competition in the marketplace with apps like Lyft and Uber, which are disrupting tired, old government systems. They are shaping new technologies and creating new jobs. Their social ideals are shown by people like Zach from Barrie, who ran all the way to Ottawa, raising awareness of youth mental health. They are clean from the notions of trading ideals for access and insulated from the worst of our politics.

I would like to recognize our young people across this country, who are vehicles of change and leaders, not a year from now, not a decade from now, not a lifetime from now, but today.

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BROCK UNIVERSITY PRESIDENT

Mr. Chris Bittle (St. Catharines, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as we celebrate Black History Month, we take the time to highlight the important contributions of black Canadian leaders in our communities. I would like to take a moment to highlight a leader in Niagara, Dr. Gervan Fearon.

In St. Catharines, Brock University is a fundamental part of our community. The university recently appointed Dr. Fearon as its sixth president and vice-chancellor. He is also the university's very first black Canadian president. In fact, he became the very first black Canadian to become a university president in 2014, when he was named president and vice-chancellor of Brandon University. Dr. Fearon has distinguished himself during his career as a teacher, researcher, and public servant.

I would like to recognize Dr. Fearon for his leadership and for forging a new path, including contributing to the building of outstanding post-secondary institutions, businesses, and communities throughout Canada.

I have enjoyed my conversations with Dr. Fearon, and I am looking forward to seeing him implement his vision for Brock University, which I know will have a positive impact beyond the campus. He is a role model for all Canadians. I am proud to celebrate his contributions to St. Catharines and Canada.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

CANADIAN ARMED FORCES

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals have shamefully opened a new front in their legal battle with our veterans. This time, the Prime Minister claims that it is not up to him to provide a safe, harassment-free workplace in the Canadian Armed Forces or to develop policies to prevent sexual harassment or sexual assault.

Will the Prime Minister explain why he is so determined to keep attacking our veterans, but lets known terrorists off the hook with a \$10-million cheque?

[English]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me be very clear on this matter. Inappropriate sexual behaviour of any kind is completely unacceptable and will not be tolerated. Our government has been very clear that we are committed to a harassment-free workplace for all Canadians. We have recently tabled Bill C-65, and we have a proven track record on this matter.

Though I cannot speak to the specifics of this case, as a government we have made our approach clear on issues like these, and we will continue along this path.

• (1425)

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I can speak to the specifics of this case. The minister specifically instructed his lawyers to argue that the armed forces do not have a duty to provide women a safe place to work. That is shameful, and they have also specifically excluded the armed forces from their legislation.

Why does the Prime Minister say one thing when it is all about symbolism, but when it is about the hard work of actually implementing these things, he is missing in action?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I stated, I cannot speak to the specifics of this case, but we are committed to making sure that we have a harassment-free workplace in the Canadian Armed Forces. We encourage all members to come forward. With our new defence policy, we are investing in our people to make sure we get this job done.

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal government is arguing in court that it has no duty to provide a safe place for women to work in the armed forces. That is shameful, and it flies in the face of every phony statement the Prime Minister has ever said on this issue.

The Prime Minister cannot blame a government lawyer. The Prime Minister actually instituted a cabinet committee to oversee litigation, to put a political screen on all these types of arguments. Who sits on that committee? It is the Minister of Justice. What does the Minister of Justice think about her government's lawyers arguing this in court?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our track record on this matter has been very clear since the time we formed government. Since September 2015, 55 members have been released due to inappropriate sexual behaviour. We are

Oral Questions

committed to making sure that we have a harassment-free workplace within the Canadian Armed Forces, and Operation Honour is going to get that job done.

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Milton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, words do not lie, and doublespeak is very clear in the following case. The Minister of Defence, on his own website, pledges that the “Canadian Armed Forces is fully committed to providing a workplace free from harassment and discrimination”, yet the lawyers for the government said that it is not their job to “care to individual members within the CAF to provide a safe and harassment-free work environment”. Which is it? Do they stand with women in the forces, or do they not?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I could not be clearer on this matter. We are going to stomp this problem out. Operation Honour was created on this matter, and our defence policy is going to make sure that we create the proper environment to allow any Canadian who wants to join the Canadian Armed Forces to be able to pursue a career and develop to his or her full potential.

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Milton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the most tawdry part of all this is that the litigation committee of cabinet, which is charged with overseeing how lawyers are instructed, has five women sitting on it. Do any of those five female Liberal ministers want to stand up and let us know exactly why they think it is okay that they have protection in the workplace and yet women in the forces do not? Will they pull this brief?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have zero tolerance for any type of sexual misbehaviour

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. Yes, it is Wednesday, but the rules still apply. Members are familiar with the Standing Orders and the rule against interrupting.

The hon. Minister of National Defence has the floor.

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Speaker, let me be extremely clear. We have absolute zero tolerance for any type of behaviour like this, and that is exactly what we are going to do. We have committed to this in our defence policy, and we are going to get the job done.

* * *

[Translation]

TAXATION

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the European Commissioner for Economic and Financial Affairs, Pierre Moscovici, wants web giants to pay their fair share of taxes in Europe. It seems logical to have companies pay their fair share of taxes, but the Canadian government is taking a step backward. It is going in the opposite direction and allowing web giants to forgo paying their fair share of taxes.

While companies here are charging sales tax on every transaction, why is the government showing favouritism to web giants such as Amazon, Netflix, and Facebook?

Oral Questions

● (1430)

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister was very clear on this. We made a promise and we plan to keep it. That being said, we recognize that in the long term we need to develop a comprehensive solution for taxing digital platforms. We are not going to take a piecemeal approach.

[English]

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today the Prime Minister is travelling to Silicon Valley to visit Amazon. Will he be asking it to impose taxes on the products it sells in Canada, as it should, or will he be negotiating a cozy deal?

What we are asking for is simple fairness. When a company is exempt from collecting taxes on its sales, it is being given an unfair 8% to 15% advantage. If we do not ensure the same rules apply for everyone, then we are playing favourites.

Why does the government have one set of tax rules for web giants and another one for everybody else?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has been clear. We have made a commitment and we will keep it.

That being said, we recognize that in the long term we must look at finding a global solution to addressing the entire question of taxation over the digital platform. We will not have a piecemeal approach.

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CANADIAN ARMED FORCES

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau (Berthier—Maskinongé, NDP): Mr. Speaker, victims of sexual assault and harassment in the Canadian Armed Forces launched a class action lawsuit in May.

On January 29, in response to my question on sexual violence and harassment, the Prime Minister said, “This is a problem that has gone on for far too long, and it is time we dealt with it, particularly here in Parliament, where we set an example for the rest of the country.”

However, by attempting to quash the lawsuit, the example the Prime Minister is setting is completely irresponsible and reprehensible.

Will the Prime Minister withdraw the government's attempts to discredit these victims?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member opposite for her passion on this issue.

As I stated, we want to be able to work with the opposition on this issue, because this is an important issue that impacts all of us. We need to make sure that we have a harassment-free workplace, especially in the Canadian Armed Forces, and with our new defence policy and with Operation Honour we are going to get the job done.

[Translation]

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau (Berthier—Maskinongé, NDP): Mr. Speaker, whether here on Parliament Hill or in the forces, the days of sexual harassment, bullying, and inappropriate behaviour are done.

The women and men who have served our country want to know what their government plans to do to change the culture within the Canadian military. These women and men expect more than just a discussion with the minister. They want meaningful action today.

What is the government's plan?

[English]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as part of Operation Honour we are going to get the job done. Every person who willingly serves our country despite the many dangers and sacrifices of military service deserves a professional environment in which he or she is treated with respect and dignity. That is the type of path that we are going to go on and we are going to get the job done.

* * *

[Translation]

ETHICS

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I am sure everyone knows by now, the Prime Minister was found guilty of violating the Conflict of Interest Act not once but four times. He accepted a free trip to the private island of a billionaire who solicits money from the Canadian government. He went with his family, his friend the Minister of Veterans Affairs, and the president of the Liberal Party. The trip cost Canadian taxpayers \$200,000.

I wonder if the government House leader is able to turn around and convince the Prime Minister to do the right thing, if he has the slightest bit of honour, and pay back the money he took from Canadians.

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the security agencies make determinations on what is needed to protect the Prime Minister, as they have done for previous prime ministers. We follow their recommendations. The former commissioner has acknowledged that these costs were incurred as part of the Prime Minister's duties. The Prime Minister will continue to work with the commissioner to clear future family vacation plans.

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is always the same old story.

When Liberal ministers had illegal expenses, they had to pay them back. When some of the Prime Minister's staff had illegal expenses, they had to pay them back. When Canadians do not pay their taxes, public servants go get the money with interest. When Canadians want to take a vacation, they pay for it themselves.

The question that everyone is asking is the following: is there one law for the Prime Minister and another law for the other members of the House, regardless of political affiliation, and the rest of Canadians?

Oral Questions

●(1435)

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have said many times, it was the former commissioner who decided that these expenses were incurred as part of the Prime Minister's duties. It was the opposition that asked for an investigation. Now that the report has been tabled, it refuses to accept the findings.

We on this side of the House respect the work of the commissioner and will accept the findings. The Prime Minister already accepted responsibility.

[*English*]

Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal House leader answering for the Prime Minister says that he accepted the Ethics Commissioner's recommendations. The Ethics Commissioner made no recommendations. The Ethics Commissioner found that the Prime Minister broke the law.

The health minister paid back her inappropriate travel expenses, because the Prime Minister made her pay them back. Now with a clear finding that he broke the law, why will he not just pay it back?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I just said in French, I shall repeat in English. The former commissioner has acknowledged that these costs are incurred as part of the role of the Prime Minister. It was the Conservatives who demanded that an investigation take place. Now that the investigation has taken place and the ex-commissioner has submitted her report, they refuse to accept its conclusions.

We on this side respect the work of officers of Parliament. We thank the ex-commissioner for her important work. The Prime Minister has accepted responsibility. The Prime Minister has accepted its findings. There were recommendations that were put in place, which is exactly why the Prime Minister put a screen in place. It is exactly why he will ensure that future family vacations are cleared ahead of time.

Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a big part of the \$200,000 wasted on the Prime Minister's illegal trip was generated by the security detail that must accompany him wherever he chooses to go. Canadians accept that for working trips to the UN, the G7, or perhaps even the Davos celebrity fest. However, after the Prime Minister dragged his security detail along on his illegal vacation, and it had no choice but to accompany, the Prime Minister owns those wasted dollars. Therefore, why will he not do the right thing and pay it back?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there are security agencies that are tasked with the responsibility to provide their expertise to ensure that the safety of the Prime Minister is ensured. Whenever and wherever the Prime Minister travels, there are costs related to security. We always accept the advice of our security agencies as to how to best ensure the safety of the Prime Minister, as was the case for past prime ministers.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the former ethics commissioner released her report over a month ago.

Since then, the Prime Minister has repeatedly said that he takes full responsibility and accepts the recommendations, but he has shown no leadership on this front. As head of state, he should lead by example, be proactive, and stop lowering the bar.

The commissioner cannot force him to pay back the taxpayer dollars he spent on an illegal vacation, but nothing is stopping the Prime Minister from reimbursing the public for his extravagant spending. Why won't he do that?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, immediately after the report was released, the Prime Minister took responsibility and accepted the commissioner's findings, as any prime minister should do.

The leader of our party, the Prime Minister, accepted responsibility and accepted the findings. The difference between the Conservatives and the government is that Conservatives have never accepted the work of senior public servants. We on this side of the House respect and appreciate the work they do.

[*English*]

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister was found guilty of improperly arranging his personal affairs, found guilty of accepting illegal gifts, found guilty of accepting a ride on a private aircraft, and found guilty of conducting illegal discussions about government business. However, the Prime Minister did not just take an illegal trip, he sent taxpayers a \$200,000 bill for it.

When other Liberals have been found ripping off taxpayers, they have been forced to pay the money back. Why is the Prime Minister held to a lower standard? Why does he not do the right thing and pay it back?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have said, immediately after the report was released, the Prime Minister accepted responsibility and accepted the findings of the report. The member opposite needs to be corrected. Even within the report, and I encourage the member to read the report in its entirety, she recognized that he did not contravene subsection 6(1) because he did not participate in or make any decisions relating to the Aga Khan and his institutions. As well, he did not contravene section 7 because he did not give preferential treatment to the Aga Khan.

I encourage the member opposite to have respect for this institution and to do the important work we are here to do. We, on this side, will always respect officers of Parliament.

Oral Questions

●(1440)

MARIJUANA

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we are five months away from the Prime Minister's promised July 1 deadline for cannabis legalization, but now the Liberal government is backing away from that date, causing confusion and concern. Meanwhile, thousands of mostly marginalized Canadians are getting slapped with criminal records for offences that are about to be legal, and the government is not saying if, when, or whether they will provide them with amnesty.

Why is this government hypocritically prosecuting Canadians? Why will it not commit to a fair pardon process, and when will cannabis be legal in Canada?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is a huge change in Canadian law and it must be approached in a sensible, orderly, practical way. Until Parliament has passed the legislation and enacted a new regime, the old regime remains in effect and that law must be respected.

In the meantime, I think all Canadians understand the government's objectives to do a better job of keeping cannabis out of the hands of our kids, a better job of keeping illegal cash out of the hands of organized crime, and to increase safety on our roads. That is what Bill C-45 and Bill C-46 will accomplish.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, that means the authorities will keep saddling people with criminal records.

The media are reporting that, in the run-up to marijuana legalization, U.S. authorities are concerned about slowdowns at the border. With thousands of people still burdened by criminal records for simple marijuana possession, the government is offering no guarantees that there will not be problems at the border after legalization, even if people are pardoned.

Can the government reassure those thousands of people that everything will be fine when they try to cross the border in the future?

[English]

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have had ongoing discussions with American officials, including the new ambassador of the United States to Canada and the new Department of Homeland Security secretary.

Our various agencies are discussing what is necessary to ensure that there is a smooth flow at the border in terms of people crossing in the ordinary way, remembering always that the export or the import of cannabis has always been illegal and will remain illegal. Canadians need to know what the American requirements are, and we will make sure that Canadians understand very clearly what the law is.

[Translation]

ETHICS

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, while the Prime Minister continues to downplay the scandal related to his breaking the law and violating the ethics rules of the House, we continue to believe that no one is exempt, including our princely current Prime Minister.

I would like him to admit that he deliberately tried to exempt himself from a federal law, and that he abused the system and the trust of Canadians by making taxpayers pay for his family vacation.

Can the Prime Minister tell us whether he will pay back the cost of his family vacation, which was paid for by Canadian taxpayers?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as has been the case for past prime ministers and is the case for the current Prime Minister, whenever and wherever the Prime Minister travels, there are costs associated with security.

The former commissioner has acknowledged that these costs were incurred as part of the Prime Minister's duties.

[English]

Ms. Rachael Harder (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we accept the findings of the Ethics Commissioner's report. The commissioner found that by accepting a gift from someone who has business dealings with the government, the Prime Minister broke the law. When the Minister of Health incurred questionable travel expenses, the Prime Minister forced her to pay it back. When the Prime Minister spends \$200,000, however, for an illegal vacation, he excuses himself.

Why will he not do the right thing and pay it back?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have said, immediately after the report was released, the Prime Minister did the right thing by accepting responsibility and accepting its findings. The Prime Minister has been present in the House and has answered over 1,400 questions. Immediately after the report was released, the Prime Minister made himself available to the media to ensure that he did answer questions, and to ensure that Canadians had the answers that they deserved.

The Prime Minister went one step further and travelled the country at open, available, and public town halls to answer questions directly from Canadians. Canadians are concerned about the economy. Canadians are concerned about many other issues. The Conservatives refuse to focus on the economy because they know our plan is working.

Oral Questions

● (1445)

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there have been a number of Liberals who have repaid inappropriate expenses, which was the right thing to do, and yet we have the first Prime Minister in the history of our nation found guilty on four counts of ethics violations, refusing to pay back taxpayers. The same Prime Minister is so afraid to talk about his law-breaking that he hides behind his talking points on the middle class. Let us talk about that.

When was the last time a middle-class Canadian family spent over \$200,000 on a family vacation? It begs this question. Why the double standard?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have said, immediately after the report was released, the Prime Minister accepted responsibility and accepted the findings of the report.

The member is correct. This government will continue to focus on Canadians. While the Conservatives choose to focus on the Prime Minister and this government, the Prime Minister and this government will continue to focus on Canadians, to focus on the very real challenges that they face.

You will notice, Mr. Speaker, that our plan is working. Canadians have created 422,000 jobs, jobs for Canadians by Canadians, because of the strategic investments that this government is making in Canadians. Once again I repeat, this government and the Prime Minister will continue focusing on Canadians.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): I do agree with one thing with the government House leader, Mr. Speaker. The Liberals are focused on ripping off Canadians and they are focused on living a champagne and caviar lifestyle off the backs of hard-working taxpayers.

The Prime Minister knew his actions were illegal and he tried to hide it. The rules do not apply to him: taxpayer-funded nannies, tax changes that do not affect him, millions to terrorists, mandate letters not worth the paper they are written on. It is Liberal hypocrisy on steroids.

Will the Prime Minister do the right thing and repay taxpayers, yes or no?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have said on numerous occasions, immediately after the report was released, the Prime Minister accepted responsibility and accepted its findings. The former commissioner has acknowledged that there are costs that are incurred as part of the role of the Prime Minister. When it comes to our security agencies, we take their recommendations, we take their advice, and we will continue to do so.

This government will continue to focus on Canadians to ensure the economy is working for Canadians. We will make sure that the immigration rules are working to reunite families. This government will continue to focus on veterans to ensure they have the services they deserve. This government will continue to focus on Canadians.

[Translation]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, more than 20 civil society groups in Canada have raised serious concerns about military agreements with the Philippines.

Yesterday, we learned that Canada sold combat helicopters for hundreds of millions of dollars to the Duterte regime, which has a terrible human rights record.

How can the Liberal government justify selling these helicopters to the Philippine army when it knows that this regime could use them against civilians?

What about our principles?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have received no application for an export permit related to this contract.

The Prime Minister and I have been very clear about the Duterte regime's human rights violations and extrajudicial killings, including during our visit to the Philippines.

I will conduct an extremely rigorous human rights analysis of any potential export permit application related to this contract.

[English]

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, one of the cruel ironies of this helicopter deal is that Philippine President Duterte, who is unquestionably presiding over one of the world's worst human rights situations, once admitted to throwing a man out of a helicopter and said that he would do it again. This is a country where extrajudicial executions continue to be condoned by the president.

It is absolutely clear that this deal would never be approved under the human rights standards required by the Arms Trade Treaty. Will the minister stand in the House now and indicate clearly that there is no way that the export of these helicopters to the Philippines will be approved?

● (1450)

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have received no application for an export permit related to this contract. The Prime Minister and I have been very clear about the Duterte regime's human rights violations and extrajudicial killings, including while in the Philippines.

I will conduct an extremely rigorous human rights analysis of any potential export permit application related to this contract. I have the power to deny a permit if I feel it poses a risk to human rights, and I am prepared to do so.

*Oral Questions***FAMILIES, CHILDREN AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT**

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today the ministry of families, children and social development welcomed the Yukon Minister of Health and Social Services Pauline Frost and the other Yukon government representatives to Ottawa to sign our government's seventh agreement on early learning and child care.

Thanks to this agreement, Yukon will receive more than \$7 million over the next three years to ensure that Yukon children can receive the best possible start in life.

Could the minister please tell the House how this money will be spent?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would first like to thank and congratulate our dear colleague from Yukon for his hard work on behalf of Yukon families and children.

I was pleased and proud to sign, with the Government of Yukon, an agreement that will increase, by more than 30%, its investment in early learning and child care to the benefit of educators, parents, including, of course, mothers and children. This is part of a 10-year long-term plan to increase the accessibility, the quality and affordability of early learning and child care for all Canadian families and children.

* * *

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the legion condemned the comments made by the Prime Minister in regard to veterans. It said, "These sorts of words are extremely insensitive to Canada's Veterans...". We agree.

Veterans know that the Prime Minister broke his promise to them, and to add insult to injury he has made dismissive comments, claiming that they are asking for too much. They are only asking for what he promised.

When will the Prime Minister apologize to our veterans for his extremely insensitive comments?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Seamus O'Regan (Minister of Veterans Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are committed to the well-being of veterans and their families. We have kept our promise.

The new lifetime pension option is a monthly non-taxable benefit for life that recognizes pain and suffering and provides income replacement up to 90% of a soldier's pre-release salary indexed annually for life for those who need it.

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister says that our veterans, my former colleagues, and the defence minister's colleagues are asking for too much, but he came to an understanding with a known terrorist and quickly cut him a cheque for \$10 million.

During the election campaign, the Prime Minister promised that he would not drag our veterans to court. The election is over and the promises have evaporated.

Can the Prime Minister explain why he is so out of touch with the military and especially with injured and disabled veterans?

[*English*]

Hon. Seamus O'Regan (Minister of Veterans Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am always glad to have the opportunity to speak to the government's record on veterans and to compare it to those on the other side.

Let me take our new pension for life proposal and talk about a 30-year-old veteran, with 12 years of service, with osteoarthritis of his spine and multiple joints, and hearing loss, who is 60% disabled. He or she would receive over \$4,600 a month across his or her lifetime in pain and suffering compensation, and income replacement; \$1,000 a month in caregiver support; and \$80,000 for post-secondary education. That is very real.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Veterans Affairs likes to show up and say that this money and that money is being spent, and that the Conservatives did nothing. The Conservatives did one thing. They avoided making promises they could not keep. When we say something, we follow through.

The Canadian Legion even said that the Prime Minister's remarks were completely unacceptable. The Prime Minister has a total lack of respect for veterans. He is keeping them in court.

I want to know why veterans have to fight to get their money. After all, ISIS terrorists are getting money without having to work.

[*English*]

Hon. Seamus O'Regan (Minister of Veterans Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a corporal who served five years in the regular forces and suffered 100% disability is entitled to nearly \$6,000 a month in benefits; an additional \$1,000 a month for caregiver support; nearly \$72,000 through the critical injury benefit; an additional financial assistance to modify her vehicle and her home to meet her needs.

Our pension for life option is very real, and it is the least we owe our veterans.

● (1455)

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, since we are not getting any answers, my question will now be for the Minister of National Defence, the parliamentary secretary for U.S. relations or the parliamentary secretary for transport.

These veterans stood behind the Prime Minister when he promised two things: a return to lifetime pensions for all our injured; and to never force veterans back to court. How can the Liberals stay silent when those veterans now have to go to the Supreme Court of Canada and when he broke his promise on lifetime pensions?

Oral Questions

Hon. Seamus O'Regan (Minister of Veterans Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would ask the hon. member this. Maybe he could ask the member for Barrie—Innisfil why he said the Conservatives lost the trust of veterans. Was it the nine offices they closed? Was it all the front-line staff they fired? Was it all the balancing of budgets on the backs of our veterans? Was it one of those or was it all of the above and more?

* * *

[Translation]

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Mr. Speaker, seasonal workers in Quebec and Acadia will not have any income as of this week, as a result of the EI gap. Although unions and organizations have made unanimous appeals, the Liberals refuse to take action and are leaving these families without any income.

When will the government create a pilot project or find any other solution to extend benefits and give these seasonal workers a bit of stability?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for giving me an opportunity to remind members in the House that we are very aware of how our EI system supports families and workers in their difficult transition from work to unemployment. We also realize that we need to do better, even though the Canadian government has done a lot in the past two years to make EI benefits more flexible and generous, in an environment of significant economic growth. There is still work to be done. Fortunately, we can count on our partners in the provinces and the unions to do even better.

[English]

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Mr. Speaker, those are hollow words for workers in the Atlantic and other parts of the country. The reality is that they are being cut off EI. At the same time, the Liberal government is creating a \$2 billion hole in the program.

When will the government stand up for seasonal workers? When will it create a pilot project to extend the benefit period? When will the government stop taking Atlantic Canadians and so many others for granted?

[Translation]

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government was elected to grow the economy, grow the middle class, and respond to the challenges that all Canadians are facing, since everyone wants to benefit from the extraordinary economic growth we are experiencing right now. We are fully aware of that. We are listening carefully to the concerns of people living in eastern Canada, particularly in the regions where the seasonal industry plays an important role. We are working closely with stakeholders. We look forward to continuing to do all the work that we have been doing over the past two years to improve the flexibility and generosity of the employment insurance system.

[English]

FOREIGN INVESTMENT

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Bangladesh has just banned one of China's state-owned enterprises due to corruption and bribery. It happens to be the same organization as the one proposing to buy the big Canadian construction giant Aecon.

Bangladesh is ranked as the 31st most corrupt place to do business according to Transparency International. If the Government of Bangladesh says that this China state-owned corporation is too corrupt to do business with, then why will the Prime Minister not commit to a national security review and to extending the review period so Canadians can have their say?

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, under the Investment Canada Act, for which I am responsible, there is a robust and rigorous process to look at all these issues raised by the member opposite. We listen to our national security agencies. We follow their advice. In the past we never have and we never will compromise on national security. We will always make sure that any decisions we make will be in the best interests of all Canadians.

● (1500)

Hon. Tony Clement (Parry Sound—Muskoka, CPC): That was a non-answer, Mr. Speaker. Let us try again.

The Chinese company poised to take over Canadian construction giant Aecon is rampant with corruption and has just been blacklisted by Bangladesh for that very reason. We know Aecon has been awarded numerous sensitive Canadian government contracts, including working with our military and in the nuclear sector.

When Bangladesh is sounding alarm bells, why is Canada staying silent and not calling for a full national security review of the takeover of Aecon?

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite knows full well that under the Investment Canada Act, all such transactions are subject to a national security review. This is a multi-step process that we always follow. We take the advice of our national security agencies very seriously. We follow that advice. We have been very clear that when it comes to national security, we will never compromise on that. We will do our due diligence. We will follow the process, and we will make sure that the outcome will benefit all Canadians.

Oral Questions

Mr. Glen Motz (Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the list of reasons to stop the communist China takeover of Aecon continues to grow. The state-controlled company has been connected to bribery, corruption, and collusion in many countries, and last month it was banned from Bangladesh. China continues to launch cyber-attacks against Canada, is a human rights violator, and now poses a threat to the security of our Internet banking and communications systems, to name a few.

Will the minister finally confirm that this proposed takeover will be subject to a vigorous national security review?

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House we have been absolutely clear that we will follow the multi-step process when it comes to national security reviews. We always have done that, and will continue to do that.

What I find problematic is that members opposite have no faith or confidence in our national security agencies. We do. We will follow their advice. We have followed their advice, and will continue to follow their advice.

* * *

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Robert-Falcon Ouellette (Winnipeg Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is our responsibility as members of Parliament to stand up for the most vulnerable members of society. There are few people more vulnerable than victims of child sexual exploitation online. Over 6,000 incidents were reported in Canada in 2016, and there are many more that go unreported. Each of these incidents is a child who deserves security and a chance to be a kid.

The people of Winnipeg Centre would be interested to know what the government is doing now to step up the fight and protect Canadian children.

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the sexual exploitation of children is an intolerable crime. This morning, I announced an additional \$4.1 million for the Canadian Centre for Child Protection in Winnipeg. The funding will be used to operate a cyber tip line, support victims, and enhance the arachnid program, which is cutting-edge Canadian software that helps remove exploitive content. We must keep doing everything possible to protect our children, bring perpetrators to justice, and stop these horrendous crimes.

* * *

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Trans Mountain was federally approved in 2016 because it is in the national interest, but every day and every delay puts it at risk, just like the other multi-billion dollar opportunities lost on the Liberals' watch. The interprovincial conflict is escalating, but the Liberals are MIA. They are failing to act on their own approval and failing to act in the best interests of all of Canada. The B.C. NDP is trying to kill the pipeline, just like the NDP promised it would. The Liberals cannot let them keep stalling.

What does the minister consider to be an unusual or unnecessary delay, and exactly what action will he take to ensure this vital infrastructure gets built?

Ms. Kim Rudd (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the decision we took on the Trans Mountain expansion project was based on facts and evidence and what is in the national interest.

We look forward to working with every province and territory to ensure a strong future for Canadians, but the facts and evidence do not change. This project will diversify our markets, be built with improved environmental safety, and ensure a strong future for all Canadians. Our government made the right decision when we approved the federally regulated project, and we stand by that decision. The pipeline falls under federal jurisdiction. This pipeline will be built.

* * *

PENSIONS

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we have seen too many times the Liberal government's indifference to the pensions of private sector workers like those at Sears, but right under its nose, at Canadian Nuclear Laboratories, there are thousands of workers from Chalk River, Ontario, to Pinawa, Manitoba, who are going to be kicked out of the public service pension plan in September because of the federal government's privatization agenda.

The government has known about this issue for a long time now. Will the President of the Treasury Board stand up today and let these workers know what is going to happen to their pension in September?

• (1505)

Hon. Scott Brison (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have immense respect for our public service. In fact, we have an understanding of the importance of strong well-funded pension plans, which is why our finance minister has worked with provincial and territorial governments to strengthen the CPP across Canada. The question the hon. member has asked is one that the Minister of Natural Resources has engaged in. We will work with all stakeholders, and we will ensure that all public servants are treated fairly.

* * *

[Translation]

CANADA REVENUE AGENCY

Mr. René Arseneault (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when it comes time to file their income taxes, many people face particular challenges, especially if they live far from big cities in remote communities, have reduced mobility, or have little or no Internet access.

Can the Minister of National Revenue tell us what measures she is implementing to help Canadians file their income tax returns?

Points of Order

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my esteemed Acadian colleague from Madawaska—Restigouche for his question and for the work that he does in our regions.

Improving the CRA's service is a key part of my mandate. That is why, this year, we are making things easier for people who use paper returns by sending them all the forms they need directly by mail. What is more, we are launching a service called "file my return", which will allow eligible Canadians to file their tax returns by answering a few simple questions via an automated telephone service.

I encourage all Canadians to file their tax returns if they want to get the credits they are entitled to.

* * *

[English]

CANADIAN COAST GUARD

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it has been 27 days since the ferry border crossing in my riding was crushed by ice from Coast Guard traffic and closed. The ferry serves as a much needed economic link between Canada and the U.S. Now businesses on both sides of the border are threatened with closure and constituents in my riding are extremely concerned.

When will the Prime Minister take action and get this border crossing open?

Mr. Terry Beech (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the women and men of the Canadian Coast Guard work hard every day to provide icebreaking services that keep our waters safe and the economy strong. My heart goes out to everyone that has been negatively affected, or will be negatively affected, by damage to the Sombra wharf.

I have agreed with the member opposite to meet with the mayor of the local community in the near future. I know that other federal departments have been working to see if there is any way we can help. Unfortunately, the shipping lane that the Canadian icebreaker was on was nowhere near the ferry dock and no link can be found between the damage to the ferry dock and the transit of the Canadian Coast Guard vessel.

* * *

NORTHERN AFFAIRS

Hon. Hunter Tootoo (Nunavut, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, *qujanna-miik*.

My question is for the Prime Minister. Round table meetings are currently taking place to discuss Canada's new Arctic policy framework. I believe that this new policy will have a huge effect on the Government of Nunavut and will influence our capabilities for years to come. It is for this reason that the Government of Nunavut must be considered a true partner. Unilateral decisions like last year's moratorium on Arctic oil and gas are not acceptable and cannot be how Arctic policy unfolds.

Will the Prime Minister ensure that the Government of Nunavut is at the forefront of any policy decisions?

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is co-developing the Arctic policy framework in partnership with the territorial, provincial, and indigenous partners. The engagement process has already highlighted the strong Arctic peoples and communities that must be at the core of the framework. Previous governments imposed their priorities, but this framework will be created by northerners for the north. Together we will develop a shared vision for a strong, prosperous, and sustainable Arctic.

ROYAL ASSENT

[English]

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

Rideau Hall
Ottawa

February 7, 2018

Mr. Speaker:

I have the honour to inform you that Ms. Assunta Di Lorenzo, Secretary to the Governor General, in her capacity as Deputy of the Governor General, signified royal assent by written declaration to the bill listed in the Schedule to this letter on the 7th day of February 2018, at 11:00 a.m.

Yours sincerely,

Christine MacIntyre
Executive Director, Events, Household and Visitor Services

The schedule indicates the bill assented to was Bill C-210, An Act to amend the National Anthem Act (gender).

* * *

● (1510)

[Translation]

POINTS OF ORDER

ORAL QUESTIONS

Mr. Simon Marcil (Mirabel, BQ): Mr. Speaker, during yesterday's question period, I used unparliamentary language and hurt people's feelings. Since I am not the kind of person who wants to hurt people's feelings, I withdraw my remarks.

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for his apology.

* * *

TRANS-PACIFIC PARTNERSHIP

Mr. Simon Marcil (Mirabel, BQ): Mr. Speaker, now that that is taken care of, I seek the unanimous consent of the House for the following motion:

That this House calls on the government to ensure that there is no breach in supply management as part of the new Trans-Pacific Partnership.

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?

Routine Proceedings

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

The Speaker: Order. I believe the hon. member for Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix has a point of order.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons to withdraw her remarks about members on this side of the House not respecting the House. That is not true. All members here respect the House, and we respect everyone.

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix for her comments. Is her question related to the Standing Orders or the debate? I do not see the hon. Leader of the Government in the House of Commons rising to respond.

[*English*]

Mr. Mark Strahl: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

In response to my question, the government House leader indicated that I had my facts wrong about the report that bears the Prime Minister's name. I did want to say that yes, while he was accused of breaking the law in seven places, he was found guilty of breaking it in four.

The Speaker: That sounds more like a question for debate, but I do thank the hon. member.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1515)

[*English*]

INDIGENOUS AND NORTHERN AFFAIRS

Ms. Yvonne Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 32(2), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, copies of the 2012-13 annual report of the Nunavut Implementation Panel. I request that this report be referred to the Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs.

* * *

PETITIONS

HEALTH

Ms. Rachael Harder (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to table in the House a petition on behalf of 600 women, who are calling on the Minister of Health to provide better information and resources to prevent pelvic floor dysfunction in all stages of a woman's life.

Eighty-three per cent of women are unaware of their pelvic floor muscles and the role these important muscles play in both pregnancy and in delivery. One in three women will have issues in their lifetime. I have received emails from women who live coast to coast and who are speaking out with regard to these issues. They are asking the government to play a role.

A 28-year-old woman from Saskatchewan shared her story of intense discomfort during pregnancy because of the separation of her abdomen. She required a week of pelvic muscle exercises before she was even able to lift her leg without pain.

Another woman shared her story about an—

The Speaker: Order. I hate to interrupt because it is an interesting subject, but this is not debate. We ask members to simply present the petition and to do so in a concise fashion.

Ms. Rachael Harder: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate that reminder.

Another woman shared her story about an undiagnosed pelvic disorder and the long-term health consequences it had on her.

We can and we should do more in order to educate women and health professionals about pelvic floor dysfunction. By tabling this petition in the House today, I am standing with women from across this country who are requesting that more be done.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise to present a petition in the House today from constituents in Saanich—Gulf Islands calling on the Government of Canada to protect Saanich Inlet immediately by listing it as a designated zone for zero sewage discharge.

I appreciate the moment to present this petition again.

ANIMAL WELFARE

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith (Beaches—East York, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have four petitions to present today that are all related to improving the humane treatment of animals in Canada.

The first two petitions are signed by over 40,000 Canadians calling on our government to improve the Criminal Code's animal cruelty section. Ninety-two percent of Canadians are in support.

As some in the House will remember, I introduced a bill, which was defeated. However, the minister did state that all Canadians care about this issue, and 40,000 Canadians are calling on our government to institute and implement immediately a review of the Criminal Code.

• (1520)

VEGETARIANISM

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith (Beaches—East York, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the third petition was signed by more than 3,000 Canadians.

The petitioners call on the Government of Canada to require public canteens under federal jurisdiction to provide a strict vegetarian or vegan option and to raise this issue and work with all provincial and territorial counterparts. This occurred in Portugal. Dieticians around the world know that this is the healthiest of options.

ANIMAL WELFARE

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith (Beaches—East York, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the fourth petition is signed by more than 7,000 Canadians.

Government Orders

The petitioners are calling on the government to require slaughterhouses and other industrial agribusinesses that raise, transport, or slaughter large numbers of animals to install video surveillance equipment with a feed that can be viewed by CFIA officials.

There have been rampant abuses in slaughterhouses, including most recently in the Ryding Regency slaughterhouse in Toronto. The actions I saw in that video are criminal, and the government should act.

VISITORS' VISAS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition that has been signed by many constituents in regard to Canada's super visa for individuals who want to visit from abroad, whether it is from the Philippines, Punjab, or any other country.

The super visa was designed to allow individuals to come for a period of up to two years, then leave, then ultimately be able to come back for another two years. The petitioners are concerned that many of these individuals, especially on their second return, are often limited to well less than six months.

FALUN GONG

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, while John McCallum, Canada's ambassador to China, thinks that Canada has more in common with China than the U.S., these petitioners know better. The petitioners recognize the abuse of Tibetans, Christians, democracy advocates, Muslims, and many others in China who simply want their basic human rights recognized.

This petition draws the attention of the House to the persecution of Falun Gong practitioners. The petitioners call on Chinese officials to immediately end the persecution of the Falun Gong and to release all prisoners of conscience, including Canadian citizens and their family members.

The petitioners request that the Canadian government take every opportunity to establish measures to investigate the Chinese regime's organ harvesting from innocent people, a subject on which I have a private member's bill. I hope the government will take this seriously and change direction and start taking human rights in China seriously.

* * *

[*Translation*]**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 ask that all questions be allowed to stand.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Des voix: Agreed.

[*English*]**MOTIONS FOR PAPERS**

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

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS[*English*]**CANADA ELECTIONS ACT**

Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.) moved that Bill C-50, An Act to amend the Canada Elections Act (political financing), be read the third time and passed.

She said: Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to rise in the House today to speak to Bill C-50. This bill would amend the Canada Elections Act to create an unprecedented level of openness and transparency for political fundraising events.

[*Translation*]

Political parties are made up of Canadians from across the country who have different experiences and points of view. Political parties help the public learn more about their leaders and their politicians, as well as their policies and positions of principle. Political parties appoint and train candidates and volunteers, support them before and during elections, and coordinate the logistics for national election campaigns.

Unlike many organizations with mandates that are just as broad and vital, political parties must do their own fundraising to support almost all their activities. Donations pay for all activities, from daily operations to a national election campaign.

• (1525)

[*English*]

The system works. Canadians donate because they believe in our political parties, what they stand for, who leads them, and the candidates they empower to run for office.

A strict regime is in place to ensure fairness in this system. Existing regulations regarding political fundraising in Canada are among the strongest in the world. The existing regulations include strict spending limits, a cap on annual donations, and a ban on corporate and union donations.

Caps on donations have existed for 44 years in Canada, and governments, both Liberal and Conservative, have worked to strengthen our political financing system over this period of time. Bill C-50 would do just that. It would add an additional layer of openness and transparency in political fundraising.

Government Orders

[Translation]

Our government has stated that we must raise the bar for transparency, accountability, and the integrity of our public institutions and the democratic process. We also said loud and clear that we want to encourage Canadians to fully participate in our democracy. It is this last objective that I have been focusing on since the Prime Minister asked me to serve as the Minister of Democratic Institutions one year ago.

[English]

Our government has moved on several fronts to ensure a more open and inclusive democracy. We have changed the way we appoint senators and judges. More women have been appointed through our public appointments process. We are making elections more accessible and inclusive. We are taking steps to protect our democracy from cyber-threats and foreign interference. We take these actions seriously, because we know how deeply Canadians value and cherish our democracy.

Former Supreme Court Justice Frank Iacobucci said:

Political parties provide individual citizens with an opportunity to express an opinion on the policy and functioning of government.

Section 3 of our Charter of Rights and Freedoms guarantees Canadians the right to vote. This article and the right to freedom of association are intimately connected. Canadian citizens and permanent residents also have the right to donate to a political party of their choice.

[Translation]

Many Canadians make financial contributions to election campaigns or participate in political fundraisers, since that is a way for them to actively participate in our democracy. It is also an important way for people to express their democratic will. We will continue to protect the right of all Canadians to provide financial support to the political party of their choice.

[English]

Canadians have been loud and clear. They want to know more about who funds political activities in Canada. Bill C-50 would shine a light on who is attending political fundraisers, where and when these events are taking place, and the amount required to attend them.

This bill would ensure that more information than ever before about political fundraisers was shared with the media and the public. This transparency would allow Canadians to continue to have confidence in our democracy, confidence that they could support a party with which they shared values, ideals, and policy positions and confidence that they, too, could actively participate, should they so choose.

Our laws, when it comes to political financing, are already quite strict in this regard. Bill C-50 would build on these existing strict laws. Specifically, it would see the following rules put in place. First, details about fundraising events involving the Prime Minister, cabinet ministers, party leaders, and leadership contestants of parties with a seat in the House of Commons, when over \$200 per person was necessary to participate at the event, would now be required to be made public. Second, these events would be required to be

advertised on political parties' websites at least five days before they took place, and political parties would be required to report a list of attendees to Elections Canada within 30 days after the event.

The bill would also make technical amendments, which would bring leadership and nomination campaign expenses in line with the current regime for candidates.

[Translation]

This bill takes into account certain privacy considerations with regard to the disclosure of the names of minors, volunteers, event staff, journalists, and support staff for people with disabilities or for any minister or party leader who participates in the event.

[English]

I would like to highlight some quotes from acting Chief Electoral Officer Stéphane Perrault, who said the following at a committee appearance on the subject:

I note that the bill offers a calibrated approach. Not all parties will be subject to the new requirements and I believe that is a good thing. Similarly, the rules will not apply to all fundraising activities, but only those for which a minimum amount is charged to attend and where key decision-makers are also present.

Later in his testimony, he elaborated, saying:

Generally speaking, the bill increases the transparency of political fundraising, which is one of the main goals of the Canada Elections Act. It does so without imposing an unnecessary burden on the smaller parties that are not represented in the House of Commons or for fundraising events that do not involve key decision-makers.

It is clear from Mr. Perrault's testimony at committee that he feels that Bill C-50 would accomplish the goal outlined in my mandate letter to "significantly enhance transparency for the public at large and media in the political fundraising system for Cabinet members, party leaders and leadership candidates."

● (1530)

[Translation]

I believe that my hon. colleagues, like our government, want to provide Canadians with more information about political fundraising activities.

If Bill C-50 is passed, it will keep the government's promise to significantly enhance transparency in Canada's political fundraising system for both the public and the media. By improving transparency, we will also help build Canadians' trust in the political system. This is one of many measures that we are taking to improve, strengthen, and protect our democratic institutions.

[English]

I am proud to speak to this bill at third reading, as I strongly believe that it is one more step in our efforts to improve our political financing system, one that would strengthen the confidence Canadians have in how parties raise money through events.

Government Orders

I would like to close my remarks by thanking the officials in my department for their hard work in helping to put this bill together, the members of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs for their diligent study of this bill, and the members of this place for their support in getting this bill to the next step in the parliamentary process.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Madam Speaker, I first want to thank my hon. colleague, the Minister of Democratic Institutions, for the quality of her French, which is quite impressive. I congratulate her on the quality.

I am sure the member for Winnipeg North will also appreciate the fact that I salute his effort to speak French. Quality will come in time.

I also want to give the minister my best wishes for what is coming in the next few months and say congratulations.

The Conservatives are concerned about this bill, because it would make legal something we consider unethical.

[*Translation*]

That is what is called cash for access, or paying to get access to decision-makers.

Let us remember that the Minister of Justice organized a fundraiser at a Bay Street law firm with only lawyers in attendance, and that was not a good thing. Let us remember that the Prime Minister held \$1,500 fundraisers and that when the public learned of those events he had to come up with a new plan.

My question for the minister is this: why legalize something that is ethically unacceptable?

Hon. Karina Gould: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his kind words and his best wishes for the coming months.

I would like to clarify one thing: all these fundraising activities are already legal. The activities of those on either side of the House do not break any laws. It is important to make this clear.

I would like to quote Jean-Pierre Kingsley, the former chief electoral officer of Canada, who testified before the committee on October 5, 2017.

[*English*]

He said:

I will admit that the limit of \$1,550 right now is a very reasonable one and should not lead one to suspect that an individual is trying to do something wrong by contributing that. There are relationships that are made when firms, or partners of firms, or people working with the same organizations, all participate in an event. This bill will help us to understand those better, so that's good.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to extend my congratulations to my colleague, the minister, on her pregnancy. I wish her much happiness in this wonderful adventure.

I was hoping to see the changes promised by the Liberal Party on electoral reform and the voting system, especially since the experts and the Canadians polled were in favour of a proportional voting system. I have already spoken about this.

I understand Mr. Kingsley's reticence. However, as progressive New Democrats we are concerned about the rich having privileged access to decision-makers and ministers.

Would lowering the political contribution limit not have been the best change to make? We all agree that a middle-class Canadian cannot donate \$1,550 a year to a political party. That does not happen in real life. We could have restored public financing for political parties, which would have improved our democracy and reduced the influence of money on the quality of our democratic life.

• (1535)

Hon. Karina Gould: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his kind words and well wishes. I congratulate him on his new role as environment critic. We miss him at Democratic Institutions. I thank him for his question.

I would clarify that there are several ways to make donations regardless of their size. I would like to quote Mary Dawson, the former commissioner of conflict of interest and ethics, when she appeared before the committee.

[*English*]

She said:

I support the direction of this proposed legislation. As I've said on previous occasions, transparency is important for any kind of regime that touches on conflict of interest....The amendments to the Canada Elections Act proposed by Bill C-50 promote transparency with respect to fundraising activities. I think it is a positive measure that would benefit our electoral process. It will also help to apply the Conflict of Interest Act more effectively. The easier access to the names and addresses of participants in these fundraising activities could be useful to the office if it has to investigate an allegation that a participant in such an activity obtained an advantage from a minister.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, one of the things we know that is so important in our democratic system is the idea of openness and transparency. Despite the fact that the Liberal Party is already practising what is being put forward in the legislation, the leader of the Conservative Party is refusing to be open and transparent, as he did with fundraising activities he was having last spring when he was a leadership contestant.

Could the minister comment on how important it is for the institutions we have, for faith and trust from the public, and why it is so important that be embedded upon this idea of openness and transparency, as it relates to political financing?

Hon. Karina Gould: Madam Speaker, I encourage all parties to act already in the spirit of the legislation, to post their fundraising events online five days in advance at a minimum, to report who attended these events, how much the tickets cost, and where these events took place. I would certainly encourage the leader of the official opposition to lead by example as well, and undertake some of these initiatives.

I want to again quote Mary Dawson, the former conflict of interest commissioner. At her PROC appearance on October 17, 2017, she said:

It goes quite a good way, I think, because it puts things in the public domain. It allows me to have access to some information if I'm dealing with some kind of a problem. I use the lobbying register a lot for that purpose as well. There are interfaces in all of these public reports, so I think it's a good initiative.

Government Orders

That goes specifically to your point about openness and transparency, so Canadians know who is trying to access their leaders.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I would remind the minister that she should be addressing the question to the Speaker.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Elmwood—Transcona.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I could be wrong, but I understand the Minister of Democratic Institutions had some experience and expertise in democratic reform and looking at different kinds of electoral systems prior to getting into politics.

One of the things that has struck me about Bill C-50 is its lack of ambition in changing the landscape of Canadian elections. We are doing some tinkering at the margins with respect to transparency around political financing reform. However, prior to getting into politics, had she known she would have the opportunity to reform the Canadian electoral system, whether political financing or the way we vote, is this the extent of her ambition for changing Canada's electoral laws? If it is not, what does she think we should do in addition to this and why is it not in the bill?

• (1540)

Hon. Karina Gould: Madam Speaker, as I mentioned in my speech, I am very proud of the bill. This is an important step and it opens up fundraising activities in a way that we have not had before in Canada. It is yet to be determined what kind of impact it will have. However, the fact that the official opposition does not want to pursue it demonstrates that it has a significant impact on how we raise money as politicians, something all of us absolutely need to do.

With regard to the other elements of my mandate that were mentioned, I am very proud of Bill C-33. It is a really important bill that will reverse some of the elements of the previous government's so-called fair elections act.

With regard to cybersecurity and protecting our democratic institutions, it is absolutely vital for our next election.

I look forward to continuing to work with members in this place to do what we can to protect, strengthen, and improve our electoral system and democratic institutions.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I want to commend the minister as a woman minister who is also, in pregnancy, fulfilling all of her duties. I commend and congratulate her.

We will always have problems while political parties are dependent on having a hand out, constantly needing to fundraise. Will the government reconsider bringing back in the reforms brought in by Jean Chrétien to have public support, as indicated by the way people vote, even a token amount per year?

Hon. Karina Gould: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague and friend for her lovely comments.

Very briefly, one of the things I mentioned was with regard to the charter and the right of Canadians to make contributions to political parties and the important element of democratic participation that

this encourages. We are looking forward to debating the bill on public financing, but we also have to recognize that political parties also receive a substantial subsidy following an election based on the amount they have spent.

Mr. Blake Richards (Banff—Airdrie, CPC): Madam Speaker, the Prime Minister of Canada, the chairman of cabinet, the head of government is a very powerful position, one that only 23 people in the history of our country have had the distinct privilege of holding. While constitutionally this position serves at the pleasure of Her Majesty, it is Canadians who the Prime Minister ultimately is to serve.

Therefore, we have to ask ourselves, when we have newspaper headlines like, “[Prime Minister] defends cash-for-access fundraising”, or articles that state, “Prime Minister...says financial donation limits in federal politics are too low for wealthy donors to buy influence with his cabinet ministers”, are Canadians really being well-served and, specifically, are they being well-served by this legislation?

Today, as we debate Bill C-50, those are the questions we have to answer. Perhaps this headline speaks to that, “Liberals’ fundraising bill fails to quell cash-for-access charges.”

Let us be perfectly clear why the Liberals introduced the legislation. It was because they got caught with their hands in the cookie jar, and now they are trying to blame the cookie jar.

Bill C-50 came to fruition because the Liberal Party was selling cash for access to the Prime Minister at events where tickets cost up to \$1,525 a person. What is worse, in the Prime Minister's own “Open and Accountable Government” guide, under the fundraising section it states:

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

The document goes on further to state:

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

One wonders if Orwell's *1984* Ministry of Truth may have produced that document, given the actions we have seen from the Liberal members and the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister simply got caught for breaking the very ethics guidelines that he himself created. Now we get this legislation as a mandate, as an attempt to try to fix this self-inflicted Liberal wound.

Even after introducing Bill C-50 and promising to abide by these new rules, the June 19, 2017, Liberal fundraising event took place. This event featured the Prime Minister speaking at a Liberal so-called donor appreciation night for Laurier Club members. In order to join such a club, members must donate at least \$1,500 annually to be a member. Just to get in the door, one needs to donate \$1,500 to see the Prime Minister speak.

Government Orders

This is after the Liberals promised to abide by the rules of Bill C-50, the legislation they had just introduced, and promised to be open to the media. However, instead, the following took place. Liberal Party staff restricted media access to Ottawa bureau chief at the Huffington Post, Althia Raj, as well as to Joan Bryden from the Canadian Press. Then, after a lot of representations on its own behalf, the media was actually allowed inside, cordoned off into one little area, and not allowed to mingle with any of the guests. Giuseppe Valiante, a Montreal reporter with the Canadian Press, was told to leave after the Prime Minister gave his speech.

Therefore, it is not quite clear why the Liberal government bothers to put these so-called rules in place when it is quite evident it just intends to break them anyway.

Legislation is not supposed to be about a PR exercise, legislating is not about a pair of the Prime Minister's socks that BuzzFeed can write a kitschy article about. Legislation is supposed to be about making good policy that changes Canada for the better.

● (1545)

Legislation should not be a way for the PMO to try to spin out of the bad headlines the Prime Minister created through his bad behaviour. Some of those bad headlines include, from the *National Post*, "Ethics watchdog says [Prime Minister] vacation on private island broke conflict rules"; from CTV, "[Prime Minister] broke ethics rules, watchdog finds"; and from the *Toronto Star*, "[Prime Minister] violated conflict-of-interest rules with vacation to Aga Khan's island: ethics commissioner". It is kind of like a greatest hits album for the Prime Minister, but it is not one he should be proud of.

In 2006, when our previous Conservative government came to power, we came in to clean up the corruption culture, the corruption that had taken hold in Ottawa after 13 years of Liberal rule. One of our government's top priorities then was passing the Federal Accountability Act. In that legislation, our Conservative government banned all corporate and union donations to political parties. If political parties wanted the ability to be heard and operate, they would be forced to go to ordinary Canadians on main street and make their case. That is a promise Canadians were and are on board with.

Clearly, that is not a concern for the Liberal Party or for the Prime Minister. Regular Canadians do not have billionaire friends who invite them to vacation on private islands. Regular Canadians usually cannot afford \$1,500 for the privilege of bending the Prime Minister's ear. After all, the Prime Minister should be equally accessible to all Canadians. However, we know that is not the case.

If this is something the Prime Minister actually believes in, then he should do the right thing and stop attending cash for access fundraisers. The ethical issue surrounding cash for access fundraisers is not solved because the event is apparently open to the public. At the end of the day, is the event really open to the public? Does publishing the list of attendees on some website a month and a half later make the event transparent? No, it certainly does not. For the Liberal government, it is apparent that it is "do as I say and not as I do". Apparently, the Prime Minister thinks the law does not apply to him.

If the Liberals really wanted to end these sorts of practices, all they had to do was simply follow their own guidelines to stop attending cash for access fundraisers. It is really quite simple. If one is the justice minister, this means not attending the fundraiser with lawyers who are lobbying the government. If one is the parliamentary secretary who has been tasked with coming up with a plan for marijuana legalization, do not attend fundraisers with representatives from the cannabis industry, and if one is the Prime Minister, do not attend fundraisers with stakeholders who regularly and actively conduct business with the government. Those are very simple measures that even the Liberal Party should be able to follow, if it cared to bother following the rules.

Ethics is not a tricky thing, but I guess for a Prime Minister who views his role as merely ceremonial, there is really no reason for him to be worried about a conflict of interest. I have bad news for him. The office of the Prime Minister is not ceremonial. It requires more than selfies and signing autographs. As the head of cabinet and the head of government, the Prime Minister should go above and beyond what is stated in the law. He should follow his own guidelines.

The Prime Minister is most certainly not above the law, no matter how much he thinks he is, so he should lead by example. As public figures, we are all expected to lead by example. The Prime Minister should understand that, but it appears that neither he nor his government have plans to stop this obvious conflict of interest.

If someone does not have \$1,500 to pay for access to a fundraiser, apparently that person's opinion does not matter to the Prime Minister, and that is simply not right. We are talking about the Prime Minister and his cabinet, the people who make our laws, create regulations, and raise our taxes. Is it right that they attend partisan fundraisers where they are being actively lobbied? How does the entire Liberal government not see that this is a serious conflict of interest?

● (1550)

I know the answer to that one. It is a classic case of Liberal arrogance seeping in yet again, the same type of arrogance that led to the sponsorship scandal. How quickly the Liberals forget that they were swept out of power previously during the Chrétien and Martin days because Canadians were simply tired of their arrogance and their unethical dealings. Now, after just two years as government, the Liberals have piled up a whole slew of ethical breaches already.

The finance minister introduced a bill that would rewrite pension laws while he still held on to a million shares of Morneau Shepell, a company that could benefit from these new laws. That led to an investigation by the ethics commissioner.

The Liberal's former Calgary minister campaigned with his father for a school board seat while using House of Commons resources. That also led to an investigation by the ethics commissioner.

Government Orders

Who can forget about the private island vacation that the Prime Minister took on an island of a billionaire who lobbies the government? That led to him making history as the first prime minister to have been found guilty of breaking the law, not once, not twice, not three times, but four times.

It is no wonder the Liberals have voted down the opposition's efforts to have the Prime Minister appear in front of the ethics committee to answer for his actions. He has even refused to answer the opposition's questions in question period in the House of Commons about these serious ethical breaches. Instead he leaves the government House leader to answer for him, for the mess that he made, while he sits there and signs autographs.

This is why it is so hard to take the Prime Minister and his government seriously when they claim that Bill C-50 would make political parties more accountable. The truth is it will not.

The barbershop owner, the mechanic, and the farmer in our ridings do not have time to go on the Internet to keep up with the fundraising activities of the Liberal Party. They rely on the Prime Minister and his cabinet having the moral integrity not to sell access to themselves to the highest bidder.

Fundraising is a perfectly normal activity for politicians and political parties. Asking Canadians to support us and our party's vision and our ideas is part of how democracy works. Political parties take their ideas to the people and if the people like them enough, they chip in a bit of money to help the message get spread. Selling government access for donations to a political party is not a part of being in a democracy. Maybe it happens in countries with basic dictatorships, which the Prime Minister admires so much. I do not know. Maybe that is where he came up with the idea that this was okay. I can tell him that it is not right and it is certainly not ethical.

As politicians we are expected to go above and beyond. I challenge the Prime Minister and his government to do just that. Stop attending cash for access fundraisers and all of these problems will be gone. No more publicity stunts. It is time to take real action and to make real change, not just lip service.

• (1555)

Mr. Fayçal El-Khoury (Laval—Les Îles, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like every Canadian to understand that any citizen has access to the office of the Prime Minister of Canada. They can simply write to him about the issues that concern them and I can assure them they will get the proper answer.

In addition, the Prime Minister at any public political activity or appeal spends many hours agreeing to citizens' requests to have a photo taken with him. We did not see this kind of action with the leader of the previous government.

I am sorry to tell the member that when it comes to stopping cash for access, we are looking for a concrete regime for any political financial activity. Why does the member not just support it and then it would benefit all political parties in this chamber?

Mr. Blake Richards: Is that member serious, Madam Speaker? He says it is okay because if every Canadian writes a letter to the Prime Minister he might answer them in a few months, but guess what, they could all have a picture with him. I bet that makes them

all feel so much better. I am sure they feel great. Maybe they can get one of those autographs he signs during questions. I am sure they would feel great about that too.

Other people who can afford it have the ability to buy, with their cash, access to the Prime Minister, to bend his ear and talk to him about whatever project they might want approved or whatever it is. However, that is okay because others can get an autograph or maybe have a selfie taken with the Prime Minister. They will feel better about that I am sure.

If that is the defence that the member is providing, then I do not know what kind of defence that even really is. If he thinks that is going to move him up to the front benches or something, I am not quite sure that will do it. Maybe the Prime Minister will send him a photo too.

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal (Surrey—Newton, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I listened carefully to the speech from the hon. member. In fact, I would like to correct him to say that it was a former prime minister, the Right Hon. Jean Chrétien, who brought in the legislation to end the corporate and union donations.

I am very proud to have been in public service for many years, and doing my annual fundraising events where 800 to 1,000 people come to support me. I think the rules we have around the \$1,500 limit is probably the lowest in democratic countries.

Has the member ever accepted a \$1,500 donation from one of his constituents? If he did, why did he not follow that rule at that time himself?

Mr. Blake Richards: Madam Speaker, when the member wants to stand up in the House of Commons to try to correct somebody, he should make sure he has his facts straight. He is simply wrong. He can go back and check that for himself.

I guess the way to respond to his various statements and questions would be say that these cash for access fundraisers are part of a pattern that we have seen from the government of unethical behaviour. Part of that pattern, just as a way of a parallel example, is this vacation that the Prime Minister took, his so-called vacation, when he went to the private island of a billionaire who lobbies the government. Obviously that was found by the Ethics Commissioner to have broken the law in four separate ways. The Prime Minister says that he is taking responsibility, but he is refusing to actually take responsibility by paying that back.

There have been previous instances where the Prime Minister, when he was simply a member of Parliament, prior to being the Prime Minister, was found to have inappropriate travel expenses. This was back in 2012. He was found to have misused \$672 in transportation costs to attend an event that had nothing to do with his role as a member of Parliament, and he used House of Commons resources to do that. When he was caught doing that, he admitted to the wrongdoing and repaid the money.

There is a saying about what is good for the goose is good for the gander. In this case, I would ask the member, is what was good for the goose still good for the goose? Why is he not paying back the money now?

Government Orders

• (1600)

Ms. Tracey Ramsey (Essex, NDP): Madam Speaker, I have a question for the member for Banff—Airdrie. It is about Mary Dawson.

When she appeared before the committee, she made it very clear that parliamentary secretaries are not covered under the provision currently. She made a recommendation that the committee may want to consider that omission. This could potentially be expanded.

Could the member comment on whether or not he agrees that parliamentary secretaries should be included in the changes that are being proposed?

Mr. Blake Richards: Madam Speaker, I found that omission interesting as well.

I suppose if one actually believed that this piece of legislation was intended to try to address or fix the problem, then maybe one could say that there is an omission. However, I do not really believe that is what this is about at all. It is simply a PR exercise, because the Liberals got caught with their hands in the cookie jar and now they are trying to blame the cookie jar.

What is really interesting about it is that if we actually look at the Prime Minister's own guidelines that were written, it says very clearly that they should apply to ministers and to parliamentary secretaries, and there should be no conflict of interest and no appearance of it. Simply, all they have to do is follow their own guidelines. They do not even need a new piece of legislation. Clearly, that is not what this is about at all. This is simply a PR exercise for the Liberal Party because it was caught breaking the rules.

[Translation]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Alberta and commend him on the quality of his speech.

My colleague has been in public office for a number of years now. He served under the former government and was first elected in 2011. Being from Alberta he is practically neighbours with the riding of our former prime minister, the Right Hon. Stephen Harper.

Could our colleague tell us whether, to his knowledge or from what he remembers, former Prime Minister Harper ever took part in what is known as cash for access events?

[English]

Mr. Blake Richards: Madam Speaker, that I know of, no, that never occurred. That is because he is someone who tried to conduct himself with integrity. That is the difference between that prime minister and the current one.

As for the current one, I cannot even name the number of examples of ethics breaches, violations, hypocrisy, and the breaking of promises, all things that speak to the integrity of the Prime Minister, of which there really is none.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member referenced a number of articles. I would like to reference one in *The Globe and Mail* on September 20, 2017, with the headline, "Conservative Leader...won't post details of private fundraisers". The article talks about how he sees a big difference

between the Prime Minister and himself, somebody who aspires to be prime minister and by all intents and purposes is really just one election and one vote away from it. I guess once he does become prime minister, if he ever gets to that point, as the opposition party would like, he would then suddenly become responsible for making sure that he lives up to those requirements.

I am wondering why, if the Leader of the Opposition has nothing to hide, he would not want to release that information. Does he not appreciate the fact that openness and transparency would allow others to look into what he is doing to make sure that he is completely clean on this as well? Why will he not provide that?

• (1605)

Mr. Blake Richards: Madam Speaker, the member is right about one thing. There is a very big difference between the Prime Minister and the leader of the official opposition. There is a very big difference. We have a Prime Minister over there who thinks that he is above the law and better than everyone else. Over here we have a Leader of the Opposition who is one of us. He is one of the people. He is someone who understands what everyday Canadians go through and has their best interests in mind. That is the big difference between the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition.

I can assure members that when the Leader of the Opposition is the prime minister of this country in 2019, they will not be seeing his name attached to any kind of ethics scandals or wrongdoings, like we have seen multiple times with the Prime Minister and his government, because the Leader of the Opposition stands up for regular everyday Canadians and understands what they are going through and does not feel he is entitled and better than everyone else. He wants to accomplish something for everyday, hard-working Canadians, and that is what he will do.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise at third reading of Bill C-50 to offer some thoughts about the bill and about the issue of electoral reform, whether it is reforming finance, reforming the way we vote, or more generally.

I think it is important to start off with some reflections on why anyone listening at home might care about this debate, because if members looked at the bill, they would see it would not do a lot. It would add some measure of transparency to political fundraising events held by members of government in the formal sense, such as cabinet ministers, the prime minister, and party leaders.

Those Canadians who are on the Elections Canada website all the time and are interested in poring over these things, or those who watch political news shows with analysts who are more familiar with the names and data would benefit from understanding better some of the relationships around government, and understanding those things is not a bad thing. It is helpful to have more of that information in the public domain. However, I do not think that a lot of Canadians would think that Bill C-50 would make a big difference for them personally in terms of the way they relate to the political system.

Government Orders

The way a lot of Canadians relate to the political system is with a fair bit of cynicism. They feel that it does not really matter whom they vote for as the issues of the day do not really get addressed. If they are going to see any kind of reform, it has to be big enough and bold enough to help them feel that their participation, even if it is only voting once every four years, is going to start to make them feel that it makes more of a difference than they feel that it does now.

I would say to a lot of Canadians that voting makes more of a difference than they know. They may not feel that it makes much of a difference, but it can make a lot more of a difference than they know. However, I would also forgive them for not feeling that way, particularly in light of a government that ran on a slogan of real change but is largely defending the status quo. We can see that with the bill before us.

The bill is not really about fundamentally changing the Canadian political system at all. A lot of Canadians who voted, and many more who do not ever bother to vote, would look at this and think that our political system is not working for them. They feel that it is hard for them to have their voice heard, and tinkering around the edges does not fix that.

A lot of Canadians voted for a government that promised real change, and not just real change generally, or real change on this or that, but it promised real change specifically on electoral reform. The big promise was that 2015 would be the last election fought under the first past the post system. Bill C-50 is really a status quo bill. It would not provide anything near the level of change that was promised in terms of electoral reform.

To the extent that I think all of us in this chamber have a stake in caring about how Canadians feel about the state of their democracy, and to the extent that some real change is required in order to get many Canadians who feel disaffected and disinterested in Canadian politics back to the table or to the table for the first time, we should be concerned that the bill, which was an opportunity for the Liberal Party and the government to present its vision on how we were going to bring some meaningful change to Canadian electoral politics, really is saying to let us keep on with the status quo.

Around 40% of Canadians do not find it is worth showing up to vote, and many feel that the system is, in some important way, broken. This is not a good status quo. It is not a status quo that the Liberals promised to defend in the last election. They said they were going to change it. They said that they heard that message, and that they were onside with Canadians who felt that way, and a reason to vote for them was that they understood that and they were going to bring meaningful reform.

•(1610)

When it comes to publishing the details of a fundraising event five days in advance, the lack of that information is not what has been driving Canadians away from the political process progressively more and more over the last 30 to 40 years. It was not that they did not get the five-day notice on the fundraiser. It was not that it did not apply to the leaders of political parties that are not currently in government. That is not what Canadians were calling for when they said that they wanted meaningful change in order to feel that the political process was working for them. However, that is all that is offered in the bill. That is fine. It is a step in the right direction. I do

not have a problem supporting it. It is not that it is a bad measure because it is not enough, but it really does not meet the expectation that was set in the minds of Canadian voters for improving the electoral system.

Where are we four years from now regardless of who is elected as government in the next election? Well, we are in the same bloody place we were over two years ago when Canadians were dissatisfied and electoral reform was an election issue. How is it that we went through a whole election where that was a key election issue and there were key promises made on the part of the now governing party, and we end up in the same place with the same complaints and the same feelings of dissatisfaction? That is the problem with the bill. It is not a reason not to vote for it, but it is a real problem with the bill and it is a problem for Canadians who were rightly fed up with the status quo.

To some extent this does not just defend the status quo, but it actually legitimizes some of the worst aspects of the status quo that the Liberals have professionalized to an extent that no one foresaw or expected in terms of cash for access fundraising. Politicians of all stripes have always done fundraising and members of the governing party have always done fundraising. However, it was not until this Parliament that it became an issue. Believe me, it is not because we had more charitable opposition parties in former Parliaments that cash for access was not an issue; it is because there was not the same evidence of the professionalization by government of selling access to their ministers.

That is why we did not hear about the term “cash for access” even under the Harper Conservatives. It was not because there was a benevolent opposition party that was willing to let the Conservatives get away with that. Believe me, if they had been doing that, the NDP as the official opposition would have been calling attention to it and the Liberals as the third party would have been calling attention to it too. I disagree with my Conservative colleagues on many things, but I am not going to make up that they were doing something that they were not doing.

Cash for access was not a theme of the Canadian political discourse until these particular Liberals came to power. There is a reason for it. Nobody was as organized in seeking out members of the Canadian business community or different communities that would have an interest in getting the ear of a minister until the current government was elected and members made a science of it. They recruited those people and offered them special time in smaller venues at a high price in order to get the ear of ministers. That is wrong. I do not care what the law says, that is wrong.

To be going through the motions of passing a bill on electoral financing and fundraising and not address that issue, not by making that practice, which is a repugnant practice, more transparent is not what we need to do. It is a practice we need to put an end to. To the extent that we do not see any sign from the government benches that the repugnant practice of selling access to ministers is not going to end as a result of Bill C-50, there are serious problems with the bill.

Government Orders

It is a great step in the right direction. We could pass a law that says anytime we meet someone in the grocery store we should smile at them. That would make the world a better place. It would make everyone feel good. It would be a step in the right direction, but it would not solve a lot of the real problems that are facing Canadians today.

The bill does not do that and it does not solve the real problems that Canadians are facing today with respect to how they feel about their own political system. At the very least, it should do that. We do not expect the bill to fix the problems with pensions in Canada. We do not expect it to fix the problems with health care, but surely we could have expected that it would fix some of the problems that Canadians experience in the way they relate to their politics.

● (1615)

I am concerned that the government sees the passage of this bill as legitimizing a new practice in Canadian politics in terms of the level of sophistication of going out and selling access to ministers based on interests that donors have in the ministers' portfolio area. The government's defence of this practice does not hold up at all. It says that this is not so bad because the Prime Minister gets out there and does town halls. He talks to people, and if they write him a letter he will get back to them.

It is an offence to the intelligence of Canadians to pretend that the little old lady who comes to a town hall with 3,000 people and has to sit in the back because she got there by Handi-Transit and gets to wave at the Prime Minister is the same as a high-powered corporate executive who pays \$1,500 to go to a small dinner in somebody's condo, residence, or whatever, to talk about whatever he or she is going to talk about. This bill does not give us any more insight into what is talked about at those events, what is said or not said.

To compare those two scenarios and expect Canadians to believe that they are comparable is just ridiculous. It is totally ridiculous, and kind of offensive. It offends me, and I think it probably offends a lot of Canadians. "When I sign up to go to a town hall," says Joe Canadian, "I get it that I am not going to get the kind of experience that a high-powered corporate exec is getting when he pays \$1,500 to go meet the Prime Minister in a mansion somewhere. I get that it is not the same thing." However, the Liberals are trying to say that it is the same thing. Canadians have to ask themselves whether they want people in government who think they are that stupid. This is a legitimate question for Canadians to be asking themselves.

That is the issue as I see it. We have a really repugnant practice of cash for access. We have a bit of window dressing here to try to make it seem a little better, maybe kind of okay. I do not think it accomplishes that at all. However, in the absence of real reform, it is not worth turning down.

What a missed opportunity this is. The Liberals actually built a mandate for meaningful reform. They said they were not a status quo party and wanted change. Instead of talking about the quality of this window dressing and the colour of the drapes, we could be talking about what kind of new voting system we are going to have.

We could be talking about other measures that would have done a lot for Canadian democracy. Some measures we have talked about,

because they have been presented in the form of various private members' bills. I am thinking particularly of my colleague from Burnaby, who had a great idea. We talked a bit about how political parties are already subsidized publicly in two ways.

One is that when these high-powered corporate execs buy that \$1,500 ticket, Canadian taxpayers actually reimburse them almost half the cost of the ticket. There is something particularly perverse about that. Corporate execs, who can pay the \$1,500 with the money in their pocket, are able to climb over ordinary Canadians, who also want the ear of the government to get special attention, and then actually have those same ordinary Canadians pay them back about half the cost of the special access they are using to steamroll Canadians. One can pick any issue, whether it is big pharma and jacking up drug prices, or energy companies that want to build a pipeline through this community or that community and want the ear of the government instead of having to go to the communities to get their permission. There is something perverse about the fact that those same people who are the victims of those bad policy decisions are being made to pay for the corporate executives' access to those dinners.

That is one way in which Canadians already subsidize political parties. There is another way, in that the costs that Canadian political parties incur during an election are rebated, in part, by taxpayers as well. Therefore, we already have different forms of subsidy. I am trying not to go off on a tangent too much.

It is completely legitimate to talk about a per-vote subsidy, and maybe even look at cancelling some of those other subsidies in order to pay that money. Allocating already existing public subsidies on the basis of the parties that people actually want to support makes far more sense than rewarding certain parties for having donors who have more money to give, and then forcing all taxpayers across the country to rebate those donors simply because they are the ones with more money in the first place. There is something perverse about that, too.

● (1620)

However, I will digress on that point. The point I want to make comes back to the excellent point made by my colleague from Burnaby. Because we are rebating a certain portion of the costs to political parties for what they spend during an election, we could use that as a tool in order to encourage political parties to nominate more female candidates so we can start to correct the serious gender deficit we have in the House of Commons. We have 26% or 27% women in the House of Commons, even though women make up more than 50% of the Canadian population. That is a great idea. That is the kind of bold thinking that might actually do something to change the status quo of Canadian politics. That would be in keeping with the kinds of promises the Liberals made in the last election, when they said that they would not be defenders of the status quo.

Government Orders

That is not what we see in the bill. The bill is simply a reimagining and reinstating of the status quo. We have heard good ideas about how to really increase the participation of women in Canadian politics, and not just to encourage them more. That is good too, and it is something that also needs to happen, but it ignores the fact that there are a lot of systemic barriers in the way of women participating in politics. It is not just about calling up our female friends more to see if we can get them to run. We also have to take more concrete measures.

Earlier this week, I was listening to the member for Burnaby South speak to this bill. He said that Canada has slid down to 65th in the world for participation of women in its House of Commons. That is not a very impressive number. It is certainly not an impressive number for a government that styles itself as a feminist government and says it is very committed to increasing the participation of women in politics.

We know that the Liberal Party has assured its incumbents of being able to run again, and it has a disproportionately small number of women in its caucus. This means that if the Liberal Party is successful in the next election, in re-electing most of its members who are here, that would be a bad day for women, because there are not a lot of women, proportionately, in the Liberal caucus.

There are no real policy ideas coming from those benches to address those issues in any real way. It has been unfortunate that when we have had real ideas come forward, they have been quashed. Who quashes new ideas like that?

They could be ideas that came out of an all-party committee on electoral reform, which many pundits predicted would not be able to come to a majority opinion on how to proceed with electoral reform, but it did. It recommended a referendum on proportional representation. That idea got quashed, even though it took many people across many different political fault lines working together to make it happen.

Here we have a great idea on how to concretely take a measure that would not cost Canadian taxpayers any money. In fact, it would save them money, because the way it was going to work was through the rebate I was talking about. Parties that did not run a slate with gender parity across the country would have their rebate reduced by a proportionate amount. That would actually save Canadian taxpayers money and incentivize political parties to get more women involved in politics at the same time.

If we want to talk about policy innovation and good ideas, that is a good one. A lot of good ideas we talk about that would move us in the right direction do cost money. That is money worth spending, in many cases. I do not apologize for that. However, this is one that is actually more likely to save Canadian taxpayers money, and certainly would not cost them any more. We saw it quashed. Who would quash those things? Only a party and a government that, frankly, are satisfied with the status quo would do that. Where this leaves us is largely with the status quo. We have changed the drapes, but the house is the same.

We need to do a heck of a lot better if we are going to address the real democratic deficit in Canada. I look forward to passing this bill and then moving on to those real questions.

● (1625)

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith (Beaches—East York, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we have some of the strongest political financing rules in the world. We can look at the ban on corporate and union donations, the cap of around \$1,500 in personal donations, and, most important, the limits on what politicians can spend.

I mentioned this in the House earlier this week. I have friends in the United States whom I play baseball with. When I told them that I was thinking about getting involved in politics and that the spending I could do during the writ period was \$100,000, they laughed in my face. We talk about window dressing and substantive changes to political financing rules. Political financing rules are incredibly strong in the country.

The member said that this is legitimizing cash for access. He said it is window dressing that does not accomplish anything. If he truly believes that, why is he supporting this legislation?

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Madam Speaker, as I said in my speech, having a bit more transparency is all right. However, that does not mean I am going to run home and say that everything is right with Canadian politics and that the Liberals fixed it all and we don't have to worry about who is giving money to whom anymore, because that would be ridiculous.

We still have a democratic deficit in this country, and there is a lot of work that needs to be done to correct that deficit. This does not do that. I have alluded to some of the things I think we could do to really start addressing the democratic deficit, which has to do with a deficit in gender in our politics, not enough women in politics. It has to do with the fact that a government that got less than 40% of the vote is the one that is able to choose what is in our bills on electoral reform and quash good amendments presented by our party, because the Liberals have a majority on the committee, with less than 40% of the vote. I would like to talk about those issues, and we are nowhere near that with this.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to add a point of precision. The hon. member left the impression that someone who makes the maximum donation, which I think is \$1,550, is somehow benefiting more from the tax credit than a smaller donor. However, as he no doubt knows, the tax credit is progressive. Someone who gives \$400, for example, gets a bigger benefit. In fact, that \$400 donation really costs someone only \$100. There are many people giving that kind of money, because it only amounts to \$100.

Government Orders

My question is about the per-vote subsidy. The hon. member is implying that the per-vote subsidy would be a reflection of the support a particular party has in any given year. However, a per-vote subsidy is calculated based on the results of the preceding election, and as we have seen, sometimes a party's standing after an election is nowhere near what it was the year before the election. How is that a reflection of what that party deserves to get from the public purse?

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Madam Speaker, to the member's first point, I would say that my point was not that people who give the maximum get a proportionately larger benefit but that there is something perverse about people giving the maximum to get in to a special meeting with a minister, perhaps in an area in which they have a particular business interest, and the rest of us Canadians are giving them half that money back. It is approximately half, because it is 75% on the first \$400, 50% on the next \$300, and 33%, I think, on the next \$250. It works out to about a \$666 rebate on \$1,500, which is approximately half of \$1,500.

I am going to give myself that one.

I stand by my main point, which is that there is something perverse about that.

On the second question, about the nature of the per-vote subsidy, we can all agree that it is hard to engineer a perfect system. The public subsidy is already being paid, as there is already a total amount that is paid in terms of public subsidies to political parties. Right now it is a system that rewards parties that have donors who have more money to give. They can make those decisions to donate, and money comes back to them, which is a factor in how much they can donate. If people donate \$20, because that is all they have, it does not really matter what the rebate is. It is a question of cash on hand, not how much is coming back at the end of the tax year. Therefore, my point is that a per-vote subsidy I think goes a long way to try to reduce that inequity in the current public subsidy system.

• (1630)

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would ask that my colleague comment on the cynicism the government has engendered through its action, or lack of action, on the electoral reform file. During the election campaign, the Liberals said it was terrible that we had a Conservative government for the last four years with only 38% or 39% of the vote yet had 100% of the power and was taking Canada down a road they did not agree with, yet when the Liberals were elected, they said that now that they were in power, it was okay. I have had so many people tell me that they feel so betrayed by this. The cynicism is palpable in my riding. I wonder if he might want to comment further on that.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Madam Speaker, the member is quite right. There are two roots to that cynicism. One is that what we are ultimately getting out of the government, certainly on the electoral reform issue but actually on a lot of other issues, is the defence of the status quo. That is not at all consistent with the main message of the Liberal campaign, which was change, real change, in fact.

If the Liberals promised real change and the upshot of a lot of their measures, and that is certainly the case here with Bill C-50 and it is the case on the electoral reform file, is a strong defence of the status

quo, then people are going to feel disappointed and betrayed. I do not blame people for feeling that way with respect to the paucity of ambition of this bill and the total lack of movement on the larger electoral reform file.

The second root of the cynicism comes from the idea that those guys were bad and we are better so anything we do is okay. We see that in a lot of ways. We see that in the Prime Minister's remarks about electoral reform. We needed electoral reform when it was Stephen Harper, but now that it is him, we do not need to change it. The system is working again. The job of the system is to elect Liberals and, hallelujah, the good old days are back and we do not have to worry about making any changes.

We see it in the Prime Minister's behaviour with respect to being found to have broken the law on conflict of interest, and thinking that it is okay that there are no consequences for that. We see it from government ministers who are unapologetic about their cash for access fundraising and do not think it needs to change. In fact, the Liberals can pass a bill that kind of tweaks at the edges of some of the rules of this nefarious thing they are doing, and they think that is okay.

That is where cynicism lives and grows. It is unfortunate to see it all day, every day, in this place.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the fact that the NDP is voting in favour of the bill.

At the end of the day, what we are talking about in this legislation is an expansion. We are saying that it not only applies to the Prime Minister but also the cabinet and leaders of political parties, leaders who are ultimately striving to be the prime minister some day, and I think Canadians have a right to know who is attending those major fundraisers. To give the impression that the Prime Minister is the only one is wrong. Leaders of all political parties have fundraisers.

Why would people object to leaders of political parties being subjected to legislation such as this?

• (1635)

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Madam Speaker, we are voting for this bill, but it is important to call out the obfuscation of the Liberals that we have seen many times, conflating the role of government ministers, ministers of the crown, who disburse large amounts of public funds and make major policy decisions, and those of other members of the House, or in some cases leaders who are not yet a member of the House. The role is clearly very different.

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. 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 Edmonton Strathcona, the Environment; the hon. member for Drummond, Food Labelling; the hon. member for Nanaimo—Ladysmith, Government Services.

[*English*]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Surrey—Newton.

Government Orders

It is a pleasure to rise today to speak to this important piece of legislation that the government has brought forward, Bill C-50, which would make political fundraising events more open and transparent for Canadians and enhance the trust and confidence in our democratic institutions. Transparency is so important because the public deserves to know what its elected representatives are doing, what information lies at the root of government decisions, and how influence is exerted in the government. Transparency is in the best interests of Canadian democracy and is much needed in our political financing process.

The previous government simply did not understand the importance of transparency. It was a government often criticized for its pervasive secrecy and categorized as one of the worst in history regarding access to information. In fact, reports from the Canadian Journalists for Free Expression gave the previous government the lowest possible grade on transparency for a number of years running. Liberals were elected on a promise to restore a sense of trust in our democracy. At the heart of this is a simple idea: transparent government is good government. Through Bill C-50, our Liberal government will establish the openness and transparency that political financing has been needing for so long.

It is important to recognize that fundraising is a significant part of political participation and democratic expression. Fundraising is a way for Canadians to show support for a party with which it shares values, ideals, and policies. Therefore, it is of vital importance that we get these processes right.

Canada already has one of the most robust systems in the world for political fundraising. This system includes strict spending limits, a cap on annual donations, and the banning of corporate and union donations. At a national level, Canadian citizens and permanent residents can contribute a maximum of \$1,550 annually to a registered party. Contributions to federal political parties are reported to Elections Canada and donations of more than \$200 are published online, including the contributor's name and address.

At present, Canada is the sixth best democracy in the world, according to the Democracy Index from *The Economist's* intelligence unit, with a score of 9.1 out of 10. Canada ranks particularly high on the process of financing political parties with a score of 9.6 out of 10. It is evident that our democratic system is strong, but the performance of our system is due to the constant work of assessment, evaluation, and improvement.

Our democratic institutions are the pillars upon which our democracy is built. As our society continues to evolve, these systems need be strengthened and improved. Measures within Bill C-50 are a step in the right direction. These measures ensure our system continues to evolve while furthering the principles of political participation and democratic expression.

Bill C-50 would improve the fundraising process and simplify the processes of accountability. In front of committee, the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner mentioned her support for the direction of this proposed legislation with the following. First, this piece of legislation, via increased transparency, would also make it easier for her office to investigate complaints. Second, the ease of access to the names and addresses of attendees at fundraising events would be useful if her office were to look into an allegation that a

stakeholder who attended such an event subsequently received a benefit from a minister or a party leader. Third, the bill would remove secrecy surrounding fundraising events.

It is these types of results that demonstrate our government's commitment to a fair, transparent process. These types of measures are how we seek to restore a sense of trust in our democracy. We recognize that these are important steps in improving the system and, as this government has said time and time again, we will work tirelessly with opposition members, the Ethics Commissioner, and other experts in making sure we get this right.

● (1640)

In examining this bill, Dr. Leslie Seidle, a leading scholar in this field, has gone on to say that transparency is a vital principle of our political financing system. In fact, for those who do not know, political financing regulations in Canada were created under the 1974 Election Expenses Act, which established a regime for the financing of federal elections in Canada. Seidle explains that since 1974 two critical developments have occurred to strengthen transparency in federal political financing. First was the extension of reporting requirements beyond parties and candidates to other entities such as constituency associations, leadership contestants, nomination contestants, and third parties. This was an amendment of the Election Expenses Act of 1974, and took place in the eighties.

The second development mentioned by Seidle took place in 2004. Since 2004, political parties must report on their contributions at the end of every three-month period rather than annually. According to Mr. Seidle, Bill C-50 fits into these two critical junctures as a third development, enhancing further transparency to our political financing system.

The reason I mention this is that it was under a Liberal government that the Election Expenses Act of 1974 was crafted. It was under a Liberal government that reporting requirements were extended. It was also under a Liberal government that enhanced transparency over political party contributions were established. It is now again under a Liberal government that transparency over political financing is further being strengthened.

Looking back in history, it is very easy to identify the pattern. Not a single Conservative government has enacted legislation to strengthen transparency in political financing. Not only have the Conservatives chosen to disregard this file time and time again, the Conservatives have chosen to omit making improvements to our democracy. The Conservatives are now refusing legislation that enhances public scrutiny.

Government Orders

I wonder why the Conservatives would continue to oppose strengthening transparency in our political financing system. Even though stakeholders such as the Ethics Commissioner clearly indicate that Bill C-50 is good legislation moving forward, the official opposition continues to reject it. It does not make any sense that the Conservatives are unwilling to support sound legislation that promotes transparency. It does not make sense that the Conservatives object to transparency, unless of course they have something to hide. Under the bill, measures would also apply to fundraising events held by party leaders, and in this case, as I have mentioned many times in the House, the Conservative leader specifically.

We know the Conservative leader, the leader of the official opposition, has refused to disclose details of his own private events in the past. However, moving forward under this legislation, he, along with all parties, would have to disclose these events. No longer would the leader of the Conservatives be able to hide who his donors are and who influences his agenda.

In sum, I am strongly supportive of Bill C-50 because it reflects the importance of transparency in democratic rule. Bill C-50 brings forth enhanced transparency to the political fundraising process. These changes are a step in the right direction. They complement and strengthen our democracy, and they contribute to fairness within the political fundraising system.

I encourage all members of the House to vote in support of Bill C-50. Again, our party understands that when we bolster transparency, democracy wins.

• (1645)

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, in following what my other colleagues have said, yes, we will support the bill because there are some changes. However, the bill is missing the point. The Liberal Party ran on a platform that the last election, in which they got the majority government, would be the last election under first past the post, period. Then suddenly we changed ministers and mandates, and gosh darn, we do not need that anymore because we are a majority Liberal government.

Yes, there may be some changes here, but it is still not resolving the key issue, which is cash for access. The issue is that it is one thing for somebody to pay \$10 and get entrance to the bar in Edmonton Strathcona to have a meeting with me, and usually we do not charge anything, but it is another thing to pay \$1,500 in a private law firm, by invitation, and one simply has to reveal who was there and that the Minister of Justice was there but claim that she was just there as an MP and not as a minister of justice.

Can the member explain to me how this resolves that overriding issue of cash for access to the Prime Minister and ministers of the crown?

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, to the point that the bill is missing the point, I would suggest that the bill entirely hits on the point the member is concerned about. On the whole idea of paying to get access to particular individuals, it is about the openness and transparency that would come with that. The Ethics Commissioner could scrutinize after the fact who had access, who paid to go to an event, and who donated.

We would have access to these individuals. We would have access to the list of people and where they live. As the commissioner said herself, this would improve her ability to do her job and to properly scrutinize who had access to these particular individuals. I would suggest that the bill completely hits the point.

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Madam Speaker, I do not think the member got the last question. I am going to ask it again, perhaps in a different way.

On this problem of cash for access, we could go out on the street and tell reasonable people that we have a problem with cash for access fundraisers, where people are being asked to pay \$1,500 to the Liberal Party to gain access to the justice minister or the finance minister, and ask what would help. Would knowing about this beforehand help? If they were invited, would they feel better about it? If they were told within a month afterwards who had been there instead of having to wait until the end of the year, would that help? Maybe we should ban the payment of money to the Liberal Party for access to cabinet ministers.

I would ask the member what he thinks people would say. What would fix the problem more: the first three options, or the last one, banning this unethical conflict of interest of cash for access?

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, the member asked what would help. What would help would be giving the tools and resources to the commissioner and to the general public to scrutinize how these events were put together, who attended them, and how much money was paid to attend.

The whole idea of openness and transparency is to have the ability to look into the details. Not only would we get the retroactive perspective of looking back in time, but those who were planning this stuff would know in advance to prepare themselves accordingly, because this would be scrutinized later.

Absolutely, I believe this legislation would help. That is not only coming from me but from the Ethics Commissioner, the individual who is responsible for looking into this stuff professionally for us.

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal (Surrey—Newton, Lib.): Madam Speaker, first of all, I would like to thank the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands for splitting his time with me and for the very passionate speech he made.

I rise today to speak to Bill C-50, an act to amend the Canada Elections Act, political financing. Under the leadership of the Prime Minister and the Minister of Democratic Institutions, we have taken concrete action to make the government more open so that Canadians can fully understand what their government is doing. A clear way to do this is to make political fundraising more transparent.

I am proud to say that Canada has been a leader in this since the former prime minister, the right hon. Jean Chrétien, banned corporate and union donations to political parties. Today Canada's strong fundraising and election laws are an example throughout the world, as foreign countries regularly visit our country to understand our system and learn from it.

Government Orders

We have one of the most robust systems in the world, which includes strict spending limits, a cap on annual donations, and a ban on corporate and union donations. Canadian citizens and permanent residents can contribute a maximum of \$1,550 every year to a registered federal party. This is among the lowest in the democratic world. In fact, many other democratic countries have no limit at all.

These laws prevent big money from influencing our elections and policies and provide transparency, because any donation above \$200 is published online with the information about who donated it. It is important for our democracy that the voice of every Canadian is heard and that decisions are made based only on facts, principles, and values. I have no doubt that every member in the house would agree with that.

I am proud of the work that has been accomplished to make our elections fairer, where big money plays no role. Our elections are about ideas, and we need to keep it that way. These laws are important to protect the integrity of our institutions. When the government or its policies are motivated by large donations from corporations or unions, that is when public trust in government begins to erode and Canadians become disinterested in the political process. This undermines the foundation of our country and the foundation of our democracy.

Many countries have no limits on how much one can donate. The result is that large interest groups control the conversation regarding policy because of their ability to donate large amounts of funds. This leads to the policy discussion changing from what is in the public interest to what is in the interest of raising enough money for the next election.

I want to be clear. There is nothing wrong with raising funds. It is an important part of our democracy, as it gives political parties and their candidates the ability to reach out to citizens through communication materials and other means.

It is also an opportunity for voters to express their support with their money, which is their individual right. I myself am very proud of the grassroots fundraising from thousands of people who have supported me over the many years I have been in public service. The value of those donations is much higher than those that come in large sums from single groups, because they bring real committed support along with them.

• (1650)

However, these laws need to be made stronger so that our bar for transparency and accountability is high enough to maintain the highest standards of trust in our election process. That is why we are introducing new actions that will increase transparency and give Canadians a new way to understand the fundraising by political parties.

Our promise to Canadians was to increase trust and accountability in Parliament and the democratic process. This is something we have continuously worked towards that began with our actions to strengthen our election system and to engage more Canadians, especially new and young Canadians. Bill C-50 would build on the existing rules and add a new layer of transparency around fundraising by making several changes.

First, fundraising events that had a ticket price of over \$200 and were being attended by cabinet ministers, party leaders, and leadership candidates, would have to release the name and partial address of each donor, with the exception of youth under the age of 18, volunteers, staff, media, and individuals providing support services.

Second, parties would have to advertise the event to the public at least five days in advance so that Canadians would have access to where and when fundraising activities were taking place. After the event, political parties would have to release the names and partial addresses of donors within 30 days.

Third, to ensure that the rules for fundraising were followed, the donations collected would have to be returned if not reported within a set period of time.

Bill C-50 recognizes that even though Canada has world-renowned rules on political fundraising, we understand that this is something that needs to be continually addressed and improved.

This bill would allow Canadians to continue to place confidence in our democratic institutions. These amendments to the Canada Elections Act would give Canadians, including the media, more information than ever by letting them know who was going to fundraisers, when they were happening, who was attending, and the amount required to attend.

In closing, I urge all members to support this bill. Our democracy is the most important foundation of our country. Making fundraising activities more open and transparent has been a core commitment of this government, and we will continue to deliver on that promise.

• (1655)

Mr. Blake Richards (Banff—Airdrie, CPC): Madam Speaker, I listened to the member's speech and heard wonderful words, but that is what we always get from the government: a bunch of words and very little action.

The Liberals might claim this to be action, but at the end of the day, this is really a cover-up, a PR exercise. What would really be required to prevent these kinds of practices from occurring is simply for the Liberal Party to start following some of the guidelines it set for itself, for the Prime Minister to start behaving ethically, and for the Liberals to stop doing cash for access fundraisers. That is all that would be required.

There is no need for a piece of legislation to tell someone what everyone should already know, which is how to behave ethically and how to follow the rules, something the Prime Minister thinks he is above and beyond. Simply, all the Prime Minister needs to do is follow them. Why does the government not simply choose to follow the rules?

Government Orders

I would like to ask a corollary question. Let us look at the kinds of incidents that have occurred, whether they be cash for access or the Prime Minister's travel. The Prime Minister inappropriately claimed some travel expenses in 2009, before he was Prime Minister. It was \$672 for a limo ride to an event that had nothing to do with his responsibilities as a member of Parliament. At that time, he said that he would take responsibility, and he paid back the money.

What was good for the goose then should be good for the goose now. Why does the Prime Minister not simply start to follow the rules instead of creating legislation to cover it up with a PR exercise?

• (1700)

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal: Madam Speaker, I want to tell the House and Canadians that the Prime Minister is not being above the law. This is a prime minister who is a grassroots leader. I have seen him over many years, and he does not shy away from being transparent. That is why we have brought Bill C-50 forward.

On the other hand, I am sure the member for Banff—Airdrie is very informed that his leader, who did events this past summer, refused to declare who attended and who donated. It is our Prime Minister, our leader, who is transparent and open. That is why we have brought the legislation forward.

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would ask the member to comment on this. I wonder what most Canadians would have thought if we had asked them a while ago about the government putting forward a bill to amend the Canada Elections Act. Would they have thought it was about trying to fix some unethical Liberal fundraising tactics or would they have thought it was about the big promise the Liberals made in the last election, that of electoral reform? I went to 20 all candidates forums, and every time the Liberal candidate would stand next to me and would say that this election would be the last under first past the post, that the Liberals would fix it, that they had listened to the experts, that they would ask Canadians, and that they would come up with a better system.

Ninety per cent of the experts at committee said that we needed proportional representation. Over 80% of Canadians who participated said that we needed proportional representation. The Liberals went back on that promise, and the cynicism across the country is tremendous. What does he think of that?

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal: Madam Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for South Okanagan—West Kootenay for raising an important issue. On this side of the House, I can bet that every member went to their constituents and had open discussions, round table meetings, and had a town hall meeting. When I had that town hall meeting, the status quo system was very well supported, because people were confused. They wanted to see the current system remain.

When it comes to Bill C-50, I want to thank the hon. member for supporting it. The bill will take us in a positive direction, which is putting transparency and accountability out front.

Mr. Bob Benzen (Calgary Heritage, CPC): Madam Speaker, today I will be sharing my time with the member for Edmonton Griesbach.

The Liberal Party's campaign platform literature attributes a quote to its leader as follows, "sunlight is the world's best disinfectant. Liberals will shed new light on the government". That quote by the now Prime Minister has proven prophetic, but not for the reasons he had hoped. A new light has, indeed, been shed on government in this Liberal era, and that light has been unflattering. In the space of less than two years, the government has tallied a litany of ethical failures.

Now, here we are today, against that background, debating Bill C-50, a proposal to amend the political financing rules of the Canada Elections Act.

Context is important here, because the bill, at its heart, is one that addresses a question of ethics, namely, those surrounding the cash for access fundraisers in which Liberals engage. The Liberals are retroactively attempting to find political cover for a problem they created.

Bill C-50 is before us because the Liberal Party was selling cash for access at events where tickets were up to \$1,500 per person. Many speakers before me on this issue have detailed the ins and outs of the cash for access scheme and the instances in which the Liberals benefited from it. Suffice it to say, the Liberals now want to legitimize the practice because they depend on it. The numbers have been crunched and they do not look rosy for the governing party.

The Conservative Party just had its best quarter and best year of fundraising results since 2015, but the Liberals logged their worst fundraising year since the current Prime Minister became the party's leader. The Liberals know that Canadians are responding to our positive Conservative vision and taking action to support that vision for Canada through their financial support for my party. The Liberals, for their part, have lost the support of their grassroots donors because of their unethical behaviours.

It seems many Liberal supporters are showing that they have had enough of their party's tax hikes, their government's continuous pattern of debt and deficits, and its failure to deliver results for middle-class Canadians. The Liberals, therefore, want to formalize the cash for access arrangement to help them make up for the loss of funds that have resulted from Canadians' loss of confidence in them. They view Bill C-50 as the answer to their problems. They want to change the rules to conform to their behaviours so they can tell Canadians they are following the rules when they organize these types of fundraisers.

Government Orders

The Conservative opposition, in the course of its duty to hold the government to account, has repeatedly stood to defend Canadians' interests against the cross-purposes of its own Prime Minister. We have consistently exposed matters linked to the unethical behaviour of the Prime Minister and others within the Liberal ranks. Every time we have exhorted their party to do the right thing and take responsibility for their actions, to apologize and change course for the sake of the Canadian people we are all here to serve, their leadership has responded, instead, by dragging out the issue, dodging legitimate questions Canadians have about their conduct.

Here we have Bill C-50, which is the latest attempt by the party to avoid doing the right thing in favour of setting the rules up to give them more latitude. The Liberals know their cash for access fundraisers do not pass the smell test with many Canadians.

Canadians understand human nature and know how suspicious meetings could happen at events of the type that Bill C-50 governs, where people are paying a lot of money to attend and bend the ears of the powers that be. Rather than take the high road and forgo a practice many find objectionable, however, they choose instead to legitimize their bending of the rules so they can keep charging wealthy individuals to meet and discuss government business with Liberals.

We know what Bill C-50 means for the Liberals, but what does it mean for Canadians in general? In short, it means more government. Since the Liberals refuse to relinquish their cash cow, they have decided instead to bring in new rules, which come with new advertising, new reporting, and new administration requirements, which, under a Liberal government, we can bet means more costs for Canadians.

• (1705)

The Liberals prefer this avenue of new expenses for taxpayers so they can continue their sketchy events, rather than the obvious, honourable, no-cost alternative to simply call a stop to these types of fund raisers. That does not take legislation to do. That does not require making new rules to follow, and thereby creating more expense to administrate. The Liberals could just stop doing it. Instead, they opt for more red tape and to make a big bureaucratic mess out of more matters to regulate. The paternalistic answer for the Liberals is always a bigger government and new regulations, as opposed to making right choices. We need less red tape, less bureaucracy, less expense for the taxpayers in Canada, not new opportunities to grow all of those categories.

By now we have heard all the details and provisions of the bill many times. We know how Bill C-50 would provide, among other things, that fundraisers requiring a contribution over \$200 and at which party leaders, ministers, or leadership contestants would be in attendance must be advertised online by the party five days in advance, and a report of each individual fundraiser, including the headline guest, individuals who attended, and how much each attendee was required to pay to attend, must be submitted to Elections Canada within 30 days of the fundraiser for public disclosure. These and other proposals in this bill are tailored to add a gloss of acceptability to the Liberals' tradition of such fundraisers that charge for proximity to their ministers.

A new law will not make these cash for access fundraisers ethical, however. What a cynical world view that represents. Canadians want to know that their representatives are honest, trustworthy, and scrupulous in their dealings. People are naturally leery of political fundraising, and Canadians want us to have not even the appearance of a conflict.

That is what some Canadians thought they were getting with the Prime Minister. They were led to believe so because the Prime Minister's own "Open and Accountable Government" guide under the fundraising section states, "Ministers and Parliamentary Secretaries must avoid conflict of interest, the appearance of conflict of interest and situations that have the potential to involve conflicts of interest."

Given such a directive from the Prime Minister, why then do Liberals need Bill C-50 at all, when they could just follow their own stated ethical standard? I think we know the answer. The answer is because the government is ethically challenged. I do not say that as an insult; I say it as a matter of unfortunate fact. It has been proven time and again.

The recent breaches of ethics we have seen from the Liberal Party cannot be characterized as simple mistakes or missteps, though the Liberals have certainly attempted to portray them that way. No, rather these breaches have been serious and even historic in nature.

Less than halfway through his mandate, the Liberal leader has the dubious distinction of being the first Canadian prime minister to break a federal law while in office, when he accepted a gift that the Ethics Commissioner ruled could have influenced his decision-making, a gift, I hasten to note, which also posed a cost of \$200,000 to Canadians, a cost the Prime Minister to this day refuses to repay the taxpayer.

It has been evident from his actions for some time now that the Prime Minister does not think rules should apply to people like him. Every indicator points to his belief that there is one set of rules for Liberals and their friends, and another set for everybody else. We have seen this in the decision to wait nearly a year to apologize to Canadians for multiple violations of the Conflict of Interest Act. The Prime Minister genuinely did not see anything to apologize for until the Ethics Commissioner's report publicly pointed it out.

Bill C-50 shows us that the Liberals also do not see a problem with selling access to those who are willing to pay up to the maximum federal amount. I am reminded of the proverb "Physician, heal thyself", an admonition to ensure we are not guilty of the faults we are attempting to correct in others. Cash for access events resulted in the Ethics Commissioner and the Lobbying Commissioner launching investigations against the Liberals, which, in turn, has resulted in Bill C-50.

Government Orders

• (1710)

It shows us that these particular positions in the Liberal Party are choosing only to treat the symptoms rather than cure the disease. Bill C-50—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Unfortunately, the member is out of time. I allowed for a few extra seconds. I would remind the member that if he had additional information to share, I am sure that he will be able to do that during questions and comments.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame.

Mr. Scott Simms (Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member quoted quite a bit in his speech, and I have one for him as well. However, I want to touch on the fact that the transparency issue is one that is brought forward in Bill C-50, and whether one calls it a positive first step or a step in the direction, it is simply just that. It baffles me that the member would not vote for this.

I mentioned before in this debate how Conservative ministers used to have fundraisers as well. I mean, that is politics 101 in this country. The executive sits within the House of Commons. Therefore, they have to get elected just like the rest of us.

The Conservatives also claim that when they found out or when it was reported in the media that stakeholders were at some of the ministers' fundraisers, they decided to back away. It is almost like they were saying one's hand was caught in the cookie jar, when in fact they were caught reaching for that very same cookie jar. I find that baffling.

The member mentioned the success of Conservative money raising as opposed to Liberal money raising. Here is what was said by a Conservative member during this debate:

By the way, the party in government should be able to raise twice as much money as the opposition because the governing party is the one that makes the decisions.

Does the member agree with that?

• (1715)

Mr. Bob Benzen: Madam Speaker, to some extent that is true. The incumbent always has the advantage. I mean, that is a given. If one is an incumbent in one's riding, one is well known, and has the name and the power right now. Therefore, in that sense, in theory, yes, the governing party should have an advantage.

However, the problem with this cash for access is that we are dealing with government officials, either the Prime Minister or a cabinet minister, who has the power to make decisions that affect us all. That is an important distinction we have to make. It is not as if we are just talking about a backbencher. We are talking about the people who make the decisions.

Why do the Prime Minister and the cabinet ministers have to put all of their assets into a blind trust while other backbenchers do not? It is because they have so much power. Therefore, if one has access to them simply because one paid money, it could be a problem. That is what we are worried about.

Mr. Scott Simms: Madam Speaker, again I have to ask, because it was said in the House by a Conservative member that the

government should have that distinct advantage to raise twice as much money as the party in opposition. Is that not the very essence of cash for access? If that is his assumption, then that is exactly what we are trying to get rid of. Is that what the Conservatives are arguing against or are they arguing for it? I am not sure.

Mr. Bob Benzen: Madam Speaker, I think that there are different ways to get donations. Yes, every Canadian citizen could write a cheque for \$50 and send it in, no problem, but if the way a party is getting money is by giving personal time with the Prime Minister or a cabinet minister for 10 minutes or half an hour, then that is special access. This is not sending in a cheque for \$100.

The governing party could easily get tons of money just in simple cheques. Nobody asks questions and there is no personal time with these people. However, when one has access to the most powerful person in Canada, the Prime Minister, because one is a wealthy citizen and has given cash, it can create issues that we have to be very concerned about, because it is unequal access. It is extra access, and one could easily influence the Prime Minister's decisions with that.

Mr. Kerry Diotte (Edmonton Griesbach, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am here today to speak to Bill C-50. We have heard a lot of comments from this side of the House noting that the bill really would not get it done. It is quite amazing that our cohorts in the NDP want to support it. I have to say at the outset of my remarks that it is so typical of the Liberals to introduce very complicated legislation and red tape instead of just being inherently ethical.

In the Prime Minister's own open and accountable government guide, which we all know is "Open and Accountable", under the fundraising section it states, "Ministers and Parliamentary Secretaries must avoid conflict of interest, the appearance of conflict of interest and situations that have the potential to involve conflicts of interest." It is pretty simple, straightforward, and sounds pretty good.

Why do the Liberals need such legislation if they could just follow their own rules? It just does not add up to me.

We all know that the Liberals broke the rules and they were caught. That is why we are here debating this legislation today. That is the only reason this legislation has come forward. Here we are debating Bill C-50, which is basically a band-aid for bad behaviour, Liberal bad behaviour.

This legislation really is quite unnecessary. We do not need new legislation to tell us how to act and to tell us what to do and how to behave. It has been said here before, but it is worth repeating, that a new law will not make the Prime Minister's infamous cash for access fundraisers ethical. Those famous, or maybe I should say infamous, Liberal fundraisers saw scores of people paying \$1,500 a pop to have special access to the Prime Minister or cabinet ministers. It is really quite shameful.

Government Orders

Members on all sides of the House should know what is right and what is wrong. We have probably all known this since we were four years old or maybe younger. If we are caught with our hand in the cookie jar, there is a price to pay. The Liberal leader of Canada was clearly caught with his hand in the cookie jar. There is absolutely no doubt about that. He has admitted it, etc., etc.

Canadians tell me they believe the Prime Minister just does not understand basic ethics, and that is pretty evident. He does not like to own up to what he has done. He does not understand that when people do something or take something that does not belong to them, they have to give it back. We were taught that as children. We have to accept punishment. We cannot just say, "My bad, can't do it. Sorry about that. Sorry if I hurt your feelings."

It is just like his trip to the Aga Khan's private island. The Prime Minister was found to have broken the law. He was found guilty of four ethics violations. We all know what happened. When we break the law, there is a price to pay. We cannot just say "sorry". We all remember that famous song of the 1980s, *Tears Are Not Enough*. It rings true now.

• (1720)

We also know the Prime Minister is very good at crying on cue and appearing to be sorry, but he has to make amends and is just not willing to do so. He has said that again and again in the House. I guess he is just not ready. Where have I heard that before? I do not know. It is true that he has just not grown up yet. Maybe he was never punished before. I do not know.

Every Canadian knows that we just cannot take something, say sorry, and then not give it back. We learn that as children. It is especially not cool when someone is taking taxpayer money from hard-working Canadians. Now these are people who know what it is like to work hard for a dollar. That is precisely what the Prime Minister is doing. He is taking from hard-working taxpayers. He is even refusing to pay back more than \$200,000 for his illegal family trip to fantasy island. That is what I like to call it. It was a fantasy.

Do not forget he is the first sitting Canadian Prime Minister found in violation of a federal statute while in office. That is quite a record. It is terrible. It is shameful. Here is something I think of all the time. Could we imagine the outrage if then prime minister Stephen Harper had broken the law in this way? They would be stringing up the gallows. However, I know that would never have happened. It did not happen and it could not have happened because of the fundraising rules already in place, as well as the fact that we, as Conservatives, followed them. That is the key. We followed the existing rules.

Canadians really deserve better than a Prime Minister who believes there is one set of rules for Liberals and his friends, and a whole other set of rules for everybody else, all the other poor schmucks. What is really at play here is that if the Prime Minister truly wanted to be ethical and end cash for access, all he needed to do was just stop doing these types of fundraisers. It is a no-brainer. It is cliché to say that it is not rocket science, but it is beyond that. I mean, it could not be clearer. It just does not take legislation to stop unethical behaviour. It just takes being ethical. It is ludicrous that we are even having to sit here and debate this kind of thing when we all

know what the situation is. Just be ethical. All one needs is a good moral compass, and we are not seeing that from this Prime Minister.

I will transition for a minute to say a few words about the party I represent. The truth is that we approach things differently. We get a lot of smaller donations from regular Canadians, and we continue to get them. As a party, we do not rely on wealthy elites and pay-to-play events and such fundraisers. We really do not. In fact, I am told that opposition Conservatives just had their best fourth quarter ever and the best year since the 2015 election, without relying on these kinds of unethical fundraising practices the Liberals have employed. Now, the Liberals had their worst fundraising year since the Prime Minister became their leader, because they had to halt these unethical types of fundraisers. That is exactly why that happened.

These numbers support what we are hearing from all constituents and Canadians across the country. Canadians are really tired of the Prime Minister's unethical behaviour, tax hikes, and failure to deliver results for middle-class Canadians. Conservatives will continue to follow the law, as we always have.

• (1725)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I am sorry, but the member has run out of time. I am sure he will be able to work anything else he has to say into the questions and comments.

We have time for a question and comment before we continue on with some of the orders of the day that are coming up.

The hon. member for Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame, a brief question.

Mr. Scott Simms (Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame, Lib.): Madam Speaker, when we listen to this time and time again, it is almost like the years 2006 to 2015 just did not exist. My issue about all of this is, it is not like there was never a Conservative minister that attended any fundraisers, or that leaders never had any fundraisers. I am not even sure if Mr. Harper ever divulged his list of donors from the very beginning. Then those members say things like, "We do not take money from the wealthy." Has no wealthy person ever given to the Conservative Party of Canada? That is a rhetorical question.

I am absolutely gobsmacked by the amount of hypocrisy in this. I absolutely have no question. I am stunned.

Business of Supply

• (1730)

Mr. Kerry Diotte: Madam Speaker, it is not so much the fundraisers. We all know we have to fundraise. It is a matter of what happens at these fundraisers and what the expectation is. Conservatives do not come to fundraisers to bend the ear of the prime minister. That is off limits, and it always has been. I saw that, absolutely, when I was running as a candidate. There were strict rules. I was told if we thought someone was coming to a fundraiser hoping to get to lobby a minister or the prime minister, it was on us to keep them out. It was very strict.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I want to remind the members on the government side that when someone has the floor, they should show the member some respect. If they have other questions, they can attempt to get up and ask them.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): It being 5:30 p.m., the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion of the Leader of the Opposition relating to the business of supply.

Call in the members.

• (1810)

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

(Division No. 442)

YEAS

Members

Albas	Albrecht
Allison	Arnold
Ashton	Aubin
Barlow	Barsalou-Duval
Beaulieu	Benson
Benzen	Bergen
Bernier	Berthold
Bezan	Blaikie
Blaney (North Island—Powell River)	Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis)
Boucher	Boudrias
Boulerice	Boutin-Sweet
Brassard	Brosseau
Cannings	Caron
Chong	Choquette
Christopherson	Clarke
Clement	Cooper
Cullen	Davies
Deltell	Diotte
Donnelly	Dreeshen
Dubé	Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)
Dusseault	Duvall
Eglski	Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)
Falk (Provencher)	Fast
Finley	Fortin
Garrison	Généreux
Genuis	Gladu
Godin	Gourde
Harder	Hughes
Jeneroux	Johns

Jolibois	Julian
Kelly	Kent
Kitchen	Kmiec
Kusie	Kwan
Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Laverdière
Leitch	Liepert
Lloyd	Lobb
Lukiwski	MacGregor
MacKenzie	Maguire
Malcolmson	Marcil
Masse (Windsor West)	Mathysen
McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)	Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound)
Moore	Motz
Nantel	Nater
Nicholson	Nuttall
Paul-Hus	Pauzé
Plamondon	Poillievre
Quach	Ramsey
Rankin	Rayes
Reid	Richards
Saganash	Sansoucy
Saroya	Scheer
Schmale	Shields
Shiple	Sopuck
Stanton	Ste-Marie
Stetski	Stewart
Strahl	Stubbs
Sweet	Thériault
Tilson	Trudel
Van Kesteren	Van Loan
Vecchio	Viersen
Wagantall	Warawa
Warkentin	Waugh
Webber	Weir
Wong	Yurdiga — 128

NAYS

Members

Aldag	Alghabra
Alleslev	Amos
Anandasangaree	Arseneault
Arya	Ayoub
Badawey	Bagnell
Bains	Baylis
Beech	Bennett
Bittle	Blair
Boissonnault	Bossio
Bratina	Breton
Brison	Caesar-Chavannes
Casey (Charlottetown)	Chagger
Champagne	Chen
Cormier	Cuzner
Dabrusin	Damoff
DeCoursey	Dhaliwal
Dhillon	Di Iorio
Drouin	Dubourg
Duclos	Duguid
Dzerowicz	Easter
El-Khoury	Ellis
Erskine-Smith	Eyking
Eyolfson	Fergus
Fillmore	Finnigan
Fisher	Fonseca
Fortier	Fragiskatos
Fraser (West Nova)	Fraser (Central Nova)
Freeland	Fuhr
Gerretsen	Goldsmith-Jones
Goodale	Gould
Graham	Grewal
Hajdu	Hardie
Harvey	Hébert
Holland	Housefather
Hussen	Hutchings
Iacono	Joly
Jones	Jordan
Jowhari	Kang
Khera	Lambropoulos
Lametti	Lamoureux
Lapointe	Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)
Lebouthillier	Lefebvre
Leslie	Lightbound
Lockhart	Long

Private Members' Business

Longfield	Ludwig	Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis)	Boucher
MacAulay (Cardigan)	MacKinnon (Gatineau)	Brassard	Chong
Maloney	Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)	Clement	Cooper
May (Cambridge)	May (Saarich—Gulf Islands)	Deltell	Diotte
McCrimmon	McDonald	Dreesen	Egliniski
McKay	McKenna	Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)	Falk (Provencher)
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)	McLeod (Northwest Territories)	Fast	Finley
Mendès	Mendicino	Généreux	Genius
Mihychuk	Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Soeurs)	Gladu	Godin
Monsef	Mormeau	Gourde	Harder
Morrissey	Murray	Jeneroux	Kelly
Nassif	Nault	Kent	Kitchen
O'Connell	Oliphant	Kmiec	Kusie
Oliver	O'Regan	Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Leitch
Ouellette	Paradis	Liepert	Lloyd
Peschisolido	Peterson	Lobb	Lukiwski
Petitpas Taylor	Philpott	MacKenzie	Maguire
Poissant	Qualtrough	McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)	Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound)
Ratansi	Rioux	Motz	Nater
Robillard	Rodriguez	Nicholson	Nuttall
Rogers	Romanado	Paul-Hus	Poilevre
Rota	Rudd	Rayes	Reid
Ruimy	Rusnak	Richards	Saroya
Sahota	Saini	Scheer	Schimale
Sajjan	Samson	Shields	Shipley
Sangha	Sarai	Sopuck	Stanton
Scarpaleggia	Schiefke	Strahl	Stubbs
Schulte	Serré	Sweet	Tilson
Sgro	Shanahan	Van Kesteren	Van Loan
Sheehan	Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)	Vecchio	Viersen
Sidhu (Brampton South)	Sikand	Wagantall	Warawa
Simms	Sohi	Warkentin	Waugh
Sorbara	Spengemann	Webber	Wong
Tan	Tassi	Yurdiga— 77	
Vandal	Vandenbeld		
Vaughan	Virani		
Whalen	Wilson-Raybould		
Wrzesnewskyj	Yip		
Young	Zahid— 166		

PAIRED

Members

Gill

LeBlanc— 2

The Speaker: I declare the motion defeated.**PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS***[Translation]***CRIMINAL CODE**

The House resumed from January 31 consideration of the motion that Bill C-365, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (firefighting equipment) 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-365 under private members' business.

• (1820)

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

*(Division No. 443)***YEAS**

Members

Albas	Albrecht
Allison	Arnold
Barlow	Benzen
Bergen	Bernier
Berthold	Bezan

Aldag	Alghabra
Alleslev	Amos
Anandasangaree	Arseneault
Arya	Ashton
Aubin	Ayoub
Badawey	Bagnell
Bains	Barsalou-Duval
Baylis	Beaulieu
Beech	Bennett
Benson	Bittle
Blaikie	Blair
Blaney (North Island—Powell River)	Boissonnault
Bossio	Boudrias
Boulerice	Boufin-Sweet
Bratina	Breton
Brison	Brosseau
Caesar-Chavannes	Cannings
Caron	Casey (Charlottetown)
Chagger	Champagne
Chen	Choquette
Christopherson	Cormier
Cullen	Cuzner
Dabrusin	Damoff
Davies	DeCoursey
Dhaliwal	Dhillon
Di Iorio	Donnelly
Drouin	Dubé
Dubourg	Duclos
Duguid	Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)
Dusseault	Duvall
Dzerowicz	Easter
El-Khoury	Ellis
Erskine-Smith	Eyking
Eyolfson	Fergus
Fillmore	Finnigan
Fisher	Fonseca
Fortier	Fortin
Fragiskatos	Fraser (West Nova)
Fraser (Central Nova)	Freeland
Fuhr	Garrison
Gerretsen	Goldsmith-Jones
Goodale	Gould
Graham	Grewal
Hajdu	Hardie
Harvey	Hébert

NAYS

Members

Private Members' Business

Holland	Housefather
Hughes	Hussen
Hutchings	Iacono
Johns	Jolibois
Joly	Jones
Jordan	Jowhari
Julian	Kang
Khera	Kwan
Lambropoulos	Lametti
Lamoureux	Lapointe
Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)	Laverdière
Lebouthillier	Lefebvre
Leslie	Lightbound
Lockhart	Long
Longfield	Ludwig
MacAulay (Cardigan)	MacGregor
MacKinnon (Gatineau)	Malcolmson
Maloney	Marcil
Masse (Windsor West)	Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)
Mathysen	May (Cambridge)
May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	McCrimmon
McDonald	McKay
McKenna	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
McLeod (Northwest Territories)	Mendès
Mendicino	Mihychuk
Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Sœurs)	
Monsef	
Moore	Morneau
Morrissey	Murray
Nantel	Nassif
Nault	O'Connell
Oliphant	Oliver
O'Regan	Ouellette
Paradis	Pauzé
Peschisolido	Peterson
Petitpas Taylor	Philpott
Picard	Plamondon
Poissant	Quach
Qualtrough	Ramsey
Rankin	Ratansi
Rioux	Robillard
Rodriguez	Rogers
Romanado	Rota
Rudd	Ruimy
Rusnak	Saganash
Sahota	Saini
Sajjan	Samson
Sangha	Sansoucy
Sarai	Scarpaleggia
Schiefke	Schulte
Serré	Sgro
Shanahan	Sheehan
Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)	Sidhu (Brampton South)
Sikand	Simms
Sohi	Sorbara
Spengemann	Ste-Marie
Stetski	Stewart
Tan	Tassi
Thériault	Trudel
Vandal	Vandenbeld
Vaughan	Virani
Weir	Whalen
Wilson-Raybould	Wrzesnewskyj
Yip	Young
Zahid— 217	

PAIRED

Members

Gill LeBlanc— 2

The Speaker: I declare the motion defeated.

* * *

[English]

BRITISH HOME CHILD DAY

The House resumed from February 1 consideration of the motion.

The Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on Motion M-133 under private members'

business in the name of the member for Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry.

● (1830)

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

(Division No. 444)

YEAS

Members

Albas	Albrecht
Aldag	Alghabra
Alleslev	Allison
Amos	Anandasangaree
Arnold	Arseneault
Arya	Ashton
Aubin	Ayoub
Badawey	Bagnell
Bains	Barlow
Barsalou-Duval	Baylis
Beaulieu	Beech
Bennett	Benson
Benzen	Bergen
Bernier	Berthold
Bezan	Bittle
Blaikie	Blair
Blaney (North Island—Powell River)	Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis)
Boissonnault	Bossio
Boucher	Boudrias
Boulerice	Boutin-Sweet
Brassard	Bratima
Breton	Brisson
Brosseau	Caesar-Chavannes
Cannings	Caron
Casey (Charlottetown)	Chagger
Champagne	Chen
Chong	Choquette
Christopherson	Clement
Cooper	Cormier
Cullen	Cuzner
Dabrusin	Damoff
Davies	DeCourcey
Deltell	Dhaliwal
Dhillon	Di Iorio
Diotte	Donnelly
Dreeshen	Drouin
Dubé	Dubourg
Duclos	Duguid
Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)	Dusseault
Duvall	Dzerowicz
Easter	Eglsinski
El-Khoury	Ellis
Erskine-Smith	Eyking
Eyolfson	Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)
Falk (Provencher)	Fast
Fergus	Fillmore
Finley	Finnigan
Fisher	Fonseca
Fortier	Fortin
Fragiskatos	Fraser (West Nova)
Fraser (Central Nova)	Freeland
Fuhr	Garrison
Généreux	Genius
Gerretsen	Gladu
Godin	Goldsmith-Jones
Goodale	Gould
Gourde	Graham
Grewal	Hajdu
Harder	Hardie
Harvey	Hébert
Holland	Housefather
Hughes	Hussen
Hutchings	Iacono
Jeneroux	Johns
Jolibois	Joly
Jones	Jordan
Jowhari	Julian
Kang	Kelly
Kent	Khera

Private Members' Business

Kitchen	Kmiec
Kusie	Kwan
Lambropoulos	Lametti
Lamoureux	Lapointe
Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)
Laverdière	Lebouthillier
Lefebvre	Leitch
Leslie	Liepert
Lightbound	Lloyd
Lobb	Lockhart
Long	Longfield
Ludwig	Lukiwski
MacAulay (Cardigan)	MacGregor
MacKenzie	MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Maguire	Malcolmson
Maloney	Marci
Masse (Windsor West)	Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)
Mathysen	May (Cambridge)
May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	McCrimmon
McDonald	McKay
McKenna	MacKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)	McLeod (Northwest Territories)
Mendès	Mendicino
Mihychuk	Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound)
Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Soeurs)	
Monsef	
Moore	Momeau
Morrissey	Motz
Murray	Nantel
Nassif	Nater
Nault	Nicholson
Nuttall	O'Connell
Olyphant	Oliver
O'Regan	Ouellette
Paradis	Paul-Hus
Paupé	Pescholido
Peterson	Petitpas Taylor
Philpott	Picard
Plamondon	Poilievre
Poissant	Quach
Qualtrough	Ramsey
Rankin	Ratansi
Rayes	Reid
Richards	Rioux
Robillard	Rodriguez
Rogers	Romanado
Rota	Rudd
Ruimy	Rusnak
Saganash	Sahota
Saini	Sajjan
Samson	Sangha
Sansoucy	Sarai
Saroya	Scarpaleggia
Scheer	Schiefke
Schmale	Schulte
Serré	Sgro
Shanahan	Sheehan
Shields	Shipley
Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)	Sidhu (Brampton South)
Sikand	Simms
Sohi	Sopuck
Sorbara	Spengemann
Stanton	Ste-Marie
Stetski	Stewart
Strahl	Stubbs
Sweet	Tan
Tassi	Thériault
Tilson	Trudel
Van Kesteren	Van Loan
Vandal	Vandenbeld
Vaughan	Vecchio
Viersen	Virani
Wagantall	Warawa
Warkentin	Waugh
Webber	Weir
Whalen	Wilson-Raybould
Wong	Wrzesnewskyj
Yip	Young
Yurdiga	Zahid — 294

NAYS

Nil

PAIRED

Members

Gill LeBlanc — 2

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

* * *

[Translation]

NATIONAL IMPAIRED DRIVING PREVENTION WEEK

The House resumed from February 2 consideration of the motion.

The Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on Motion No. 148 under private members' business.

● (1840)

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

(Division No. 445)

YEAS

Members

Albas	Albrecht
Aldag	Alghabra
Alleslev	Allison
Amos	Anandasangaree
Arnold	Arseneault
Arya	Ashton
Aubin	Ayoub
Badawey	Bagnell
Bains	Barlow
Barsalou-Duval	Baylis
Beaulieu	Beech
Bennett	Benson
Benzen	Bergen
Bernier	Berthold
Bezan	Bittle
Blaikie	Blair
Blaney (North Island—Powell River)	Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis)
Boissonnault	Bossio
Boucher	Boudrias
Boulerice	Boutin-Sweet
Brassard	Bratina
Breton	Brisson
Brosseau	Caesar-Chavannes
Cannings	Caron
Casey (Charlottetown)	Chagger
Champagne	Chen
Chong	Choquette
Christopherson	Clement
Cooper	Cormier
Cullen	Cuzner
Dabrusin	Damoff
Davies	DeCoursey
Deltell	Dhaliwal
Dhillon	Di Iorio
Diotte	Donnelly
Dreeschen	Drouin
Dubé	Dubourg
Duclos	Duguid
Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)	Dusseault
Duvall	Dzerowicz
Easter	Eglinski
El-Khoury	Ellis
Erskine-Smith	Eyking
Eyolfson	Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)
Falk (Provencher)	Fast
Fergus	Fillmore
Finley	Finnigan
Fisher	Fonseca
Fortier	Fortin
Fragiskatos	Fraser (West Nova)
Fraser (Central Nova)	Freeland
Fuhr	Garrison

Généreux
Gerretsen
Godin
Goodale
Gourde
Grewal
Harder
Harvey
Holland
Hughes
Hutchings
Jeneroux
Jolibois
Jones
Jowhari
Kang
Kent
Kitchen
Kusie
Lambropoulos
Lamoureux
Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengary)
Laverdière
Lefebvre
Leslie
Lighthound
Lobb
Long
Ludwig
MacAulay (Cardigan)
MacKenzie
Maguire
Maloney
Masse (Windsor West)
Mathysen
May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
McDonald
McKenna
McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)
Mendès
Mihychuk
Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Sœurs)
Monsef
Moore
Morrissey
Murray
Nassif
Nault
Nuttall
Oliphant
O'Regan
Paradis
Pauzé
Peterson
Philpott
Plamondon
Poissant
Qualtrough
Rankin
Rayes
Richards
Robillard
Rogers
Rota
Ruimy
Saganash
Saini
Samson
Sansoucy
Saroya
Schiefke
Schulte
Sgro
Sheehan
Shipley
Sidhu (Brampton South)
Simms
Sopuck
Spengemann
Ste-Marie
Stewart
Stubbs
Tan
Thériault

Genuis
Gladu
Goldsmith-Jones
Gould
Graham
Hajdu
Hardie
Hébert
Housefather
Hussen
Iacono
Johns
Joly
Jordan
Julian
Kelly
Khera
Kmiec
Kwan
Lametti
Lapointe
Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)
Lebouthillier
Leitch
Liepert
Lloyd
Lockhart
Longfield
Lukiwski
MacGregor
MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Malcolmson
Marcil
Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)
May (Cambridge)
McCrimmon
McKay
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
McLeod (Northwest Territories)
Mendicino
Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound)

Morneau
Motz
Nantel
Nater
Nicholson
O'Connell
Oliver
Ouellette
Paul-Hus
Peschisolido
Petitpas Taylor
Picard
Poilievre
Quach
Ramsey
Ratansi
Reid
Rioux
Rodriguez
Romanado
Rudd
Rusnak
Sahota
Sajjan
Sangha
Sarai
Scarpaleggia
Schmale
Serré
Shanahan
Shields
Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)
Sikand
Sohi
Sorbara
Stanton
Stetski
Strahl
Sweet
Tassi
Tilson

Private Members' Business

Trudel
Van Loan
Vandenbeld
Vecchio
Virani
Warkentin
Webber
Whalen
Wong
Yip
Yurdiga

Van Kesteren
Vandal
Vaughan
Viersen
Wagantall
Waugh
Weir
Wilson-Raybould
Wrzesnewskij
Young
Zahid — 292

NAYS

Nil

PAIRED

Members

Gill LeBlanc — 2

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

* * *

*[English]***UNITED NATIONS DECLARATION ON THE RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES ACT**

The House resumed from February 5 consideration of the motion that Bill C-262, An Act to ensure that the laws of Canada are in harmony with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, 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-262 under private members' business.

● (1850)

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

(Division No. 446)

YEAS

Members

Aldag
Alleslev
Anandasangaree
Arya
Aubin
Badawey
Bains
Baylis
Beech
Benson
Blaikie
Blaney (North Island—Powell River)
Bossio
Boulerice
Bratina
Brisson
Caesar-Chavannes
Caron
Chagger
Chen
Christopherson
Cullen
Dabrusin
Davies
Dhaliwal
Di Iorio
Drouin
Dubourg
Duguid
Dusseault

Alghabra
Amos
Arseneault
Ashton
Ayoub
Bagnell
Barsalou-Duval
Beaulieu
Bennett
Bittle
Blair
Boissonnault
Boudrias
Boutin-Sweet
Breton
Brosseau
Cannings
Casey (Charlottetown)
Champagne
Choquette
Cormier
Cuzner
Damoff
DeCoursey
Dhillon
Donnelly
Dubé
Duclos
Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)
Duvall

Private Members' Business

Dzerowicz	Easter
El-Khoury	Ellis
Erskine-Smith	Eyking
Eyolfson	Fergus
Fillmore	Finnigan
Fisher	Fonseca
Fortier	Fortin
Fragiskatos	Fraser (West Nova)
Fraser (Central Nova)	Freeland
Fuhr	Garrison
Gerretsen	Goldsmith-Jones
Goodale	Gould
Graham	Grewal
Hajdu	Hardie
Harvey	Hébert
Holland	Housefather
Hughes	Hussen
Hutchings	Iacono
Johns	Jolibois
Joly	Jones
Jordan	Jowhari
Julian	Kang
Khera	Kwan
Lambropoulos	Lametti
Lamoureux	Lapointe
Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)	Laverdière
Lebouhiller	Lefebvre
Leslie	Lightbound
Lockhart	Long
Longfield	Ludwig
MacAulay (Cardigan)	MacGregor
MacKinnon (Gatineau)	Malcolmson
Maloney	Marcil
Masse (Windsor West)	Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)
Mathysen	May (Cambridge)
May (Saarich—Gulf Islands)	McCrimmon
McDonald	McKay
McKenna	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
McLeod (Northwest Territories)	Mendès
Mendicino	Mihychuk
Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Sœurs)	
Monsef	
Moore	Morneau
Morrissey	Murray
Nantel	Nassif
Nault	O'Connell
Oliphant	Oliver
O'Regan	Ouellette
Paradis	Pauzé
Peschisolido	Peterson
Petitpas Taylor	Philpott
Picard	Plamondon
Poissant	Quach
Qualtrough	Ramsey
Rankin	Ratansi
Rioux	Robillard
Rodriguez	Rogers
Romanado	Rota
Rudd	Ruimy
Rusnak	Saganash
Sahota	Saini
Sajjan	Samson
Sangha	Sansoucy
Sarai	Scarpaleggia
Schiefke	Schulte
Serré	Sgro
Shanahan	Sheehan
Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)	Sidhu (Brampton South)
Sikand	Simms
Sohi	Sorbara
Spengemann	Ste-Marie
Stetski	Stewart
Tan	Tassi
Thériault	Trudel
Vandal	Vandenbeld
Vaughan	Virani
Weir	Whalen
Wilson-Raybould	Wrzesnewskyj
Yip	Young
Zahid— 217	

NAYS

Members

Albas	Albrecht
Allison	Arnold
Barlow	Benzen
Bergen	Bernier
Berthold	Bezan
Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis)	Boucher
Brassard	Chong
Clement	Cooper
Deltell	Diotte
Dreeschen	Eglinski
Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)	Falk (Provencher)
Fast	Finley
Généreux	Genuis
Gladu	Godin
Gourde	Harder
Jeneroux	Kelly
Kent	Kitchen
Kniec	Kusie
Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Leitch
Liepert	Lloyd
Lobb	Lukiwski
MacKenzie	Maguire
McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)	Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound)
Motz	Nater
Nicholson	Nuttall
Paul-Hus	Poilievre
Rayes	Reid
Richards	Saroya
Schmale	Shields
Shiple	Sopuck
Stanton	Strahl
Stubbs	Sweet
Tilson	Van Kesteren
Van Loan	Vecchio
Viersen	Wagantall
Warawa	Warkentin
Waugh	Webber
Wong	Yurdiga— 76

PAIRED

Members

Gill	LeBlanc— 2
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The Speaker: I declare the motion carried. Accordingly, the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs.

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

* * *

[*Translation*]

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS AND GOVERNMENT SERVICES ACT

The House resumed from February 6 consideration of the motion that Bill C-354, An Act to amend the Department of Public Works and Government Services Act (use of wood), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of a deferred recorded division on the motion at second reading stage of Bill C-354.

● (1900)

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

*Private Members' Business**(Division No. 447)*

YEAS

Members

Aldag	Alghabra
Alleslev	Amos
Anandasangaree	Arseneault
Arya	Ashton
Aubin	Ayoub
Badawey	Bagnell
Bains	Barsalou-Duval
Baylis	Beaulieu
Beech	Bennett
Benson	Bittle
Blaikie	Blair
Blaney (North Island—Powell River)	Boissonnault
Bossio	Boudrias
Boulerice	Boutin-Sweet
Bratina	Breton
Brison	Brosseau
Caesar-Chavannes	Cannings
Caron	Casey (Charlottetown)
Chagger	Champagne
Chen	Choquette
Christopherson	Cormier
Cullen	Cuzner
Dabrusin	Damoff
Davies	DeCoursey
Dhaliwal	Dhillon
Di Iorio	Donnelly
Drouin	Dubé
Dubourg	Duclos
Duguid	Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)
Dusseault	Duvall
Dzerowicz	East
El-Khoury	Ellis
Erskine-Smith	Eyking
Eyolfson	Fergus
Fillmore	Finnigan
Fisher	Fonseca
Fortier	Fortin
Fragiskatos	Fraser (West Nova)
Fraser (Central Nova)	Freeland
Fuhr	Garrison
Gerretsen	Goldsmith-Jones
Goodale	Gould
Graham	Grewal
Hajdu	Hardie
Harvey	Hébert
Holland	Housefather
Hughes	Hussen
Hutchings	Iacono
Johns	Jolibois
Joly	Jones
Jordan	Jowhari
Julian	Kang
Khera	Kwan
Lambropoulos	Lametti
Lamoureux	Lapointe
Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)	Laverdière
Lebouthillier	Lefebvre
Leslie	Lightbound
Lockhart	Long
Longfield	Ludwig
MacAulay (Cardigan)	MacGregor
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Rankin	Ratansi
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Sahota	Saini
Sajjan	Samson
Sangha	Sansoucy
Sarai	Scarpaleggia
Schiefke	Schulte
Serré	Sgro
Shanahan	Sheehan
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Sikand	Simms
Sohi	Sorbara
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The Speaker: I declare the motion carried. Accordingly, the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Natural Resources.

Adjournment Proceedings

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

[English]

The Speaker: I wish to inform the House that because of the delay there will be no private members' business hour today. Accordingly, the order will be rescheduled for another sitting.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

[English]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on October 19 last year, I raised concerns with the Minister of Environment that Aamjiwnaang First Nation members living adjacent to the Sarnia industrial complex have suffered high incidences of cancer, rashes, and respiratory diseases, yet there has been minimal enforcement action by Conservative or Liberal governments on repeated spills and pollution incidents.

This first nation's call for a health impact study has long been ignored as has been the case for other first nations. Federal authorities have failed to act despite clear power and the duty to act, and despite constant flaring of acid gas and repeated spikes in sulphur dioxide releases.

The Minister of Environment responded that while the situation in Sarnia is very worrying she is encouraged by the steps taken by the Ontario government. She agreed on the need for strong regulations to ensure clean air and health protection, and shared that her government looks forward to strengthening CEPA. We are still waiting for those reforms.

The powers needed to address the concerns at Sarnia exist now. Quite simply there is a lack of political will to act. The environment minister is empowered to list and regulate toxins and has a mandatory duty to monitor environmental quality and to develop and deliver that system in consultation with aboriginal peoples. Many of the toxins emitted by Sarnia industries are federally regulated as toxins.

For decades, federal governments have consulted on strengthened standards for toxins with no action. They know Canadian emissions standards remain far weaker than those of other jurisdictions. The federal Minister of Health has a mandatory duty to investigate when information comes to her attention that toxins may be impacting health.

What is the government's excuse for failing to act to protect this suffering community?

The Prime Minister continues to espouse that there is no greater priority for him than delivering a nation-to-nation relationship and respecting the rights and interests of indigenous peoples, yet he sits by, forcing the first nation to seek intervention of the courts on information that should be readily available to the community, the cumulative impacts of all of the industrial emitters in Sarnia.

Why are they seeking this information? Studies finding abnormally low male birth rates in their community have suggested potential connections to their proximity to industrial emissions. The community members also report high rates of asthma and miscarriages, yet to date there has been no comprehensive study to assess the health effects of the emissions on this community.

Frankly, neither has there been a health study in response to calls by the indigenous communities of northern Alberta, a call that has been ignored by successive federal governments for decades despite the government's duty to act. There seems to be a common theme running through the responses by the environment minister, that regulating industrial emissions and environmental and health impacts of industry is a provincial responsibility. That view is not supported by either federal law or rulings of the courts.

Will the government finally step up and respond to the pleas of this indigenous community to address its concerns about the impacts of industrial emissions on its members' health?

•(1905)

Mr. Bill Blair (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada and to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to attempt to address the question posed by the hon. member for Edmonton Strathcona regarding the regulation of toxic substances.

Our government is committed to reducing the risks posed to Canadians by toxins and toxic substances. We are working with the provinces and territories to set stronger air quality standards to improve air quality and to protect the health of Canadians and their environment. These standards have continuous improvement built in, as well as keeping clean areas clean.

In 2016, Canada published the multi-sector air pollutants regulations, Canada's first federal regulatory requirements for industrial air emissions. The regulations apply to thousands of sources of air pollution across Canada, including oil and gas and chemicals facilities. These regulations are expected to reduce 2,000 kilotonnes of nitrogen oxide emissions, resulting in over \$6 billion in cumulative health and environmental benefits for Canadians over the 2016 to 2035 period.

In May 2017, we proposed new national regulations that will reduce emissions of toxic air pollutants from many of the petroleum and petrochemical facilities that currently operate in Sarnia. It is anticipated that the proposed regulations will result in \$238 million in health benefits, resulting from air quality improvements over the period from 2017 to 2035.

These proposed regulations are also expected to provide better air quality for Canadians living and working near certain oil and gas facilities. Cleaner air leads to improved human health, including fewer asthma symptoms, a reduced risk of premature death, and fewer heart-related issues.

Adjournment Proceedings

The chemicals management plan assesses chemicals used in Canada and takes action on those found to be harmful. Through the chemicals management plan, the Government of Canada has committed to address 4,300 priority chemicals by 2020 and has considered more than 2,700 chemicals to date. We will continue to identify where further actions are required to prevent and control risks.

Ms. Linda Duncan: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the response. Unfortunately, it still does not address or respond to the issues and concerns raised by this first nation community and, frankly, many first nation communities, including those in northern Alberta.

It is one thing to consult, as successive governments have for decades. It is another thing to actually put that standard in place to make legally-binding standards and then to go out to inspect and enforce.

Also, where is the demanded health study? The two ministers have responsibility under this legislation. There is a mandatory duty when this information comes to her attention. The government appears to be admitting these chemicals have been causing serious harm, which of course they do. Where is the next step of moving in and actually genuinely assessing the impacts and whether additional measures need to be taken more expeditiously?

• (1910)

Mr. Bill Blair: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Edmonton Strathcona for her passion on this issue, her continued interest, and her inquiry. I am pleased to inform her that our government has been actively working with provinces and territories to set strong air quality standards, which improve air quality and protect the health of Canadians and their environment.

Most recently, through a collaborative partnership with the Aamjiwnaang First Nation and the province of Ontario, Environment and Climate Change Canada installed a permanent air quality monitoring station in the community. Data collected will be used to inform the next steps in addressing local air quality issues.

Environment and Climate Change Canada is also working with that first nation and providing capacity funding to enable meaningful engagement with the first nation regarding its legitimate environmental concerns.

We continue to work with indigenous communities across Canada on industrial air pollution, and we remain committed to protecting the health and safety of all Canadians.

[*Translation*]

FOOD LABELLING

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on October 19, 2017, I rose in this House to discuss an issue that is very important to me and very important to the entire greater Drummond community, as well as to most Canadians. I am talking about the labelling of genetically modified foods.

Right around the time I was calling out the government on this extremely important issue, the organization Vigilance OGM reported that five million genetically modified salmon had been sold in Quebec. Meanwhile, major grocery store chains like Provigo, IGA, Metro, and others stated that they were not selling genetically

modified salmon in their stores because their customers did not want that. Still, those five million salmon somehow found their way onto the dinner plates of Quebec consumers.

The question remains: did Quebecers unwittingly eat genetically modified salmon? Unfortunately, the evidence suggests that they did. That genetically modified salmon probably ended up in hospitals, prisons, day cares, and so on. That is worrisome.

Canadians want the government to be transparent about genetically modified foods, especially in the case of salmon, which is the world's first genetically modified animal approved for human consumption. That is all happening in Canada now, and Quebecers were used as guinea pigs.

I think Canadians have the right to choose what they eat. More and more, they want to know what they are eating. They want to know if their food has too much salt, fat, or sugar. They also have the right to know if they are eating genetically modified foods.

[*English*]

There is a broad consensus among the Canadian population for mandatory labelling of GMOs. A Health Canada survey revealed that over 80% of Canadians supported mandatory labelling of genetically modified foods. In May 2016, with Health Canada approving the commercialization of genetically modified salmon, Canada was the first country to authorize production for human consumption of an animal genetically modified.

While everyone knows there is GM salmon sold without our knowledge, the Liberal government needs to listen to the people. GM salmon is currently in circulation in our restaurants, hospitals, schools, and day cares. That is why the Liberal government must quickly tag genetically modified salmon. Canadians have the right to know what they are putting on their plates. We need the mandatory labelling of GMOs.

• (1915)

[*Translation*]

An article published in *Le Journal de Montréal* on December 18 unfortunately confirmed what we already knew, namely that Quebecers have indeed unwittingly eaten genetically modified salmon. This was confirmed by the spokesperson for Vigilance OGM, Thibault Rehn, who said, "We were able to confirm that it was indeed genetically modified salmon that was brought into Quebec in June, as we suspected".

Why is the government not answering the questions of Canadians who are calling for the mandatory labelling of GMOs?

[*English*]

Mr. Bill Blair (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada and to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to talk about the labelling of genetically modified foods in Canada.

Adjournment Proceedings

Genetically modified foods are becoming more common every day and are part of the regular diets of Canadians. Genetically modified foods that have been approved by Health Canada have been consumed in Canada for many years and are as safe and nutritious as their non-genetically modified counterparts.

In the case of genetically modified animals, Health Canada, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, and Environment and Climate Change Canada work together to verify that they are safe for food, feed, and the environment before they are allowed to enter the Canadian marketplace.

Any food product that enters the marketplace, genetically modified or not, must comply with all Canadian laws and regulations. This includes labelling in a manner that is truthful and not misleading. The CFIA verifies that food products meet labelling requirements, and it takes enforcement action if it identifies violations. This may include potential prosecution.

Mandatory labelling of foods can be required by Health Canada where there are health or safety concerns that could be mitigated through labelling or to highlight a significant nutritional or compositional change. This is also the case for genetically engineered foods.

Voluntary labelling is permitted to provide consumers with information that is not related to the safety of the product. To facilitate the use of such voluntary labelling, the Government of Canada supported the development of a national standard to provide guidance on the voluntary labelling of genetically modified products. The guidance helps make sure that any claims made comply with the labelling requirements of the Food and Drugs Act and the Consumer Packaging and Labelling Act. Ultimately, the decision on whether to proceed with voluntary labelling rests with the company.

The topic of labelling products of biotechnology has received significant international consideration in the context of the Codex Alimentarius Commission, the international standards setting body for food, of which Canada is a member. Codex provides guidance texts for the labelling of foods derived from modern biotechnology. Canada's current approach is consistent with the guidance provided.

With regard to salmon, before a genetically modified food animal can be sold in Canada, it must be determined to be safe to be sold as food. Health Canada and the CFIA complete rigorous reviews of genetically modified salmon for food and feed prior to approval for sale in Canada. All approved genetically modified salmon sold in Canada has been assessed and is considered as safe for human consumption as conventional salmon.

Mr. François Choquette: Mr. Speaker, Canadians have the right to know. That is what they are asking for.

[*Translation*]

That is why they are calling for the mandatory labelling of GMOs. Health Canada has deemed food irradiation to be safe and yet irradiated foods are still subject to the Canadian Food Inspection Agency's labelling regulations. If the Canadian Food Inspection Agency requires mandatory labelling for irradiated foods why can the same not be done for genetically modified foods? That is what over 80% of Canadians are calling for. We are not talking about one or two troublemakers here. We are talking about 80% of Canadians.

Canadians now choose what they want to eat. They have the right to know what they are eating. It is their choice whether to eat GMOs or not.

[*English*]

Mr. Bill Blair: Mr. Speaker, first of all, I would remind the member that with regard to genetically modified salmon, before a genetically modified animal food can be sold in Canada as food, it must be determined to be safe.

As part of the review of novel food, mandatory labelling is considered when there are clear health risks that can be mitigated through labelling. If there are no health and safety concerns identified, there are no special labelling requirements.

If a company chooses to make a voluntary claim, the Canadian national labelling standard for genetically engineered foods can assist companies to make claims that are truthful and that do not mislead consumers. The standard was developed through extensive consultation with industry and the public. It provides guidance to food manufacturers who choose to make claims regarding the presence or absence of genetically engineered foods so that they are in compliance with the labelling requirements of the Food and Drugs Act and the Consumer Packaging and Labelling Act. The CFIA is responsible for enforcing these labelling requirements—

● (1920)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The hon. member for Nanaimo—Ladysmith.

GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this is how a young veteran in my riding of Nanaimo—Ladysmith described dealing with Veterans Affairs. We should keep in mind that this is a young man who has served our country and has PTSD. He said that it is like being given a jigsaw puzzle and turning out the lights. How inhumane this is.

My constituency office is one of many across the country flooded with urgent requests for help accessing government services. It is not because these people do not qualify. It is because they simply cannot get through to government agencies or access the necessary information or forms they require. Many tell me that they feel as if they are being systematically stonewalled by the very agencies that supposedly exist to support them. Phone lines are jammed to the point that people are not even permitted to remain on hold or leave a message. Instead, they are advised to call back later, which yields the same result no matter what time of day they pick up the phone.

Insiders readily admit to my staff that some government agency phone trees are designed to send people in circles and eventually drop their call because the systems are too overloaded to handle the number of calls pouring in at any given moment. The agencies themselves are understaffed and under-resourced, leaving the remaining staff stretched so thin that they are scrambling to deal with the ever-growing backlog.

Adjournment Proceedings

Wait times are stretching from days to weeks to months. Whether it is a simple callback, a much-needed refund, or an anxiously awaited application approval, Canadians are waiting longer and longer, and they are suffering undue stress and financial hardship as a result. I have heard from women trying to access employment insurance when they are on maternity leave or trying to access the Canada child benefit and feeling that they are being cross-examined by agencies for funding they are truly entitled to.

I hear of families separated by refugee status. In one family, the father was thought to be killed in war but has been discovered. His wife, now a refugee in Canada, applied to have the family reunification process take place. This young mother's children are now saying that they do not believe their father is alive because they have been waiting for so many years. Parents tell me that they are missing seeing their children grow up. It is heartbreaking and it is not fair.

Summertime was the worst. It is as if Service Canada did not anticipate that staff would be going away on holiday, and the phone lines were jammed worse than ever.

Canadians accustomed to reliable service are increasingly becoming disillusioned with our ability to help them navigate. The shift to online platforms makes it even worse for Canadians of all ages. Some get kicked back when it turns out they have accidentally filled out the wrong form. It is especially difficult for seniors and people with disabilities who do not have access to a computer or simply are not computer literate. They deeply resent being told they have to go to the web instead of dealing with a person at the front counter. Low-income Canadians and seniors, especially, are the people who should have the support they need from our government.

When will the government restore Canadians' faith in the system set up to serve them, and when will the federal government reinvest in the workers to provide this service?

Mr. Bill Blair (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada and to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for Nanaimo—Ladysmith for raising this important question.

I want to begin by assuring all members of the House that our government is determined to provide Canadians with the help that they need and deserve. This determination is reflected in the service standards that have been set out for retirement pensions and employment insurance benefits, and in the measures we are taking to improve service delivery. Service standards have allowed us to evaluate the way in which Service Canada does its work, and are essential to offering Canadians the best possible service. For example, in the case of Canada pension plan and old age security benefits, the goal is to issue payments to eligible seniors during their first month of eligibility in 90% of cases. To date, the department is in fact achieving this goal.

In terms of how quickly employment insurance benefits are paid, the Service Canada standard is to issue the first payment or a notice of non-payment in the 28 days after a claim is made, with an annual objective of achieving this standard 80% of the time. My colleague, I hope, will be pleased to learn that in 2016-17 Service Canada exceeded this objective, with an annual result exceeding 83%. Also,

for this fiscal year, the result as of September 30 was 82.5%, again surpassing our annual objective.

That said, some claims take more time to process than others for various reasons. For some claims, the department may not have received all the necessary information or it may be necessary to validate the information on some claims to verify eligibility for benefits. In such cases, the department tries to issue the benefits to clients as quickly as possible, while ensuring that all the necessary information is available and has been examined in order to make the right decision.

In addition to the complexity of claims, volume is another factor that affects the department's ability to meet service standards. Depending on labour market conditions and other factors, the volume of benefit claims can vary significantly during the year. These variations can change claim-processing speed from one week to the next. However, I wish to assure my colleague that Service Canada keeps close track of the variations in claim volume and makes adjustments quickly.

The department allocates resources where they are needed so that Canadians receive their services and benefits in a timely manner. We know that millions of Canadians count on the Government of Canada to gain access to the services they are entitled to. We also know that they expect their government to offer fast, high-quality service, whether online, over the phone, or in person. That is why in budget 2017 we announced an investment of \$12.1 million to develop modern approaches to service delivery for the fiscal year 2017-18.

Employment insurance will be the first program targeted for this modernization initiative. Thanks to this initiative, Canadians will have easier access to services and benefits, and it will allow us to process claims more quickly and efficiently. Once it is complete, the benefits delivery modernization project will offer Canadians an improved, consistent, and modern client experience for all programs: employment insurance, Canada pension plan, and old age security.

As members can see, in addition to existing service and processing standards, our government is taking targeted measures to improve the quality of services offered to all Canadians. The needs of Canadians are our first priority, and we will continue to ensure that they get the services that they deserve and are entitled to.

● (1925)

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: Mr. Speaker, unemployment insurance support is fully funded by payments paid by the workers. Therefore, that is not a gauge of the government's commitment to funding and supporting the front-line workers who do this processing.

Adjournment Proceedings

In Nanaimo, the place that I represent, we have a Service Canada office, but even some at Service Canada say, “Go up the hill to the MP’s office.” I have great constituency workers who do an awful lot of casework in my office. However, not every MP offers that service. The system should not be dependent on MPs doing casework that the government is unable to do.

I say this as strongly as I can to my colleague. Constituents say, “I just want to know how long I’m going to have to wait. Why can’t I get that reporting?” The stories we hear are heartbreaking. The system is not working as the member describes.

Mr. Bill Blair: Mr. Speaker, I also have a responsibility for managing a constituency office where many low-income seniors and others desperately needing help arrive at our door asking for assistance. I sincerely believe it is all our responsibility to do everything we can to ensure that Canadians have ready and easy access to the services and supports that they need.

I would also advise the member that during the fiscal year 2016-17, Service Canada has made considerable progress in improving service delivery in all of its programs. We know that many of these programs and services were badly understaffed and underfunded.

However, it has made significant improvements over the past fiscal year. That was thanks to the implementation of major measures aimed at optimizing processing capacity and simplifying the processes that Canadians experience.

It also has a service delivery strategy that is aimed at modernizing services according to its citizens’ expectations, based on our government’s commitment to improve Canadians’ client service experience.

We understand that Canadians expect to receive services that respond to their expectations, receive them as quickly as possible, and with all of the support they require. That is exactly what we are committed to offer.

● (1930)

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

(The House adjourned at 7:30 p.m.)

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