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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Wednesday, January 30, 2019

—

Speaker: The Honourable Geoff Regan

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, January 30, 2019

The House met at 2 p.m.

Prayer

• (1405)

[*English*]

The Speaker: The hon. member for Sarnia—Lambton will now lead us in the singing of the national anthem.

[*Members sang the national anthem*]

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*Translation*]

FRENCH IN QUEBEC

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we thought that the Prime Minister had appointed a Liberal minister of heritage, but yesterday it became clear that he appointed a minister of Liberal heritage.

The Liberal heritage includes sponsorships, Option Canada, and a refusal to recognize Quebec as a distinct society. The Liberal heritage includes disdain for Quebec French. If we oppose multiculturalism, we are racist. If we want a secular Quebec, we are racist. If we want a French Quebec, we are racist. If we want newcomers to integrate with us, we are accused of using an “us” based on colour.

The Liberal heritage includes denigrating and insulting anyone who does not think like them. The Liberal heritage includes walking all over Quebec to score points in English Canada. Enough is enough. This is unbelievable. The best way to integrate newcomers is to be able to communicate with them. French is a unifier, not a divider, of people in Quebec, and we are very proud of that.

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[*English*]

EDNA BEANGE

Mr. Robert Oliphant (Don Valley West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I rise to celebrate the life of one of the most prominent residents of Don Valley West, Edna Beange. She died a few weeks ago at the wonderful age of 98. An East York icon, a long-time city counsellor, an inspiring activist, Edna followed in the tradition of

strong Leaside women like Agnes Macphail, making a difference in our community right until she died.

Edna served as a leader with numerous agencies, primarily those concerned with housing, seniors and youth, including the Toronto Council on Aging, East Metro Youth Services, the Canadian Mental Health Association, the Children's Aid Society and Stay at Home in Leaside.

Among the many awards and honours she received, in 1994, Edna was the first recipient of the Agnes Macphail Award, which honoured and celebrated her citizenship and her leadership.

Edna was a force of nature. To her son Donald and daughter Jean, I offer not condolences but thanks for sharing this remarkable woman with Toronto, Ontario and Canada. She will never be forgotten.

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PETER CALAMAI

Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to remember a former colleague and friend, Peter Calamai, an old-school, fastidiously articulate journalist's journo, a self-described ink-stained wretch.

Peter covered city hall, foreign conflict, science and literacy beats and was recognized for his in-depth work with three National Newspaper Awards, a Governor General's award, a Michener Award, an Order of Canada and an honorary doctorate.

Covering Africa out of Nairobi for Southam papers he hosted with Mary great dinners for itinerant hacks, with updates on his performances with the local opera company. Named a “master bootmaker” by the Sherlock Holmes society, friends eagerly awaited his annual Christmas letter in Dr. Watson's voice, detailing that year's travels of Peter and his beloved “Dame Mary”.

In recent, retired years, Peter was a driving force in establishing a foreign correspondent fellowship in the name of his predeceased friend Jim Travers.

Regrettably, it is Mr. Calamai's turn for tributes. May he rest in peace.

*Statements by Members***FRANK SERNAK**

Mr. Vance Badawey (Niagara Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the people of Niagara Centre have lost an incredible talent. Frank Sernak enjoyed a successful radio broadcasting career of over 50 years, much of that time spent with CHOW radio in the cities of Welland and Port Colborne.

Frank's distinctive, calm and soothing voice guided a generation through many events, including the blizzard of 1977. Frank and a few others stayed on the air throughout the entire weekend, during the worst of the storm, providing much-needed updates to the many thousands of people affected throughout the Niagara region. While he may have been known for his voice, Frank was beloved for his selfless dedication to our entire community.

A frequent volunteer, Frank was a sought-after master of ceremonies, giving his time to many community events such as the Rose Festival in the city of Welland.

Our thoughts and prayers are with Rose, Frank's wife of over 60 years, and all of his many family and friends. While Frank may have left us, the legacy of his modesty, kindness, wit and charm will not soon be forgotten.

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SOCIAL ACTIVISM IN WINDSOR

Ms. Cheryl Hardcastle (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am energized after being home in Windsor—Tecumseh with young women who are not discouraged by big issues with no quick fix. They understand the power is within each of us to collectively make the profound changes we see needed. My thanks to Jada Malott, Mira Gillis, Maya Mikhael, and Gabby Wilkinson for standing up against exploitation, hunger, pain and violence. Do not stop because so many do not yet have a strong voice.

In the twilight of January 17, I was in Dieppe park where on both shores of the Detroit River, Canada and the U.S together held a vigil of light and love for the women we have lost and a silent resolve to end violence against women. My thanks to Michelle Mainwaring and Pat Papadeas for their initiative. To Terry Weymouth, Anuja Virani and Irene Moore Davis, my thanks for being both trailblazers and pathfinders.

When we work to end violence against women we address many problems facing society. It takes love and courage. Together we are better.

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● (1410)

CANADIAN TENNIS PLAYER

Mr. Omar Alhabra (Mississauga Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to boast about a Canadian rising tennis star.

Eighteen-year-old Bianca Andreescu was born in Mississauga and trained at the Ontario Racquet Club. Here is what she accomplished in just one month. She started 2019 by defeating two tennis giants, Caroline Wozniacki and Venus Williams, eventually reaching her first WTA final at the ASB Classic in New Zealand. A week later, she won her first-ever grand slam match at the Australian Open, and now, this past Sunday, Bianca won her first-ever WTA title at the

Newport Beach tournament in California. Four weeks ago she was ranked 152nd in the world. Today, she has surged to number 67. She is now Canada's number one women's tennis player.

Mississauga and all of Canada are incredibly proud of Bianca. Her impressive skills and achievements are just the beginning. We say, "Go, Bianca, go!"

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[Translation]

FINANCE

Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): Mr. Speaker, welcome to 2019, the year when the budget is supposed to balance itself, for those who still believe in the Liberals' promises.

Since he has never had to budget to make ends meet, the Prime Minister said yes to every expense submitted to him, happy to charge it all to the government's credit card.

However, it is Canadians who will be stuck footing the bill. In fact, they already are, through increased Canada pension plan deductions for workers and employers and the elimination of the public transit tax credit, not to mention the carbon tax, which will increase the cost of travel, heating and food.

Forty-six per cent of Canadians are \$200 away from financial insolvency, yet the government wants to raise taxes even more to pay for its own mistakes. Forget about the second term. The government is already admitting it would take eight terms for it to balance the budget, in 2040. At the rate we are going, it will have added \$275 billion to the debt by then.

Canadians got fooled once, but they will not be fooled again.

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[English]

PERFORMING ARTS FESTIVAL

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I rise to commemorate a special birthday in my riding. PuSh International Performing Arts Festival is a signature event in Vancouver's arts and culture sector, celebrating its 15th anniversary this month. Since 2003, PuSh has gone from a three-show series, drawing 2,500 people, to 21 performances at three Vancouver venues, drawing international audiences with its thought-provoking program.

Every January, this unique, multidisciplinary festival promotes diversity, inclusion and creativity while providing performers with an outlet to push the limits of their art. This is all thanks to founder Norman Armour whose bold vision has guided PuSh to its place today.

In the last two years, our federal government has given PuSh \$1 million to ensure its success. On this important milestone, I wish PuSh all the best in the many years ahead with more extraordinary entertainment that continues to challenge artistic boundaries.

Statements by Members

[Translation]

THAI PONGAL

Mr. Shaun Chen (Scarborough North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to rise to recognize the valuable contributions of the Tamil community in Canada.

Earlier this month, Tamil Canadians celebrated Thai Pongal, a four-day festival of thanksgiving for a successful harvest.

[English]

Thai Pongal celebrates peace and abundance, when families gather to enjoy rice pudding.

January is also Tamil Heritage Month, a time to highlight the role of Tamil-Canadians in our collective success. Recently, I attended events hosted by the Canadian Tamil Congress and the National Council of Canadian Tamils, both located in my riding of Scarborough North. They remind us that this year also marks the 10th anniversary of the end of the Sri Lankan civil war, which affected many in Canada's Tamil diaspora. Their stories are a stark reminder of the need for lasting peace and reconciliation.

Nandri vanakkam.

* * *

●(1415)

OIL AND GAS INDUSTRY

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals said they bought the Trans Mountain pipeline to guarantee construction would start in 2018, but the money just went to build American pipelines instead. They claim they did not kill northern gateway, as if the minister did not even know that a ministerial order had been signed and there was a shipping ban. They claim that the company just decided on its own not to build energy east and that it was not because of regulatory changes. Now, following an Alberta production curtailment, with another new round of energy industry layoffs imminent, the government refuses to pull Bill C-69.

All Alberta wants is for the government to stop making things worse, stop killing projects, stop dreaming up new ways to kill future projects, stop insulting construction workers and stop the empty platitudes. Instead of saying that their hearts go out to Alberta they should just apologize, or better still, kill Bill C-69.

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CHARLOTTETOWN URBAN BEEHIVE PROJECT

Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, things are really buzzing in Charlottetown these days. Earlier this month, Charlottetown's urban beehive project, by Nine Yards Studio, was presented with a medal under the community initiatives award category at the 2018 National Urban Design Awards.

Local architects Shallyn Murray and Silva Stojak created demonstration beehives that encourage a hands-on approach to bee education, allowing the public to see how honey is being produced, and to learn all about pollination and the industry of beekeeping. The hives are housed in Charlottetown's largest urban garden, the Prince Edward Island Farm Centre. Through Plexiglas windows, visitors

can safely observe the bees working away in their hives. A hexagonal amphitheatre allows for even more learning opportunities.

I extend my congratulations to the Charlottetown urban beehive project for receiving this prestigious award. It is a great example of how design can play an important role in our community, our development and our environment.

* * *

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Michael McLeod (Northwest Territories, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, two weeks ago, I was pleased to welcome the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations to my riding.

We travelled to Norman Wells to celebrate the signing of the self-government agreement in principle with the Norman Wells Land Corporation. This is a significant step for the Norman Wells Dene and Métis, transferring authority for law-making and enforcement for those areas that are important to their rights as indigenous peoples. Entrenching this authority is important for future generations of the Sahtu, as well as for Canadians in general.

We are building government-to-government relationships with indigenous peoples based on respect and understanding. This is what real reconciliation looks like. We need to keep working toward finalizing land claims and self-government agreements, not only because they strengthen local participation in decision-making, but because they also create certainty about the ownership, use and management of land and resources.

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CANCER DIAGNOSIS

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Niagara Falls, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my great honour to rise in the House today to give a well-deserved tribute to Hugh Segal. He is known to all of us as a senator, an educator, an author, a champion of the less fortunate and a leader. We know him to be a kind, decent and honest man, whose love for his country and family is unparalleled.

As a columnist and political pundit, Hugh always provides a balanced view and profound insight into Canada and our world beyond. His well-deserved awards include the Order of Canada, honorary doctorates from the Royal Military College of Canada and Queen's University, the Order of Ontario, and the Peace Patron Award. Put simply, Hugh Segal embodies the very best of humanity, and the world desperately needs more Hugh.

Today we learned that Hugh is battling cancer. I want him to know we are praying for him and his family as he continues this fight.

We all know cancer can be beaten. If Hugh's history is any indication, it does not stand a chance.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

PIERRE DE BANÉ

Mr. Fayçal El-Khoury (Laval—Les Îles, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Pierre De Bané, a good friend of mine and a former parliamentarian, passed away on January 9, 2019. I would like to honour his memory by expressing how grateful I am for all of the help and good advice he gave me.

Mr. De Bané was the first Lebanese Canadian to sit in the House of Commons and the Senate, where he served for 45 years. Over the course of his political career, he was responsible for several portfolios under Pierre Elliott Trudeau's government.

Pierre De Bané studied and taught law. He was a staunch supporter of the French language and his community in the Lower St. Lawrence. This fine man paved the way for future generations, and I am one of those who followed in his footsteps.

Parliamentary colleagues, let us pay tribute to the memory of Pierre De Bané.

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● (1420)

[English]

HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the federal government has a responsibility to provide Canadians with sustainable, affordable, universal and accessible health care. We have repeatedly heard the Prime Minister declare himself a feminist. Meanwhile, health care providers such as VON Canada worry about their ability to provide quality care to seniors in their homes.

Seniors' needs are increasingly complex and require the services of professionals, who are now being forced out of home care into other health sectors because of low pay.

The current government could demonstrate commitment to its promises by implementing and funding wage parity for health care providers. Canadian workers, Canadian seniors, Canadian families and indeed Canadian women are worth it.

* * *

MENTAL HEALTH

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today is Bell Let's Talk day. One in five Canadians will experience a mental health issue in their life. Across the country, we are seeing increases in mental health issues, including dementia, suicide and addictions. We need to feel free to talk about these issues without any stigma and to come up with solutions.

I want to thank the many people in my riding of Sarnia—Lambton who are working hard to help increase services for those living with a mental health illness.

Today, I am asking MPs to join in the mental health conversation through any and all of their social media channels. For every text message, wireless and long distance call made by Bell Canada and Bell Aliant customers, Bell will donate five cents more towards Canadian mental health programs.

Mental health is a serious priority for Canadians, so let's talk.

* * *

[Translation]

MENTAL HEALTH

Mrs. Eva Nassif (Vimy, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today, across the country, Canadians are participating in Bell Let's Talk Day. Last year, thanks to everyone who joined in to break the silence on mental health issues, Bell raised nearly \$1 million to donate to various organizations. One such organization, La Ressource anxiété et trouble panique, in Laval, was chosen to be a recipient of the Bell Let's Talk Community Fund in 2019. Last week I was honoured to attend the press conference announcing a \$21,000 donation, which will be used to create two support groups for people suffering from anxiety. Once again this year, for every text message and social media post with the hashtag #BellLetsTalk, Bell will donate five cents to various organizations.

Together, let us continue the conversation and make a difference in the lives of Canadians.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister should have fired his ambassador to China as soon as he interfered in an independent legal process. Instead, he showed weakness. He continued to put his trust in his ambassador and allowed him to cause more damage, when Canadians' lives are at stake.

Why did the Prime Minister wait so long to fire his own representative?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on China, we will continue to stand up for the rule of law. We will respect our international obligations and we will always put the safety of Canadians first.

I would recommend that the leader of the official opposition not make an issue of a foreign policy decision because he is the one who took a pro-Brexit stand in an extremely divisive situation for the United Kingdom.

[English]

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is clear that our international partners are quickly losing respect for the Prime Minister, and it is no wonder. After clowning around in India, inviting a convicted terrorist along, he was then forced to accept concession after concession from Donald Trump, all the while managing to anger our partners in Japan and Australia. Now Canadians are paying for his mistakes when it comes to our relationship with China.

Once again, why did he show such weakness and wait so long to fire his own ambassador?

Oral Questions

●(1425)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on China, we will continue to stand up for the rule of law; we will respect our international obligations, and we will always put the safety of Canadians first.

We will take no lessons from the Leader of the Opposition, whose only pronouncement on foreign policy has been to come down on one side of the most divisive, destructive debate to happen in the U. K. for an awfully long time. People will understand that we take no lessons from the Harper Conservatives or from the current Conservative leader on Canada's place in the world.

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): The Prime Minister came down on the losing side of that debate in the United Kingdom, Mr. Speaker.

Going back to China, for days the Prime Minister allowed Canada's position to be weakened by having his own personal representative interfere with an independent process, politicizing the issue by giving a briefing in his old political constituency.

Why did it take so long for the Prime Minister to fire his ambassador?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite just did it again: He came down clearly on one side of the most divisive foreign policy debate to hit the United Kingdom in a long time. He even boasted about it, saying that he was pro-Brexit before Brexit was cool.

Quite frankly, we will take no lessons from the members opposite on the matter of Canada's standing in the world and the great work we are doing on foreign policy.

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CARBON PRICING

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we will take no lessons from someone who has boasted about admiring the basic dictatorship of China, after seeing what that government has done with Canadians in that country.

It is not just in foreign affairs that the Prime Minister is making Canadians pay for his mistakes. We now know that if allowed to continue, the government will raise the carbon tax drastically after the next election. Based on the government's own figures, the carbon tax could rise as high as \$300 per tonne.

Can the Prime Minister tell Canadians, once and for all, what the final—

The Speaker: The right hon. Prime Minister.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, 276 days ago the Leader of the Opposition promised he would be delivering a plan to fight climate change. We are still waiting.

We have laid out a plan that will not only fight climate change but make sure it is affordable for Canadian—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. I cannot hear the Prime Minister. I need to hear the person who has the floor. I can hear a lot of people speaking,

but I should only hear one at a time: the one who has the floor on either side. Right now, it is the right hon. Prime Minister.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau: Again, Mr. Speaker, it has been 276 days since the member opposite promised a plan to fight climate change, and everyone is still waiting.

We are delivering on a plan that will fight climate change and support families through this transition. That is what we are doing.

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it was over three years ago that this Prime Minister promised a plan to tackle climate change, and all he has brought in is a carbon tax that is raising the cost of everything for commuters and for households, all the while giving a massive exemption to the country's largest industrial emitters.

Maybe someone who had inherited a family fortune and has never had to worry about money does not worry about paying higher costs on fuel and home heating. Now we know that those costs could be as high as \$5,000 after the next election. Why is the Prime Minister trying to fool Canadians by giving them a cheque before the next election and then an ever-bigger bill after—

The Speaker: The Right Hon. Prime Minister.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we can always tell the Conservatives are on shaky ground when they stoop to making snide personal remarks.

For the member's own riding and his own province of Saskatchewan, Canadians in Saskatchewan will be \$1,300 better off with our plan to fight climate change and to make it affordable for Canadians than they would have been had we not moved forward with our plan to put a price on pollution so that we get less of it. They want to make pollution free again; we are putting a price on it.

* * *

●(1430)

[Translation]

HOUSING

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the whole country is in the grip of a housing crisis.

In Outremont, community support groups are meeting with people who are distraught because they cannot find a place to live. Instead of dealing with this urgent crisis, the Liberals are spouting rhetoric. They gave \$14 billion in tax breaks to big corporations. Tax havens are springing up all over, while Canadian families are living with crushing debt. The government built just 14,700 affordable housing units during its term of office.

When will the Prime Minister make the real world a priority?

Oral Questions

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to hear that the NDP is no longer denying the importance of repairs, renovations and maintenance.

We established an investment plan for the national housing strategy, which will greatly help Canadians find more affordable housing. We recognize that this is a concern for people, for all of us. Everyone needs safe housing. That is exactly why we are making investments.

[*English*]

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, that statement is unbecoming of a Prime Minister. He knows that what he has just said is false. We are talking about a profound crisis. Forty-six per cent of Canadians are \$200 away from financial insolvency. They risk losing a roof over their head. A quarter-million Canadians will be homeless at some point this year. If the Prime Minister got out of his limousine and walked a few steps from Parliament Hill, he would meet homeless Canadians.

More than 30,000 Canadians will be sleeping in parks and on the Main Streets of our country tonight in frigid temperatures. What is the Prime Minister going to do to help them now?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member opposite for giving us an opportunity to talk about how we are going to help Canadians from coast to coast to coast with our new national strategy on housing, the new national housing plan. We know that reducing homelessness by 50% is something we can achieve, and we are investing to do that. We know that making sure that millions of Canadians have better security in terms of the places they live is something we are doing right now. We have invested tangibly and concretely over the past three years, and yes, we will continue to invest, because we know there is much more work to do.

* * *

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we have a humanitarian crisis unfolding at Cat Lake, and unfortunately, the minister has done squat. That is a direct quote from the community. To claim he is making enormous strides in a community where 75% of the homes are so badly off they have to be demolished is a staggering disconnect. It is like a slow-moving Katrina, at -50°. When children are being medevacked out to emergency wards in distant cities, we need a sense of urgency.

I ask the Prime Minister, will he agree that the situation in Cat Lake is a national disgrace, and will he commit that he will meet with the leaders to find a solution?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the member knows, we are committed to working with Cat Lake on housing challenges. There is a meeting taking place today with community leadership. We are developing both an interim and a long-term plan of action. We are, unlike what the member is saying, making significant progress in the community. We lifted the long-term drinking water advisory just this past December, but we know there is lots more to do, and that is why we are continuing to address the community issues, in partnership, together.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Really, Mr. Speaker. That is his answer to people who are living in squalid conditions at -50° together, to pat himself on the back. What a disconnect.

The problem is that Cat Lake is the tip of the iceberg, because there are communities across this country that are suffering from the mould crisis. He appointed his personal friend as minister. My real deep concern is that if the minister cannot show any leadership or gumption on a crisis like Cat Lake, how can indigenous people across this country trust him or this Prime Minister to stand up on any other issue?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, over the past three years, we have made unprecedented investments, in partnership with indigenous peoples right across this country, to reduce and eliminate many long-term drinking water advisories, to invest in housing, to open up new schools and to make sure we are creating more health care, more mental health and more clinics.

We are investing, in partnership with indigenous communities right across the country, but as the member so eloquently says, there is much more work to do, and we will continue to invest, to grow, to work in partnership, because there is no relationship more important than that we have with indigenous peoples.

* * *

● (1435)

[*Translation*]

FINANCE

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, first of all, the deficit is now up to \$80 billion. Second, Canadians are paying more in taxes today than under the previous Conservative government. Third, yesterday, the Liberals voted down a Conservative Party motion calling on the government to table a plan to balance the budget without raising taxes.

After the carbon tax, which will increase gas prices by 60¢ a litre, what new tax will the Prime Minister force on Canadians?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, three years ago, Canadians were sick and tired of the Harper Conservatives' economic approach of giving benefits to the rich and hoping for job creation or economic growth. That approach failed for 10 years, which is why Canadians turned to us.

We have invested in communities, helped the middle class and lowered taxes for middle-class Canadians. The average Canadian family has \$2,000 more in its pockets than during the Harper years. We are going to keep investing—

Oral Questions

The Speaker: The hon. member for Richmond—Arthabaska.

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, none of that is true.

The problem is that the Prime Minister thinks that budgets balance themselves, which is rather unbelievable. The problem is that people have to pay for his mistakes, his failures and his out-of-control spending. Who are these people? Workers, business owners and parents, that's who. Canadians are the ones paying for his mistakes.

I repeat: what other taxes besides the carbon tax does the Prime Minister plan to impose on Canadians to pay for his out-of-control spending?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think it is a shame that a member from Quebec is not concerned about the fact that his leader promised to deliver a plan to fight climate change 276 days ago and we are still waiting. The Conservatives have no plan to fight climate change, no plan to help families and no plan to invest in the economy of the future.

We know that Quebeckers and all Canadians are concerned about the environment, and we saw an opportunity to take action. By putting a price on pollution, we will create opportunities and good jobs for the future and to help families.

* * *

[English]

CARBON PRICING

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a February 2017 Finance Canada document to the minister says that after the next election, the carbon tax will have to go up. A 2015 document from Environment Canada says that the price could reach as high as \$300 a tonne. That would translate, based on the government's own figures, into a cost of \$5,000 for an average family in the country.

Now, the Prime Minister is responsible for being truthful before the election, not just after. How much is the final price of the carbon tax?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have laid out our plan for the next four years, which actually puts a price on pollution and ensures that we return to Canadians a greater amount than, on average, they will pay in terms of putting a price on pollution. That is the commitment we made to Canadians, to both fight climate change and make it affordable for people. That is something the member opposite takes issue with, but perhaps he should take issue with his leader, who has refused to put forward his plan to fight climate change for the past 276 days, even though he promised it.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, now we know the political strategy. They will give a cheque of a few hundred dollars before the election and then a bill of up to \$5,000 after the election, when they no longer need voters but still need their money.

The Prime Minister has been in office now for well over three years, and he still refuses to come clean on the true cost of the carbon tax. Once again, I will invite him to do so right now. How much is the full and final price of the carbon tax?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have crossed this country, I have heard from Canadians

who have suffered from the wildfires, from the droughts, from the floods, from the heat waves that Canadians have been suffering because of the increase in extreme weather events. Canadians know we need a plan to fight climate change, and we need to make it affordable for regular people, and that is exactly what our plan does. We are putting a price on pollution, because we need less pollution. The Conservatives, other than wanting to make pollution free again, have not come forward with their plan, despite having promised it 276—

● (1440)

The Speaker: The hon. member for Carleton.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, only a trust fund millionaire who inherited a massive family fortune would accept a \$200 cheque as compensation for a future \$5,000-a-year bill. Everyday Canadians who have to pay their own bills and work hard for their own money know that it is a rip-off. These same Canadians are only a couple of hundred dollars short of failing to pay their bills already. Why will the Prime Minister not be truthful and tell them? How much is the final price of his carbon tax?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians know that the price of inaction would be monumental, but we do recognize that we need to build the economy of the future and put a price on pollution in a way that supports regular families in this time. That is exactly what we are doing by returning money directly to Canadians, because we know that supporting families and making life affordable while we fight climate change is essential. The member opposite has no plan to fight climate change, and indeed, his leader promised it 276 days ago, and still he has not delivered.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have now said three times in a row that the carbon tax could rise up to as much as \$5,000, based on the government's own figures in the government's own documents. Three times the Prime Minister has refused to rule that out. Now \$5,000 is not a lot of money if one has inherited a big family fortune, and therefore, he is not worried about money, because he has never had to worry about money. Everyday Canadians do worry about their money. Will he tell them the truth? What is the full and final cost of the carbon tax?

Oral Questions

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again, the snide personal attacks are all about distracting from the fact that the Conservatives have no plan for the future of our economy, no plan to fight climate change, no plan to help families through the transforming economy. These are the things that we are focused on, that we have been focused on from the very beginning. We lowered taxes for the middle class and raised them on the wealthiest one per cent. We delivered a Canada child benefit that makes a huge difference right across the country, including for 16,000 kids in the member opposite's own riding, for \$48 million a year in the riding of Carleton—

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. I want my hon. friend, the member for Prince Albert, to know that even though he is a ways off, I can still hear him very clearly, but I prefer to hear him when he has the floor, not when someone else has the floor.

The hon. member for Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River.

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INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Ms. Georgina Jolibois (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in northern Saskatchewan, more and more people are becoming homeless or live in houses that are overcrowded or infested with mould. In Hatchet Lake, as many as 20 people are sharing a single home that is unsafe to live in. Instead of taking this crisis seriously, the Liberals only say that more work needs to be done. Northern families cannot wait any longer for the Prime Minister to act. Does he have a plan to address the northern housing crisis, yes or no?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, not only do we have a plan to address that crisis, we started to put it in place years ago. I can highlight that in budget 2018, we put \$600 million toward first nation housing, \$500 million toward Métis nation housing, and \$400 million for an Inuit-led housing plan. We know we need to continue to work to close the unacceptable gap in housing for indigenous peoples. There is much more to do, but we are acting, not just talking about it. We are delivering for families right across the country and will continue to work hard to do exactly that.

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there is a first nations elder in my riding whose house is so riddled in mould that it is a serious health hazard to him and his family.

After being approved for a CMHC loan to fix it, he was told he would have to pay all the cost up front. This is a person who barely makes ends meet. Because he could not pay those costs up front, the loan was cancelled and he is now living in that mould-infested house.

The Liberal government is failing indigenous communities. Where is the national indigenous housing strategy?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we recognize that the situation in indigenous communities across the country is still dire. That is why we have been investing in it. We have been working in partnership with them. However, we recognize there is much more to do.

We have eliminated a number of long-term drinking water advisories. We have invested significantly in new housing. However, of course there are still many more investments to make and much more work to do.

We are closing the gap. We are helping indigenous communities right across the country. We will continue to focus on doing what is right to make sure that everyone has a safe and secure place to live right across the country.

* * *

● (1445)

[Translation]

FINANCE

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Liberal members all disgraced themselves yet again. They refused to tell Canadians that they will not raise taxes. What does that mean? It means that these people, who keep racking up deficits, will have to raise taxes at some point.

Could the Prime Minister look Canadians right in the eye and tell them straight out by how much he is going to raise their taxes?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is sad to see the Conservatives once again resorting to falsehoods and fearmongering to scare Canadians.

The first thing we did was cut taxes for Canadians. We lowered the small business tax rate to 9%, and we invested in the Canada child benefit, which puts more money in the pockets of nine out of 10 families because we put an end to the Conservatives' practice of sending cheques to millionaire families. We are going to keep taking care of Canadians and making sure our investments help them. It is the Conservatives who want to give benefits to the richest—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Louis-Saint-Laurent.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal Party and the Prime Minister are the ones who told falsehoods in 2015 when they promised to eliminate the deficit in 2019.

The Prime Minister also failed to tell the truth when he said that budgets balance themselves. I am sorry, but that is not how it works. The truth is that the Liberals ran up three astronomical deficits, one after the other. The truth is that deficits eventually need to be paid.

Will the Prime Minister tell Canadians the truth? Will he look them right in the eye and tell them how much more they will have to pay in taxes because of those deficits?

Oral Questions

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, during the 10 years that Stephen Harper was in office, the Conservatives added \$150 billion to the national debt. During Stephen Harper's 10-year reign, Canada posted the lowest rate of growth since the Great Depression.

I can see why Canadians wanted a new approach. That is why they chose the Liberal government, which has invested in our communities and given more money to the middle class. What are we seeing? A total of 800,000 new jobs have been created in the past three years and the unemployment rate is the lowest it has been in 40 years. We are investing in Canadians—

The Speaker: Order. The hon. official opposition House leader.

* * *

[English]

ETHICS

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, never before has a government been so mired in ethical scandals as those Liberals: the Prime Minister himself broke ethics laws; Liberal ministers involved in shady cash-for-access events. Now we have just learned that the former Liberal MP for Brampton East, the same one who has a massive gambling debt, had a huge Liberal fundraiser, where he reportedly raised approximately \$600,000. There are a lot of questions around this fundraiser that so far the Liberals are not answering.

Could the Prime Minister tell us this. Did the Minister of Innovation or any other one of the Liberal ministers—

The Speaker: The right hon. Prime Minister.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians have a right to openness and transparency in political fundraising. That is why we move forward with new legislation to ensure that political fundraising is done under new transparent, open rules. We have been doing that for close to a year now.

It is time for the Conservative Party to abide by those rules as well, to talk about who is actually donating to the Conservative Party, who is attending fundraising events with their leader and making sure they are opening them up to media the way that we are.

We are open and transparent in our fundraising. Why are the Conservatives still being—

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. opposition House leader.

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that was entire fabrication. I know the Prime Minister has problems with the truth, but maybe it is time that he actually came clean with some facts.

There are questions around this \$600,000 fundraiser. Who went to the fundraiser? Were there ministers in attendance? What happened with the over \$600,000 that was raised for a Liberal MP with massive gambling debts?

These are simple questions with simple answers. What is he hiding? Who is he protecting?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I can assure the House that Liberal fundraisers follow all

the rules in openness, transparency and accountability. We actually strengthened those rules. It is the Conservatives who are continuing to hold fundraisers in secret, continuing to keep from Canadians who is donating, how much and who is attending. We have invited the media to attend our fundraisers. They are still being secretive about their fundraising.

Canadians want to know who is paying for the Conservative Party of Canada.

* * *

• (1450)

HEALTH

Mr. Wayne Stetski (Kootenay—Columbia, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today is Bell Let's Talk Day, which encourages people to have conversations about mental health to raise awareness and reduce the stigma.

A recent B.C. report has found that 20- to 40-year-olds may suffer mental health impacts because of lower incomes, higher debt and high housing costs. A woman in my riding living with mental health challenges told me how she had to live in a storage unit, and sadly it is true. We need to address both mental health challenges and the housing crisis because for many people they go hand in hand.

Will the Liberal government take action now to address these very serious issues for Canadians?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member opposite for his advocacy. Almost all Canadians have family and friends affected by mental illness today and every day. However, today is an important day to support those around us, especially those who suffer in silence.

We want to ensure Canadians get the support they need when and where they need it. We have made the largest investment in Canadian history for mental health services, \$5 billion in budget 2017, and we have targeted investments specifically among indigenous peoples, black Canadians, veterans and homeless Canadians. There is much more to do.

Today, like every day, we need to talk more about mental health.

* * *

[Translation]

HOUSING

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, since 2012, Habitations Nicolet, a seniors' building in Hochelaga, has been undergoing major renovations that have forced the tenants out of their homes. That is six years of construction, all because funding for low-income housing renovations comes in dribs and drabs every year. Worse still, there are thousands of social housing units in Montreal that are currently boarded up. It is the most vulnerable who are paying for this lack of long-term vision.

Oral Questions

When will the Liberals stop with the lofty rhetoric and do something to put an end to these unacceptable delays?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we completely agree that, for far too long, the federal government failed to invest in housing. That is why we created a national housing strategy, which includes \$40 billion to invest in communities from coast to coast to coast.

We have invested in seniors' housing. We have invested to combat homelessness. We know there is much more to do, but over the last two or three years, we have been investing to repair and build new housing. We will continue to invest in those who are most vulnerable.

* * *

[English]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith (Beaches—East York, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this question for the Prime Minister comes from my Beaches—East York Youth Council, written by Mika Kay.

The UN reports that our planet will reach the crucial threshold of 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels by 2030. Our planet is already two-thirds of the way there. Canadians make up roughly 0.5% of the world's population, but we contribute 2% of total greenhouse gas emissions.

What initiatives has the government taken and what initiatives will the government continue to take to reduce this?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the IPCC report is a sobering reminder that we need to tackle climate change and our government is taking action. We have a practical, affordable plan to cut pollution and create good middle-class jobs. It includes phasing out coal, supporting more than 1,000 public transit projects across the country and putting a price on pollution.

While the Conservatives want to make it free to pollute, we will continue to move forward for Canadians.

* * *

ETHICS

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Milton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the former president of the Treasury Board told the House that the only document he had with respect to the Mark Norman case was a letter on which he was copied. He probably told the RCMP the exact same thing when he was interviewed by it.

It is interesting though that just days after he steps back from cabinet, he suddenly has his lawyers going into court and singing a quite different tune on this issue, which is he has many personal documents that he wishes to submit.

When did the Prime Minister know that the former president of the Treasury Board had personal documents and was withholding this—

The Speaker: The Right Hon. Prime Minister.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have said repeatedly, politicians have no involvement

in decisions on this matter. The notion that any politician was involved in those decisions is completely false.

Of course, I will not comment any further as the matter is before the courts.

• (1455)

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Milton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Vice-Admiral Norman was the second highest ranking officer in the Canadian military. So far we have heard that documents have been withheld from him and access to information requests have been deliberately sabotaged so as not to turn up any documents. We have learned today about private dinners, conversations and little meetings that happened with the Prime Minister and his inner circle, which had, surprisingly, no notes or documentation to go along with them. This is very concerning.

The fact that the Prime Minister stands here and says that there is no political interference when he himself cast Mark Norman in guilt before the charges were even laid is ridiculous.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have said repeatedly, politicians have no involvement in decisions on this matter. I, of course, have regular interactions with the Chief of the Defence Staff. In this instance, the chief notified me of steps being taken regarding this individual. The notion that any politician was involved in those decisions is completely false.

I will not comment further as the matter is before the courts.

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[Translation]

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on Monday the Liberal government announced another \$114 million for illegal migrants. That same day, the Liberals also closed the door on family sponsorship for parents and grandparents after only 10 minutes.

Under this Prime Minister, a person who enters the country illegally is immediately welcomed to Canada and gets a hotel room for free. If a grandmother tries to legally enter Canada, the door is slammed in her face.

Why is the Prime Minister making Canadians pay for his mistakes?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again the Conservatives are playing politics with people's lives. When the Conservatives were in power, there was a backlog of 160,000 cases and an eight-year waiting period for family reunification.

We have cut that waiting period down to under two years. We cleared the backlog and quadrupled the number of people who can apply for family reunification. That is our track record.

[English]

Hon. Michelle Rempel (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister is not creating more actual spots for legal immigrants. He has only created a no-hope waiting list. A waiting list is not the same as getting entry into this country. Instead, he has created a gold-plated express entry. For who? It is for people illegally entering our country from upstate New York.

Canada's Conservatives will restore fairness to Canada's immigration system. Why should Canadians keep paying for the Prime Minister's mistakes?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, here is what Canada's Conservatives actually did in 10 years in power. They created a backlog of over 167,000 cases for family sponsorship and an eight-year wait time for families to be reunited.

In the past three years, we have cut wait times to under two years for family reunification; we have cleared the backlog; and, yes, we have quadrupled the number of people who could apply for family sponsorship. That is what we are doing to bring families together.

* * *

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, when General Motors closed its Windsor plant, it shut the door on 100 years of workers' sweat, dedication and pride. Today, that site is a parking lot. Now Oshawa faces the same future.

Canadians loaned billions to ensure GM kept good jobs in Canada and since then, the Liberals have done nothing. They even ignored their own auto czar who wanted them to act. Workers still do not know what the government's plan is to save our manufacturing industry. All talk and no action is worthless and cruel.

What specifically will the Prime Minister do for the workers of Oshawa and their families? What specific action is he willing to take for these families in that community?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we stand with GM workers and their families in Oshawa. We met with the workers and the union representatives. I even had a frank conversation with the GM CEO, Mary Barra, reminding her of the proud history of GM in Oshawa thanks to those extraordinary workers.

We continue to work with our partners to support those impacted. We will always fight for auto workers and their families. We will continue to do so.

* * *

[Translation]

MARINE TRANSPORTATION

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau (Berthier—Maskinongé, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last week, ice jams in the St. Lawrence Seaway forced a shutdown of the ferry between Saint-Ignace and Sorel for three days. Just like the Conservatives, the Liberals have completely neglected the icebreaker file.

Steve Piché, the chair of the Berthier-D'AuRay chamber of commerce and industry, is calling for immediate federal government

Oral Questions

assistance. Without an icebreaker and a ferry, residents have to detour to Trois-Rivières or Montreal to get to Sorel. That is ridiculous.

Will the government make the St. Lawrence Seaway a priority and invest—

• (1500)

The Speaker: Order. The right hon. Prime Minister.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we recognize that workers at Davie do excellent work. They finished work on the *Asterix* on time and on budget.

The Conservatives shut Davie out of the national marine strategy, but we have awarded more than \$1.5 billion in contracts to Quebec businesses, including \$700 million to Davie for three icebreakers. We will continue to support workers across the country.

* * *

INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS

Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals are not able to pay federal public servants with Phoenix and now they do not trust Revenue Québec employees.

Why do Quebecers have to file two tax returns? They are the only Canadians to have to file two returns. We, the Conservatives, respect Quebec and Quebecers. A single tax return would cut the amount of red tape for Quebecers. The Prime Minister must respect Quebecers.

Why does he continue to say no to a single tax return in Quebec?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, how interesting. The Conservatives are saying one thing in French and another in English.

We will continue to work for Quebec and to meet Quebecers' needs. Quebec has a labour shortage. More than 1,000 positions are vacant according to the Canadian Federation of Independent Business.

We will continue to work with Quebec on these issues.

[English]

However, it would be important to highlight, in both official languages, that the Conservative approach on a single payer for immigration is not something we think is acceptable to the rest of the country, and certainly not to us either.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister's answer is completely incomprehensible. He should re-read his notes and stick to them.

The Prime Minister is resorting to falsehoods and fearmongering to oppose an idea that is universally supported in Quebec. In Saint-Hyacinthe, he resorted to fearmongering and implied that only the federal government knows how to do things properly when it comes to taxes.

Oral Questions

Why is the Prime Minister so afraid of Quebec?

Why does he think that Quebeckers are a threat?

Why is he denying them the right to file a single tax return?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, by calling for a single tax return, the Conservatives are putting 5,500 jobs at risk in Shawinigan and Jonquière.

This comes on the heels of a decade of Conservative attacks on the public service. The Conservatives would jeopardize our efforts to fight tax evasion, in which we have invested close to \$1 billion.

We will always work with the Government of Quebec to simplify the tax return process, but the Conservatives are playing political games by talking about something in one part of the country and not talking about it in English elsewhere in Canada.

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, talk about fearmongering. Did he not just try to scare 5,000 public servants? He is the real fearmonger.

Unlike the Prime Minister, the vast majority of Quebeckers cannot afford to pay someone to do their taxes for them. We have a unique opportunity to do something that will make life easier for Quebeckers. It is a simple matter of letting them file a single tax return.

Why is the Prime Minister being so stubborn? Why is he so opposed to this idea?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there are plenty of places in this country where people file a single tax return, and if Quebec wants to discuss it with us, we are always willing to talk.

The reality is that we intend to continue fighting tax evasion, and it is the federal government that has signed all these international agreements.

We know that there are more than 5,000 people in Quebec processing tax returns from all Canadians, and we know that there are always things that can be done to improve the way Quebeckers and Canadians handle their taxes.

We are always willing to work with Quebeckers and the government—

The Speaker: The member for Marc-Aurèle-Fortin.

* * *

SENIORS

Mr. Yves Robillard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government recognizes seniors' essential contribution to Canadian society. We are doing everything we can to ensure they enjoy the comfort and security they deserve.

Would the Prime Minister tell the House what our government has accomplished for seniors and what we still hope to do to properly recognize their contribution to Canadian society?

• (1505)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Marc-Aurèle-Fortin for his question.

Our government began working for seniors as soon as we were elected. We restored the age of eligibility for the old age security and guaranteed income supplement benefits to 65, keeping 10,000 seniors out of poverty. We increased the guaranteed income supplement for our most vulnerable seniors, helping 900,000 seniors in Canada. We also invested \$6 billion in home care and palliative care.

We are investing in our seniors and we are helping them.

* * *

[English]

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has managed to keep one of his promises, his promise to phase out the oil sands. Due to the Prime Minister's failures on pipelines, CNRL is laying off up to a thousand people. This is on top of the 120,000 energy workers who have already lost their jobs. This pain is going to be felt across Canada. One in seven manufacturing jobs in Ontario is directly linked to the oil sands.

Energy workers in Canada can no longer pay for the Prime Minister's mistakes. What is he doing to get these highly skilled Canadians back to work?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we recognize that to move forward on energy projects in this country, we need to do it the right way—that is, in partnership with indigenous peoples and respecting the concerns of Canadians, including environmental concerns. We know that, for 10 years, the Harper Conservatives failed to do just that. They did not understand that we have to stand up for the environment, that we have to work with indigenous peoples. That is exactly what we are doing.

The Federal Court of Appeal's judgment laid out a blueprint for doing this in the right way, and that is exactly the blueprint we are following. We know getting our resources to new markets is a priority.

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INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in the recent cabinet shuffle, the former attorney general was removed from her role. Grand Chief Stewart Phillip said that her removal as attorney general demonstrates the Prime Minister's "lack of resolve to address Canada's deplorable relationship with Indigenous peoples".

Then, in a written statement, the former attorney general suggested that she was removed from her role for speaking "truth to power". My question for the Prime Minister is this. What could she have meant?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have demonstrated consistently that no relationship is more important than that with indigenous peoples. That is why we have moved forward in partnership to both respond to the services needed in indigenous communities, from drinking water to housing to a broad range of educational and community investments, and restore a better relationship in terms of rights, in terms of recognition, in terms of reconciliation. This is what we are focusing on and it is an all-of-cabinet approach.

The entire government is—

The Speaker: The hon. member for New Brunswick Southwest Order.

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STATUS OF WOMEN

Ms. Karen Ludwig (New Brunswick Southwest, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, going off to college or university is a significant time in our lives. Parents and students alike plan for this important milestone, expecting personal growth and professional opportunities in return for their significant investments. However, we know that 41% of all sexual assault cases across Canada were reported by students.

Can the Minister for Women and Gender Equality tell this House what our government is doing to end gender-based violence on post-secondary campuses?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, no one should be subject to acts of violence, period. Incidents of sexual assault on school campuses remain one of the most often reported types of violence since #MeToo. Nearly half of sexual assaults reported in Canada are committed against women aged 15 to 24. That is why our government is working with an advisory committee of survivors, students and partners that will create a national framework to end gender-based violence on campuses.

No students should experience violence in this important part of their lives, and we are taking action.

* * *

HEALTH

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is important for us to talk about mental health issues. It truly is the only way we can break the stigma associated with mental illness and mental injury.

Two hundred and twenty-three days ago, this House passed a bill to create a national strategy to combat PTSD, making Canada the first country in the world to adopt legislation aimed at combatting PTSD. That is 223 days, and the Liberal government has failed to do anything to move this strategy forward.

When will the Prime Minister stop delaying and take action on developing this important national strategy to combat PTSD?

• (1510)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have made some of the largest investments in Canadian history for mental health services, with \$5 billion in budget 2017.

Of course, there is much more to do. That is why I am happy to confirm that this spring we will be moving forward with the plan to fight PTSD that the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness will put forward.

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[Translation]

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, as we saw yesterday, the Liberals equate Quebec wanting to speak

Private Members' Business

French with Quebec being racist. If we refer to ourselves as Quebecers we are being racist. The Government of Quebec wanting permanent residents of Quebec to learn French, or the Bloc wanting people wishing to become citizens of Quebec to learn French, is racist according to the Liberals.

Will the Prime Minister condemn his minister's disgusting comments by supporting the Bloc bill on adequate knowledge of French?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Constitution defends the rights of official language minorities in Canada. We will continue to defend the Constitution.

Despite what the Bloc is trying to say, we will respect the Constitution and defend both of our official languages across the country.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[Translation]

BILL C-421—CITIZENSHIP ACT

VOTE ON THE DESIGNATION OF AN ITEM

The Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 92(4), I direct that the vote on the designation of Bill C-421, an act to amend the Citizenship Act in regard to the adequate knowledge of French in Quebec, resume. I would like to remind the members that they can obtain their ballot from the table officer seated on their side of the chamber. However, during routine proceedings, statements by members and oral questions, ballots will be distributed from the corridor behind the Speaker's chair, where members will also find the ballot box.

The hon. member for Montcalm on a point of order.

Mr. Luc Thériault: Mr. Speaker, yesterday, in response to a question from the member for La Pointe-de-l'Île, the Minister of Canadian Heritage made a statement that is beneath the dignity of this House. He said, and I quote, that “the traditional discourse of the Bloc Québécois...seeks to divide and create barriers on the basis of language, culture and colour.”

He accused the Bloc Québécois of making racist statements because we want to protect the French language. He is implying that if Quebec wants to speak French, it is racist. The Minister of Canadian Heritage must immediately apologize for his biased, shameful, untrue and unfounded comments.

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member, but that appears to be a matter of debate.

[English]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, as is customary, I make reference to a document I wish to table in the House. The document is an Environment Canada briefing note showing that the carbon tax would be \$300 per tonne, which means a \$5,000 tax on the average family. I ask that we table this in the House as evidence.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent to table the document?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Routine Proceedings

Some hon. members: No.

[Translation]

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Mr. Speaker, in order to show all Canadians that what we say here is based on facts, I want to inform you that, if you seek it, you will find the unanimous consent of the House to table a document entitled, “Real Change: A New Plan for a Strong Middle Class”, the Liberal Party's recovery plan and election platform. Page 76 of this plan clearly states that there will be no deficit in 2019.

The Speaker: Does the hon. member have the unanimous consent of the House to table this document?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Ms. Anita Vandenbeld (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 22nd report of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development, entitled “Race to the Top: Improving Canada's Extractive Sector Corporate Social Responsibility Strategy to Safeguard Human Rights in Latin America”.

Pursuant to Standing Order 109, the committee requests that the government table a comprehensive response to this report. I want to thank all the witnesses and members of the Subcommittee on International Human Rights for all their hard work on this report.

• (1515)

[Translation]

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Orders 104 and 114, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 82nd report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs regarding the membership of committees of the House. If the House gives its consent, I intend to move concurrence in the 82nd report later this day.

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[English]

POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER AWARENESS DAY ACT

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-425, An Act to establish Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder Awareness Day.

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise in this House on Bell Let's Talk Day to introduce my private member's bill, an act to establish post-traumatic stress disorder—PTSD—awareness day. I want to thank the member for Barrie—Innisfil for seconding my bill.

Today parliamentarians will join Canadians from coast to coast to coast to increase awareness of mental health issues, offer support to those who persevere every day, and ultimately end the stigma around mental health illness

On June 21 of last year, Canada became the first country in the world to adopt legislation aimed at tackling PTSD. The bill, Bill C-211, has given hope to many, but we must do more than just create hope. We must act. We must continue to build awareness, understanding and acceptance that mental injuries are real, because lives are at stake. Studies suggest that over 70% of Canadians have been exposed to at least one traumatic event in their lifetime and that nearly one in 10 Canadians may develop PTSD at some point in their lives. Mental illness should not be a partisan issue.

Just as we did with Bill C-211, it is my hope today that members of Parliament from all sides will see their way to support this legislation so that it receives swift passage, and that just as we are doing today on Bell Let's Talk Day, on June 27 Canadians all across this great nation will continue the mental health discussion on Canada's first national PTSD awareness day. Through awareness and talking, we can end the stigma of mental health injury and mental illness.

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

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NATIONAL DEFENCE ACT

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-426, An Act to amend the National Defence Act (maiming or injuring self or another).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce a bill that aims to remove a significant barrier to members of the Canadian Forces receiving the mental health assistance they need. It would do so by repealing subsection (c) of section 98 of the National Defence Act. This archaic section of the National Defence Act makes self-harm a disciplinary offence in the military code of conduct.

The Canadian Forces are still losing more than one member per month to death by suicide. We have lost over 195 serving members in the last 15 years. Removing this section would send a strong message that self-harm is a mental health issue and not something to be addressed by discipline.

This is a matter that I had hoped could have been fixed by a simple amendment to Bill C-77, the military justice reform bill, recently dealt with by the House. At that time, New Democrats and Conservatives supported my amendment, but the Liberals indicated they felt amending Bill C-77 was not the way to proceed. This private member's bill offers an alternative way of taking the actions necessary to send a positive message to Canadian Forces members struggling with mental health issues. I trust it will receive broad support in the House.

Routine Proceedings

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

* * *

NATIONAL PHYSICIANS' DAY

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.) moved that Bill S-248, An Act respecting National Physicians' Day, be read the first time.

She said: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley for seconding this Senate bill.

It is self-explanatory. Physicians have existed as an entity in this country since the inception of Confederation. They have done great work. They have helped in saving lives and have been dedicated to this goal. It is time we honoured them on a particular day.

(Motion agreed to and bill read the first time)

* * *

• (1520)

[*Translation*]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if the House gives its consent, I move that the 82nd report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, presented to the House earlier this day, be concurred in.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

[*English*]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions among the parties and if you seek it, I believe you will find unanimous consent for the following motion. I move:

That, notwithstanding the provisions of any Standing Order, for the duration of the current session, when a recorded division is to be held on a Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday, except recorded divisions deferred to the conclusion of Oral Questions, the bells to call in the Members shall be sounded for not more than 30 minutes.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

PETITIONS

INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Matt Jeneroux (Edmonton Riverbend, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present e-petition 1776. This petition calls for upgrades on Terwillegar Drive, one of Edmonton's busiest roads, to make it a freeway. Anyone from Edmonton knows how busy this road can get, especially during rush hours. An upgrade of more lanes to Terwillegar Drive to make it a freeway would increase the quality of life while decreasing emissions. Let us ensure that we show the federal government is willing and able to support this important upgrade.

I thank the sponsor, Markus Muhs, hard-working city councillor Tim Cartmell and, of course, the many dedicated residents of the community who took the time to share, sign and support this very important petition.

[*Translation*]

SENIORS

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to rise in the House to present a petition about the national seniors strategy.

The petition is signed by people from all over greater Drummond who want to draw the attention of the House of Commons to the growing social inequality in this country, which affects seniors in particular. They are asking the Government of Canada to adopt a national seniors strategy to meet seniors' needs in terms of health, housing—which has been getting a lot of attention lately—and financial security, thereby improving their quality of life.

[*English*]

HUMAN ORGAN TRAFFICKING

Mr. David Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have increasing concerns around the world about international trafficking in human organs that are being removed from victims without consent. There are currently two bills before Parliament proposing to impede the trafficking of human organs obtained without consent or as a result of a financial transaction. They are Bill C-350 and Bill S-240. The undersigned petitioners are asking Parliament to pass those bills as soon as possible.

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to rise on the very same concept that my colleague just addressed. I have a petition regarding Senate Bill S-240, which would make it illegal to traffic in human organs and tissues and give the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship the power to make permanent residents or foreign nationals inadmissible to Canada if they have engaged in those horrendous activities.

Routine Proceedings

[Translation]

RADIO COMMUNICATIONS

Hon. Maxime Bernier (Beauce, PPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to present petition e-1631 on the subject of telecommunications. Canadian amateur radio operators are calling on the Government of Canada to take action to ensure the security of high frequency radio communications.

This petition was initiated by Martin Bérubé and contains 1,135 signatures.

[English]

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it must be the new lighting; I had difficulty catching your eye.

I have two petitions to table today.

The first one is signed by over 350 Albertans, who are calling for the Government of Canada to abide by the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and make sure that the religious rights of Canadians are respected.

- (1525)

DISABILITY TAX CREDIT

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): The second petition I am tabling today, Mr. Speaker, is signed by 94 of my constituents. It is on a private member's bill, Bill C-399. The petitioners are calling on the Parliament of Canada to pass it expeditiously.

FIREARMS

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition signed by Canadians from the ridings of Surrey—Newton, Delta and Surrey Centre. They call on the House of Commons to respect the rights of law-abiding firearms owners and reject the Prime Minister's plan to waste taxpayer money studying a ban on guns that are already banned.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have petitions here that were delivered to my former colleague, Sheila Malcolmson, the former member for Nanaimo—Ladysmith. I hope you, Mr. Speaker, will join me in wishing her all the best in her by-election today on her journey to becoming a member of the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia.

The petitioners are from Gabriola. They are very concerned with the Department of Transport's plans to establish new anchorages in and around the Gabriola coastline. Therefore, they are calling on the Minister of Transport to cancel the Department of Transport's plans to designate freighter anchorages in the Georgia Strait along the Gabriola coastline.

The Speaker: Without reference to electoral prophets, I can join my colleague in wishing the former member all the best, of course.

The hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands.

JUSTICE

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise today with two petitions.

The first deals with a critical issue for Canada, for our criminal justice system and for social justice. The petitioners call on the government to cease incarceration of those who are imprisoned and dealing with mental health issues, particularly addiction and drug abuse. The petitioners cite the system in Portugal, which has brought victims back into society to be useful members of the society at much lower cost than prisons.

POVERTY REDUCTION

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): The second petition, Mr. Speaker, again from residents of Saanich—Gulf Islands, calls on the government and the House of Commons to adopt a national poverty elimination strategy, ensuring a healthy and prosperous society for all.

HUMAN ORGAN TRAFFICKING

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table five petitions today. The first is in support of Bill S-240, a bill regarding the illicit trafficking of human organs. The bill is currently before the foreign affairs committee. Petitioners ask the government and members of Parliament to support its speedy passage so that we can get it done before the next election.

TRANS MOUNTAIN PIPELINE

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is in support of the Trans Mountain pipeline. Petitioners recognize the importance of the energy sector and are calling for all members of Parliament to do what they can to see that pipeline constructed.

CANADA SUMMER JOBS

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the third petition is to oppose discrimination on the basis of conscience, which was part of the effort of the government through the Canada summer jobs program. Petitioners note that section 2 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms identifies, among other things, freedom of conscience, freedom of thought and freedom of belief as fundamental freedoms. It opposes the government's values test attestation.

AFGHANISTAN

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the fourth petition calls on the government to support the Hindu and Sikh minority in Afghanistan who have faced severe persecution. It calls on the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship to use the powers granted him to create a special program to help persecuted minorities be sponsored directly to come to Canada. This is something that has not happened yet, and many people are still calling for it. It asks the Minister of Foreign Affairs to raise the persecution faced by this community with her Afghan counterparts.

Government Orders

ASYLUM SEEKERS IN THAILAND

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the fifth petition is about the challenges being faced by the Pakistani Christian community in Thailand. It notes the crackdown against Pakistani asylum seekers who are there and calls on Canada to take up the matter urgently with the Government of Thailand and urge the protection and humane treatment of Pakistani asylum seekers there. Petitioners say these asylum seekers must be provided the opportunity to apply for refugee status with the UNHCR and for resettlement without being arrested, detained or deported.

* * *

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 it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

MOTIONS FOR PAPERS

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

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

•(1530)

[English]

DIVORCE ACT

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill C-78, An Act to amend the Divorce Act, the Family Orders and Agreements Enforcement Assistance Act and the Garnishment, Attachment and Pension Diversion Act and to make consequential amendments to another Act, as reported (with amendments) from the committee.

The Speaker: The hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands has indicated to the chair that she does not wish to proceed with her motion. Therefore, the House will now proceed, without debate, to the putting of the question on the motion to concur in the bill at report stage.

[Translation]

Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.) moved that the bill be concurred in at report stage.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

Hon. David Lametti moved that the bill be read the third time and passed.

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is with humility that I rise for the first time as the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada.

I want to thank the right hon. Prime Minister for the trust he has placed in me. I also thank the people of LaSalle—Émard—Verdun for their continued support. I would also like to thank the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development and the Minister of Foreign Affairs for their guidance. I also want to thank their teams.

[English]

I would also like to salute the work of my predecessor. It was a historic appointment, and it was matched by a historic quantity of substantive legislation. I want to thank her as we move forward.

I would also like to thank the chair and the members of the committee, as well as the witnesses who expressed their support and provided insights and recommendations on Bill C-78. I would also like to acknowledge the recent expression of support for Bill C-78 on the part of the federal-provincial-territorial ministers responsible for justice and public safety.

Finally, I could not go on without mentioning the constant support of my very able parliamentary secretary, the member for Parkdale—High Park.

[Translation]

The needs of families going through a separation or divorce have changed significantly over the past decades. Federal family laws are now outdated and do not meet their needs. That is why we are proud to present the first major changes to these laws in more than 20 years.

The bill will modernize federal family laws and improve the family justice system, in particular by encouraging the use of alternative dispute resolution methods, and ensuring that the best interests of the child are at the heart of any decisions affecting them.

[English]

The best interests of the child is a fundamental principle in family law that must be reinforced to ensure that the support and the protection of our children are always paramount. Bill C-78 entrenches in law the best interests of the child as the only consideration when making decisions about parenting arrangements.

Along these lines, the bill introduces a primary consideration, according to which a child's physical, emotional and psychological safety, security and well-being will be considered above all else. Courts will have to weigh each best interest criterion in light of this primary consideration.

Proposed changes also recognize the importance of a child's voice in family justice proceedings. Bill C-78 puts forward concrete measures to promote the best interests of the child in situations in which children are most vulnerable. The bill introduces criteria to determine the best interests of the child, as well as important considerations and exceptions when there has been family violence.

Government Orders

With thanks to witnesses heard by the committee, the bill has been amended so that in some cases of family violence, applications to modify a parenting arrangement or to relocate can be made without notice to other parties, which will provide further protection to children and families fleeing these situations.

A number of witnesses addressed the issue of a presumption of equal shared parenting under the Divorce Act. While some witnesses were in favour of a presumption, most were strongly opposed to it. Creating such a presumption would have gone against our commitment to ensure that each child's best interests would always be put first. Given that each child and each family's circumstances are unique, courts need flexibility to tailor parenting orders to the needs of each particular child.

We recognize, however, the important role that both parents can play in a child's life. Bill C-78 reflects social science evidence that it is generally important for children to have a relationship with both parents after divorce. Thus, the bill requires courts to apply the "maximum parenting time" principle that a child should have as much time with each parent as is consistent with the child's best interests.

Witnesses raised concerns that this principle may create a misunderstanding that equal time with each parent should be the starting point when establishing a parenting order. To address these concerns, the bill was amended to further clarify that this principle is always subject to the best interests of the child.

● (1535)

[Translation]

Another important aspect that has been the subject of considerable discussion over the past few years is recognition of linguistic rights in the Divorce Act.

After hearing from witnesses on the matter, including the Fédération des associations de juristes d'expression française de common law and the Canadian Bar Association, we amended the bill to allow parties to use either official language in any proceedings at first instance under the Divorce Act.

Parties will have exactly the same linguistic rights as those provided for under Part XVII of the Criminal Code in criminal matters. In other words, anyone can testify and submit evidence in the official language of their choice. Parties will also be able to be heard by a judge who speaks their language and can obtain any ruling or order in the official language of their choice.

This important change will improve access to the family justice system and help enhance the vitality of official language minority communities.

I want to thank my caucus colleagues for their important work on this matter, especially the hon. member for Mount Royal and the hon. member for Ottawa—Vanier.

[English]

Our government has been growing the middle class and helping those working hard to join it. Bill C-78 furthers this work by making important contributions to help address child poverty.

Family breakdown often places significant financial strain on families. For some families, divorce may lead to poverty. Lone-parent families, most often led by women, are at a particularly high risk of experiencing financial hardship. This bill will improve federal support enforcement tools, such as the release of income information, to ensure that fair and accurate support amounts can be calculated.

[Translation]

Bill C-78 sets out obligations for parents who divorce in order to protect the children, promote their best interests and foster the amicable settlement of family disputes.

Parents will now be required to exercise their decision-making responsibilities in a manner that is compatible with the interests of the child and will protect children from conflict. These obligations should already have been accepted by divorced parents. However, making this an explicit rule will remind parties of their obligations under the Divorce Act.

To foster Canadians' access to justice, the Department of Justice will prepare various documents to inform the public of the changes proposed by the bill and guide families through the divorce process.

This leads me to mention another important objective, that is, making the family justice system more accessible and efficient.

In closing, Bill C-78 shows our commitment to enhancing the family justice system. This bill seeks to protect families, especially the children, from the adverse effects that can be caused by a divorce by focusing on dispute resolution and the interests of the child.

● (1540)

[English]

Once again, I would like to thank all those who contributed to the committee process.

I encourage my colleagues on all sides of the House to join me in supporting this very progressive bill.

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I first want to congratulate the hon. minister on his recent appointment. As the vice-chair of the justice committee and justice critic for the official opposition, I look forward to working constructively with the minister.

I think there is a fair bit of consensus on many aspects of this bill. I have a question for the minister on the issue of relocation, in particular, the notice provisions.

Right now under the bill, a parent seeking to relocate must provide 60 days' notice. The non-relocating parent would only have 30 days to respond. That is problematic for people in remote and northern communities. It is also problematic perhaps for those who are vulnerable, who may not be familiar with the legal process or who might not be able to afford retaining a lawyer. Finally, it is inconsistent with an objective of this legislation, which is to remove matters out of the court process to the greatest extent possible. In the case of relocation, the only option a non-relocating parent would have would be to file an application in court.

Government Orders

I was wondering if the minister could address those concerns.

Hon. David Lametti: Mr. Speaker, I would first thank the hon. member for his complimentary comments. I share the same sentiment with respect to being willing to work with him and other members of the committee, as well as members on all sides of the House.

In the bill, we tried to balance the needs of the best interests of the child and the ability of parents to move where it is necessary. We also tried to balance the ability of the parent who is not moving to remain in contact with the child. We want to ensure there is a fair ability, as well as an efficient and smooth process, for all sides to have their opinions heard as a result of the potential relocation.

We are trying to achieve a certain number of balances in the bill. We think we have it. We know, when this was discussed at committee, members shared different opinions. However, we think we have the right balance.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to congratulate our new Minister of Justice.

When his predecessor presented the bill to our committee, she told us it would reduce child poverty. However, during the committee study, one question remained unanswered, namely, what happens if a parent cannot afford to pay child support? In particular, I am thinking of the representatives of the Barreau du Québec, who told us about the enforcement problems Quebec is having.

In his speech, the minister touched on how this bill can address poverty. What does he think we could do in situations where a parent cannot meet their child support obligations?

As reported this week, nearly half of Canadians are \$200 away from not being able to pay their bills. Many Canadians cannot afford child support.

What can we do for families left in dire financial straits after a divorce?

• (1545)

Hon. David Lametti: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for her comments.

We did what we could with this bill. It is not always easy to determine the income of one of the parties and to ensure that the other parent pays child support. That is why we put in place what we believe to be the best system possible for ensuring that such transfers are efficient and transparent.

Obviously, we cannot do everything in one divorce bill; we will need to legislate in other areas to improve the lot of Canadians living in poverty. For example, we instituted the Canada child benefit, which helps children in such situations.

We are always willing to consider other ways of combatting poverty.

[*English*]

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to speak today and to also add my congratulations to

the Minister of Justice. I want to underscore and emphasize my thanks, as well, to the prodigious work of his predecessor, with whom I worked on so many bills in her time as minister of justice.

My question is very specific. Like a number of the commentators, I think it is universally accepted that this is important reform in the area of family law. As noted by Elba Bendo, the director of law reform at West Coast LEAF, which is a women's feminist legal organization, while the bill would make significant improvements, training is required for those throughout the justice system who work with issues particularly related to the gender imbalance for women who may fear violence in the family context as they go through this process, because if the courts get it wrong, if the family law workers get it wrong, the consequences of getting it wrong can be fatal.

I wonder if additional funding is being contemplated. A lot of this is provincial, but in the federal context, is more training being considered in how to assess cases where family violence may be at play?

Hon. David Lametti: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member and leader of the Green Party for her comments as well. I have enjoyed working with her in the past on other files, and I certainly will enjoy working with her in the future on these files.

The problem the member identifies is a very real one. In this bill, we have tried to take measures that would address the situation of people, women in particular, who are facing violence. Yes, the *encadrement* that is provided within the system is very important.

The bill cannot do everything, but as a government, we will continue to look at and be open to suggestions, working with our provincial and territorial counterparts, which have a large role in the administration of justice, and working through, in many cases, a unified family court system, which will come online very soon in many of the provinces, to look at the kinds of training methods that will help this bill live up to its promise.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last year I held an all-party round table that looked at adverse childhood effects and the mental health of children. Something that came up in that round table was the indigenous cultural focus around children. If we can do things for children, the rest of our society benefits and benefits in future years.

Could the minister mention today, on Bell Let's Talk Day, when people are talking about mental health, how this legislation would help with the adverse effects of divorce on children and what it does to the mental health of children?

Hon. David Lametti: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for the work we have done together on the INDU committee and through our common interest in innovation.

Government Orders

Putting the primary focus on the best interests of the child and making that the lens through which we see how situations need to be resolved in cases of marital breakdown and divorce precisely helps us to improve the mental health of children, as well as everyone else around the system. By focusing on children, we put mental health as one of the factors that will be taken into account in assessing exactly what kinds of orders are necessary in any particular case. By putting the child first, we are necessarily putting the child's mental health first.

● (1550)

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise to speak at third reading stage of Bill C-78, an act to amend the Divorce Act. As a member of the justice committee, I had the benefit of studying the bill in some detail at committee, where we heard from a wide range of stakeholders involved in family law. While there are some aspects of the bill that could be improved upon, and I will address those specific issues in short order, I believe that many aspects of the bill would provide greater clarity and certainty in the law. This, after all, is the first major update of the Divorce Act since it was passed in 1985, and in that regard, it is a timely update indeed.

Before getting into some of the areas where I think the bill falls short, let me start with some of the positives. One positive aspect of the bill is that it contains important measures to better ensure that children are not impacted by conflict and to encourage parties, where appropriate, to resolve their disputes outside the court process. It is important to note the words “where appropriate”. That language is in the legislation, because we know that in not all circumstances is it appropriate to resolve family disputes through negotiation or collaborative law, particularly where there is a history of family violence. However, we know that where it is appropriate, it is more often than not the best possible outcome. Because the court process is adversarial in nature, it increases conflict and it can prolong disputes, and that heightened conflict, of course, can have a profoundly negative impact on children.

We also know that the court process is often inefficient, and it is, indeed, costly. That raises issues of access to justice. More and more Canadians who are resorting to the family court system are self-represented litigants, because they cannot afford legal representation. Often these self-represented litigants do not know their rights. They do not have a good understanding of the law. That creates a number of issues, including from the standpoint of backlogs and delays in the family courts, but more broadly speaking, within our entire justice system. To the degree that we can encourage parties to settle, to go through mediation or negotiation or collaborative law, that is positive, and the bill contains measures in that direction.

A second area where the bill would provide better certainty in the law is through the codification of a wide body of case law that recognizes that in determining custody or access orders, the sole determination should be based on what is in the best interests of the child. The bill sets forth a number of factors a judge would consider in fashioning an order and determining, based on the individual circumstances of the case, what, in fact, was in the best interests of the child. That is entirely appropriate and is consistent with what the family law bar has been asking for. It is consistent with the special

joint committee report the House and the Senate undertook in 1998 with respect to custody and child support.

● (1555)

One area that I have some issues with is with respect to relocation, about which I posed a question earlier to the minister. Relocation, for obvious reasons, is one of the most difficult areas of family law when one parent seeks to relocate with that child to another location. Based upon the evidence before the committee from the family law bar, that has not been necessarily made easier by the Supreme Court in the *Gordon v. Goertz* decision of 1996, which provides a highly discretionary test, based upon the best interests of the child. This has led to uncertainty and, frankly, has increased litigation around relocation matters.

The bill seeks to provide certainty by establishing a three-way split with respect to which parent bears the burden of establishing that the relocation is in the best interests of a child. In that regard, the bill provides that when a child has substantially equal time with both parents, then the burden falls on the party seeking to relocate. On the other end of the spectrum, where a child is with the relocating parent the vast majority of time, the burden would fall to the other parent. Then, finally, where there are cases in between those two spectrums, neither parent would bear the burden.

This approach is consistent with the legislation that was passed in the province of Nova Scotia in 2013. There was some evidence before the committee that it was working relatively well, that judges were not having a difficult time sorting out which person or group would fall into the three categories.

However, that being said, while it is laudable that the government is seeking to provide some clarity in the face of *Gordon v. Goertz* and some greater certainty, I have some concern that this may create some new uncertainty. In that regard, it was raised before committee, I believe by Professor Bala, a well-respected expert in family law, that by using the term “a substantially equal time” that it might imply or might not imply shared custody with the requisite 40% threshold. Needless to say, it is new language. It has not been tested. It will be litigated. Therefore, that is something to monitor.

Second, I have some concern about the appropriateness of a three-way split. Again, there was some evidence before the committee, and it is a view that I share, that from the standpoint of fairness and the standpoint of achieving what this legislation seeks to achieve, which is to do what is in the best interests of the child, that as a general rule, the burden should fall on the parent seeking to relocate to establish that it is in the best interests of the child, save for those circumstances where the child does spend the vast majority of his or her time with the relocating parent.

● (1600)

Having regard for the fact that unless the child is an infant, relocation does have, in the normal course, a significant impact on the everyday life of that child with respect to having to go to a new school, make new friends and adjust to a community, not to mention the impact it can have on the relationship with the other parent, who might have access or custody arrangements. It can often be a major disruption. From that standpoint, it would seem more appropriate that, as a general rule, the burden fall on the relocating party.

Government Orders

Then there are some technical issues with the notice requirements. I alluded to one of the concerns I had when I posed a question of the minister. One of the concerns with respect to notice is that the legislation would provide that a parent need only send a letter or some relatively informal notice to the non-relocating party.

At committee, Lawrence Pinsky, who is the past chair of the family law section of the Canadian Bar Association, among others, raised questions about the appropriateness of that form of notice. It seemed to Mr. Pinsky, and it seems to me, that it could unintentionally create situations where one parent would say that he or she had sent notice and the other parent would say that he or she did not receive notice. In the meantime, the parent who claimed the notice had been sent notice may have relocated with that child. What does one do in those circumstances?

In such a circumstance, it may be that the other parent might not be able to have access and custody for which he or she is entitled pursuant to an order. Is the other parent in contempt of that order? That seems to be an aspect of the bill that needs to be re-evaluated, with a very minor amendment when it goes to the Senate, since we were not able to address it at committee.

Then there is the issue of the 30-day response period; 60 days to provide notice of a relocation and 30 days to provide a response. Thirty days is problematic for individuals who may be in remote and northern communities and might not have easy access to a lawyer. It could be problematic for persons who may be disadvantaged or unfamiliar with the court process, maybe who have never retained a lawyer before, or who might perhaps be unable to afford retaining a lawyer and then find themselves in a position where an application to respond has to be prepared. There might be some significant barriers for many groups of Canadians. That is a concern.

Then there is the whole issue of rushing into court. Effectively, the only recourse for parents who are not relocating and who receive that notice is to file an application in court objecting to the relocation. That is inconsistent with one of the key objectives of the bill, which is to encourage parties, where possible, to settle disputes out of court. In most circumstances, someone who is relocating likely will have thought about that relocation long before he or she provides 60 days' notice. By contrast, the party who is not relocating, more often than not, may only learn of it upon receiving notice, in which that parent has 30 days to respond.

•(1605)

That is problematic inasmuch as it might take one some time to absorb what that relocation means, how it impacts custody or access arrangements and prohibits the ability of the parties to negotiate and approach the relocation in a collaborative way and avoid litigation on that issue. It is why I brought forward an amendment, consistent with evidence from a number of witnesses, to increase the time from a 90-day period to provide notice and a 60-day period to respond. Again, it is a relatively minor amendment that hopefully can be considered in the Senate since it was not adopted when it was studied at the justice committee. It is one that could have a profound impact on many families.

I was disappointed that the bill did not recognize the fact that in most circumstances, it is desirable to maintain a shared parenting relationship. That it is not to say that it is appropriate in all cases. We

know, particularly in situations where there is family violence, that it is not. However, it does not make sense to remove a perfectly fit parent from having as much access and time to spend with his or her child, and yet we know that does happen every day. The government's response, I suspect, will be that shared parenting is not consistent with this legislation and it rejects the notion of shared parenting because the legislation is focused exclusively on the best interests of the child.

I agree wholeheartedly that any issue relating to custody or access should be based exclusively on what is in the best interests of the child. However, the fact is that in many circumstances, what is in the best interests of the child is to maintain that shared parenting relationship. We know that from common sense life experience and a wide body of social science evidence to back that up. That is why, when the Senate studied custody and access in 1998, it recommended the incorporation of factors that a court should consider with respect to the best interests of a child, which the government incorporated in the bill. One of the factors was the benefit to a child of a shared parenting relationship.

With that, on the whole, the bill gets a lot of things right. There is a fair bit of consensus among the family law bar and other actors involved in family law, divorce, separation, etc., but there are areas where there is room for improvement. I hope there will be some further consideration on how to improve the bill when it goes to the Senate.

Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as always, the hon. member displays a very in-depth knowledge of the bill and has a great deal to say. I shared some of the opinions and I am open to following the rest through the parliamentary process.

During the member's comments, he still used the terms "custody" and "access". One of the points of the bill is to change that language to parenting language, "parenting order" and "contact order". I would invite him to reflect on that change.

•(1610)

Mr. Michael Cooper: Mr. Speaker, the minister is quite right that the bill updates language to make it less adversarial, talking about "parenting" and "contact". There are some who might say this is window dressing, but I would respectfully disagree. I believe that words matter, and to the degree that this might minimize the adversarial nature of a divorce and the impact it might have on children, so much the better. Indeed, there was a fair bit of support from the family law bar for those changes.

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There was only one issue I would raise, which came up at committee. There was some concern from witnesses for, I believe, the South Asian Legal Clinic out of Toronto. They said, for example, that it might be problematic in an international context. They cited an example in which a father had abducted his child and taken that child to Pakistan. The mother sought to be reunited with her child in Canada, and they stated that the court in Pakistan was very specific in looking for the term “custody” and seeing that terminology used in the order. That is the only issue we may want to consider. However, that aside, I think it is a positive step.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am glad to be here for the very first bill being brought forward by our new justice minister. I am sure he is extremely talented.

I have to admit that we share a mutual friend in Sandy Pearlman, the late producer of the Clash and Blue Oyster Cult, so I am going to ask that the minister lessen the cowbell when he is trying to get attention in the House.

I found my hon. colleague's discourse very interesting. In our office, the most difficult and saddest issues we deal with time and time again are those of family breakup, when people come in trying to find help. In particular, I am referring to the issues that arise when families are breaking up and whoever has custody is moving to another jurisdiction.

That is an extremely difficult, emotionally fraught situation. The courts never seem to be the healing institutions on this. These are deep, traumatic wounds for families, and some never recover.

From his experience, does my hon. colleague know ways that we can do this to make sure it is always child-centred, less adversarial, and more about trying to find some healing rather than a deeper rupture.

Mr. Michael Cooper: Mr. Speaker, the member for Timmins—James Bay is absolutely right that these are the most difficult of situations. When the breakdown of marriage involves children, emotions are high, often on all sides. Sometimes, because it is about access and the parents' relationship with some of the most, if not the most important people in their lives, it makes it all the more difficult.

For example, an acquaintance of mine is a judge. Although he had not practised family law, he said that upon being appointed to the bench, one of the most difficult things he found when making decisions was making a custody order or an access order, and having to hear the evidence without really being able to be there and understand in a true and profound way all the circumstances of what may be going on within a family.

The member is right. That is why, to the degree that we can encourage parties to mediate, negotiate and resort to means other than the court process, this will go a long way.

Ms. Leona Alleslev (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to follow on my hon. colleague's comments and also offer congratulations to our new Minister of Justice. I would also like to underscore the importance of this bill, particularly the nature of the subject and the fact that it has not been updated since 1985.

With respect to the relocation aspect, my hon. colleague has made a recommendation on an amendment to change the time for the

notice of relocation in the bill, which is 60 days for notice and 30 days for the response. The proposed amendment would take that to 90 days and 60 days, respectively. He mentioned that that was rejected at committee.

I wonder if he could expand on the arguments against making that amendment, and how he would respond to those arguments.

● (1615)

Mr. Michael Cooper: Mr. Speaker, there was very little discussion or debate around that amendment, unfortunately. The member for West Nova indicated that the 60-day and 30-day time frame was consistent with some provincial legislation, including legislation in the province of Nova Scotia.

I believe that is the rationale, but we have to recognize that the Divorce Act is national in scope, and some of the national issues affecting northern and remote communities, among other factors, should be more carefully considered. An amendment to provide a little more time would go a long way.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to pose a different type of question related to the principle at hand.

I have had the opportunity to have discussions with many of the constituents I represent with regard to marital issues and parenting. There is a push to try to simplify the process. I am wondering if my colleague across the way could suggest other things that are not already within the legislation, which the government could look at pursuing in the future.

Mr. Michael Cooper: Mr. Speaker, moving outside of the court process is really key. A lot of work has been done amongst the family law bar to encourage parties and to provide information to parties, so that they have a better understanding of what is involved step by step. So often it is very difficult for people who are separating to understand what is coming next. There are programs and supports and information services in place.

A lot of things can be done, but those are just a few.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my colleague touched briefly on domestic violence. One of the objectives of this bill is to combat domestic violence.

We heard from a lot of witnesses, including many representatives from a large Canadian coalition, including representatives from the Regroupement des maisons pour femmes victimes de violence conjugale, the Ottawa Coalition to End Violence Against Women, the Elizabeth Fry Society, and I could go on and on. They told us that the bill must highlight just how likely women are to be victims of domestic violence.

Does my colleague believe that the bill does enough to help stop domestic violence?

[*English*]

Mr. Michael Cooper: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, who spent time very carefully reviewing the bill.

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An amendment was put forward with respect to incorporating gender-based violence. While I understand the intent underlying the bill, I was unable to support that amendment on the basis that family violence is all-encompassing. It can impact persons of all genders. It can impact children. It can impact a number of people in the relationship, which is why the legislation as currently worded is broad enough to encompass all of those situations.

• (1620)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as my party's critic for families, children and social development, I am delighted to rise in the House once again to speak to Bill C-78.

I will get straight to the point. Bill C-78 is clearly a step forward, considering that the 40-year-old Divorce Act is no longer a useful tool for helping families navigate the problems they encounter during a divorce.

Let me illustrate that with a quote from Senator Landon Pearson. She was appointed to the Senate in 1994 and retired in 2005. I think this quote shows that we have long known the Divorce Act needs updating. Senator Pearson served as vice-chair of the Standing Committee on Human Rights.

This is what she said way back in the early 2000s:

When their parents separate, children's lives are changed forever. The responsibility of parents and family members as well as the professionals who engage with them, is to make that change as smooth as possible. Children have the right to be looked after, and to be protected from violence and undue emotional stress. They also have the right to maintain relationships that are important to them and to have their own voices heard. Only when these and all the other rights that are guaranteed to them by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child are respected, will children be able to accept and adjust well to the new circumstances in which they find themselves.

That is why my NDP colleagues and I will support this bill. However, I want my esteemed colleagues to realize that, although this bill is a step forward, we cannot stop here. I believe this bill can and should be improved.

I think we can all agree that the objectives set out in the text—namely, promoting the best interests of the child, taking family violence into account in making parenting arrangements, fighting child poverty and making Canada's family justice system more accessible—are all steps in the right direction. However, the major flaw with this bill is that it too often lacks the teeth to support its intentions.

Many of the witnesses who appeared before the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights as part of its work on Bill C-78 came to the same conclusion. I would like to thank them once again. What I took away from those meetings is that families, associations, justice professionals and academics are all waiting for a comprehensive reform of the Divorce Act.

I want to emphasize how important it is that we not let the opportunity we have today pass us by, since we will likely not reform the Divorce Act again for another few decades. Let us not make changes just for the sake of making changes; we must listen to the recommendations made by witnesses in committee and in the many briefs that have been sent to us. We do not want to realize a

few months down the road that the act does not resolve certain problems and only addresses them superficially.

We need to make sure we do things right. I do not want us to end up dealing with problems that we were warned about and that we could have resolved today. I am thinking in particular about situations of family violence and about how the child's views always need to be taken into account in divorce proceedings.

I would therefore like to talk about three issues: fully protecting the best interests of the child, of all children, managing situations of family violence, and combatting poverty.

First, when it comes to promoting the best interests of the child, we must not end up in a situation where the child's interests are determined a priori by the parents or the judge.

• (1625)

That is why it would make sense to include a provision in the bill to give the child the right to be represented by a third party. Countless studies show that questioning a child through such a process is very beneficial. Professionals note that when a person is there to communicate to the parents the concerns and interests of their child, the divorce is settled almost immediately.

Although the bill states in clause 16(3) the need to consider “the child's views and preferences, by giving due weight to the child's age and maturity”, it seems that representation for the child would guarantee that the best interest of the child is central to concerns in all circumstances.

Moreover, we should give considerable attention to training on how to duly take into account the point of view of the child in matters before family court. I think that our approach has to be based on the International Convention on the Rights of the Child and best practices being used in Canada and abroad. In fact, to go even further, the Convention on the Rights of the Child should be included in the section on the best interest of the child.

Unfortunately, the departmental officials told the committee that we did not need to explicitly incorporate the Convention on the Rights of the Child because it is a given that Canadian courts are required to comply with the convention. However, several witnesses testified that explicitly including it, not only in the preamble but also in the body of the act, would enable both us and the courts to take into account all the underlying principles of this convention. Sadly, this view did not find favour.

I also want to point out how important it is that children be offered services and resources that give them psychological support.

Lastly, it is equally vital that the best interests of children, all children, be taken into consideration. This means that indigenous children's right to their own culture, religion and language must be recognized in paragraph (f) of subclause 16(3) on the best interests of the child.

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The testimony of UNICEF Canada representatives was extremely pertinent and supported this point of view. It is obvious to them that the International Convention on the Rights of the Child supports the principle of considering the culture of indigenous children. Here again, as I just said, we can look to article 30 of the International Convention on the Rights of the Child, which recognizes the rights of an indigenous child to enjoy his or her own culture, to profess and practise his or her own religion or to use his or her own language in community with the other members of his or her group.

I would like to read a quote from the evidence we heard at committee in support of the representation of the child. I will quote Dr. Valerie Irvine, a professor at the University of Victoria, who talked about her studies on the impact of divorce on families. She said:

Canadian families require more integrated services, such as data analytics, the elevation of the role of a child's direct health professional team, and legal representation for the child.

It is clear that, to have these professional services, we must support the provinces, which are responsible for enforcing this law. We know that compared to health services, social services are often overlooked in the provinces.

● (1630)

Barbara Landau told our committee the following:

It isn't lawyers that I say shouldn't interview children; it's judges. I think bringing a kid to the courtroom and having a judge take a few minutes in chambers with the child is a pretty frightening experience...

I think that mental health professionals are the best ones to be trained to work with children. Interviewing a child as part of the process is really helpful. Almost every case settles almost immediately once there is somebody to reflect the child's concerns and interests to the parents.

In the divorce process, each parent is represented by lawyers, and although both parents are concerned about the child's well-being, the child's best interests can unwittingly get lost in the process. If a professional who can speak on behalf of the child and is not intimidated by the judicial process is present for every step of that process, we could truly say that the child is our primary concern.

Second, I want to talk about three considerations regarding family violence. First, it is a great idea to include a definition of family violence in the bill. The definition is purposely broad in order to take into account the complexity and the variety of types of family violence. Nevertheless, many organizations have drawn our attention to the importance of explicitly recognizing in the definition that family violence is a type of violence against women, and rightly so.

The goal is not to minimize cases of violence against men but to recognize the fact that, in the vast majority of cases, family violence is gendered in nature, because it is most often men who commit violence against women. The statistics are clear in that regard.

Next, we need to set out in the bill that alternate dispute resolution mechanisms should not often be used in situations of family violence. Many organizations and academics are concerned that resolving divorce proceedings outside the court system will merely give the violent parent more ways of controlling his victims.

As a result, it is essential that the bill include provisions regarding training for justice professionals on how to recognize, understand and deal with situations of family violence.

I want to take a moment to again pay tribute to two community organizations in my riding that do amazing work day after day for children whose parents are getting divorced and for all women experiencing domestic violence. The expertise of these organizations has been extremely useful for helping me fully understand and document my committee work on this issue.

First, I want to thank Le Petit Pont, an organization that works to create and maintain parent-child bonds in a neutral, harmonious, family-friendly setting during situations of separation and conflict. The child's best interests and safety, both physical and mental, are the top priority for this organization, which operates in both Saint-Hyacinthe and Longueuil.

Second, I want to express my gratitude to La Clé sur la porte. In its 37 years of operation, it has taken in over 4,000 women from all over Quebec. This organization provides shelter for women fleeing domestic violence and their children in Saint-Hyacinthe and also offers support programs in Acton Vale and Belœil. La Clé sur la porte is fully focused on keeping women and children safe.

Every day, these two organizations see the toll that domestic violence takes on women and the indirect repercussions it has on their children, whose welfare is closely tied to that of their parents, as we know. These organizations can attest to the importance of the three amendments I just talked about.

● (1635)

Finally, there is nothing in this bill, nor in the comments made by the Minister of Justice, to convince me that Bill C-78 will do anything to reduce poverty in any meaningful way. The provisions to facilitate the settlement of support orders are good, but what happens when the parent who is supposed to pay cannot afford it?

In addition, access to justice is limited for the most economically vulnerable families. Divorce proceedings are expensive; lawyers are expensive; notaries are expensive; and incomes shrink when couples separate. The use of alternative dispute resolution mechanisms, as required under this bill, is very likely to be effective when it comes to resolving conflicts, but at the same time, this could create new inequities in terms of access to justice, because those mechanisms will also be expensive. It is therefore crucial that the bill provide funding to support those most vulnerable in our society and guarantee true equality in terms of access to justice. Funding definitely needs to be set aside for transfer to the provinces to bring in these teams of professionals.

Government Orders

Several witnesses told us this. One witness in particular told us that she had the financial means to hire experts, use psychological support services for her children, and access resources for her defence. However, in light of her experience, she found it important to come testify to say that it was clear to her that not all families have access to the same resources and that the children of these less fortunate families had to face this situation alone. We must therefore set aside funding for these social services. As we know, access to legal aid is diminishing. We must ensure that all Canadians have the same access to justice.

If the Liberals truly want to reduce child poverty, then Bill C-78 is not the answer. The Minister of Justice told us earlier that this bill will not help with that. He then once again pointed to the Canada child benefit, like many of his Liberal colleagues. We know that this benefit cannot solve everything. I will therefore accept the minister's invitation to offer my colleagues some potential solutions to truly end child poverty.

We need to come up with a real national strategy to end child poverty. It is not enough to set targets. We need to provide the means to achieve them, which the current strategy does not do. Then we must build affordable housing for families, seniors and those who need it now. Too many Canadians spend more than 30% of their income on housing. In some regions, that is the case for 50% of the population. In addition, we need a universal pharmacare plan and a universal day care system. We must also establish a \$15-an-hour minimum wage. Those are real social policies that will actually reduce child poverty. I hope we will not see half measures and that the government will consider the recommendations made by witnesses and the opposition.

We must consider all the recommendations. I was very impressed that the witnesses who appeared before our committee were so well prepared. We proposed amendments that, unfortunately, were rejected. I hope that the work in this place will let us go further. Ultimately, we all want the best for our families and, above all, for our children.

• (1640)

Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada and to the Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am humbled to rise for the first time in this new House. I truly appreciated the speech and comments from the member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, as I appreciate her participation in meetings of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights.

She spoke at length about child poverty. I would like to talk about poverty among women, which is connected to child poverty.

[English]

I want to outline a couple of important statistics.

We know that two million people in Canada are living in divorced or separated families. We also know there are over a billion dollars arrears for income support payments after the result of divorce or separation. We know that 60% of that bucket is in enforcement proceedings. When we look at who is in enforcement, who is owing whom, 96% of the time it is a man who is owing money to a woman.

I want to ask the member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot for her views on how a bill such as this, which has different aspects of government talking to one another and facilitates the payment of support will assist those women, particularly the women who are caring for children on their own, with respect to alleviating the poverty that she has mentioned, the poverty of women and children.

[Translation]

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

A number of women's groups felt it was important to testify in committee, since, quite often, women end up living in poverty following a divorce. I do not think that this bill does enough in that respect.

What can we do? Representatives from the Barreau du Québec gave us some suggestions. Quebec already has rules for collecting child support, but when both parents are struggling financially, even if the court decides that the woman needs child support, she does not receive it. This is a problem.

It is important to note that this bill will not apply to common-law partners who, in Quebec in particular, account for 40% of couples. In other regions throughout Canada, it is 50%. Thus, the rules of this bill on divorce will not apply to a majority of couples because they live together and are not married. In the event of a divorce, these women and their children, of course, will have little, if any, recourse to provide for their needs.

We have to think about that in Quebec because there is a very large number of domestic partnerships as a result of the sharp increase over the past few decades. We will have to examine this issue to see how we can help families deal with separation and divorce.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot for raising the issue of children's rights. I think we all agree that it is important to uphold children's rights. As she said, Canada is party to the United Nations convention, but there is no mention of that in this bill.

Would my colleague agree that we need a federal body, like those that exist at the provincial level, to protect children from the many ways in which Canadian society and the federal government can infringe upon their rights?

• (1645)

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question.

Government Orders

One of the purposes of the bill is to make the best interests of the child central to the process. However, many witnesses who have attended divorce proceedings with couples for decades said that the proceedings are adversarial. During divorce proceedings, the children are often ignored. The parents do not mean to do that, but it is a two-party process and the children represent a third party.

It is therefore important for the federal government to have a mechanism and the necessary resources to ensure that children are well represented. In that way, the federal government would be helping the provinces.

Children often hear their parents talking about the divorce proceedings. There needs to be a third party who understands the legal system participating in the discussions. Their only mandate would be to ensure that the child's interests are represented throughout the process. The designated person would know when to intervene to express the will and interests of the child. The child's point of view would be represented at all times.

Some lawyers came to testify to tell us that, unfortunately, some judges are not well-suited to adequately speak to children. This is an intimidating experience for the children. Everything has to unfold in a climate of trust.

Children are often stuck in the middle between two parents and they do not want to say anything to upset either parent. Children should be able to confide, in a neutral way, in a professional who can then attest to their needs when a divorce happens. Children's best interests can then truly be the number one concern. Many witnesses gave us very concrete examples demonstrating why that is the best way forward.

Ms. Karine Trudel (Jonquière, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot for her excellent work, both in her riding and at committee.

I wonder if she could speak to us briefly about the rights of indigenous children in the context of Bill C-78. The NDP proposed an amendment in that regard at committee.

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy: Mr. Speaker, we talked about integrating the Convention on the Rights of the Child. UNICEF Canada made it very clear that integrating the convention would ensure better recognition of the rights of indigenous children. The justice system would recognize their culture and their environment and it would mean they could be addressed in their language. Several witnesses raised that concern.

We know that is the federal government's responsibility. We cannot download that onto the provinces, as we often do. We have a duty to ensure that the best interests of indigenous children are taken into consideration in Bill C-78.

• (1650)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): 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 Saanich—Gulf Islands, Natural Resources; the hon. member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, Canada Post Corporation; the hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, Dairy Industry.

[English]

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, as I rise for my first full speech in our new chamber, I want to begin by acknowledging that we are on the traditional territory of the Algonquin people, expressing our gratitude for their patience and hospitality. *Meegwetch.*

There could not be a topic that is more fraught emotionally than child custody disputes in marital breakdowns, and it certainly is not new. As I pondered, having been in the deep weeds of this bill through clause by clause with my many amendments, to step back at report stage and really think about our topic, it struck me how very long humanity has struggled with the difficulties.

As my hon. colleague from St. Albert mentioned earlier, judges have a hard time with these decisions, and it put me in mind of the first book of Kings and the wisdom of Solomon. The quite well known story was 2,500 years ago, of two women coming to King Solomon with the claim that a baby was theirs. It was a child custody dispute 2,500 years ago. In trying to discern who was the real mother—we all know the story—King Solomon said to bring him a sword. He would cut the child in half and he would give half to each one of these women. Of course, the real mother said not to, but to give the child to the other woman. Of course, that is when King Solomon said now he knew who the real mother was, and that was that.

Our courts still struggle, and when they get it wrong, sometimes children die. It is still the case in this day and age, and perhaps increasingly so, as violence against an intimate partner sometimes turns into revenge against that intimate partner.

I wanted to start with these two cases because I raised them when this bill came forward for first reading, and I raised them to our then minister of justice to ask if this bill would help in these cases. I now believe that it would or, more accurately, it might. The two cases I want to raise are the cases of two women from Vancouver Island where I live, both of whom lost their children because a judge would not listen to them in a dispute over custody.

One is a case that has been raised in this House many times. In 2015, Alison Azer's children were taken on a vacation, over her objections. Her former spouse was a very well respected doctor, even in the kind of echelons where he was at least an acquaintance of our former prime minister. He was respected in the community, and the court took his word that, in taking Alison's children on holiday, he would bring them back. Alison Azer begged the judge not to give the passports of her children to her former spouse, who was originally from Iraq. She was terrified the children might be kept there, and that is in fact what happened. The children, Canadian citizens, still live overseas. Sharvahn, Rojevahn, Dersim and Meitan have now been so culturally and egregiously alienated from their own mother that, when she finally got a chance to see them, they were not willing to run to her arms. It is one of those things that just breaks one's heart. The judge did not listen to Alison.

Government Orders

The next case is worse, if there is anything worse. In January 2018, more than a thousand people crammed into Christ Church Cathedral in Victoria for the funeral of Chloe and Aubrey Berry, who were murdered by their father on Christmas. I was one of those mourners. I have never been through anything as difficult. The clergy struggled to find meaning, to give people hope, because those little angels were adored by their classmates and their family—of course they were; they were beautiful little girls—and murdered by their father. Their mother also sought to convince a judge that there should not be unsupervised visits for her children with their father. Tragically, the judge did not see that there was existing evidence of threat or harm that was sufficient to deny the father an unsupervised visit.

• (1655)

That mother's name is Sarah Cotton. When I talked to Sarah afterwards at the reception with the mourners, she was startling in her clarity. She was articulate and asked me to help work to make sure that what happened to her would not happen to other mothers. She said that the family court system had to change, that judges had to be prepared to listen and that they should not be so concerned with the access rights of a father that they should ignore the cries of a mother that there was a reason to be concerned.

The rest of what I am going to say about Bill C-78 is dedicated to Alison and Sarah, extraordinary mothers who have lost their children because they could not convince a judge to listen to them about the threat of allowing those children to go with their fathers, either overseas or for a Christmas visit that ended in the children's murder.

Where I find hope in the bill is in the recognition of family violence and the way in which the definition section of the bill would allow for a lot of consideration by a judge of a definition that falls short of "They have already been hurt. He has made specific threats".

I should step back and say that in some contexts it is not a mother and a father. It could be a mother who is a threat. We are also dealing with situations that are not cisgendered individuals in all cases who are always in heterosexual relationships. We recognize that gender violence and gender inequity transcends hetero norms.

However, let me just continue with the traditional way in which we talk about family violence, which is that it is generally the case in inter-spousal violence that it tends to be a father making threats and a mother who is in the weaker situation, either economically or in terms of the power imbalance, as has been referred to by other members.

In this definition of family violence, and this is what makes it helpful, there is not an exclusive list. It uses examples but it is not a closed list. It defines family violence as:

any conduct, whether or not the conduct constitutes a criminal offence, by a family member towards another family member, that is violent or threatening or that constitutes a pattern of coercive and controlling behaviour or that causes that other family member to fear for their own safety or for that of another person—and in the case of a child, the direct or indirect exposure to such conduct—and includes

Then we have a non-exclusive list of (a) to (i). I found it impressive, really, in terms of recognizing psychological abuse and also recognizing the real warning signs, such as under subsection (h),

"threats to kill or harm an animal", a threat against a family pet. If a judge hears that now, the judge can say that it falls within this definition of family violence and we ought to take action to protect these children. We need to think of all these elements.

It is not going to be perfect because judges will continue to make mistakes, but I hope that the recognition in this first reform in more than 20 years of our family law will direct the minds of judges to these various elements of family violence and the psychological stress. I certainly used to practice a little bit of family law. I found it very difficult because it is so emotional. However, we certainly know that there were some times that because it became so confrontational, there would be false charges against one partner or the other in an effort to gain custody. The larger risk comes when one does not listen to the parent who is really concerned that the child might be at risk if parenting time, as we now describe it, is allocated to a parent who may be capable of kidnapping their own children, alienating one parent and doing huge psychological damage to the children, or in the worst case, as I have mentioned, capable of murder.

That, I think, is an improvement: the injection of a more sophisticated understanding of family violence. The context of it and definition of it is certainly an improvement. Of course, this law is primarily child-centred legislation. It is much closer to what we have had in British Columbia for some years, which is, under British Columbia's Family Law Act, a focus on the best interests of the child.

• (1700)

Therefore, it is interesting that the two cases I have raised took place in B.C., even though they had this kind of framework of focusing on the best interests of the children. It suggests that the changes are going to be cultural and need training. I hope this legislation is going to protect children. Its goal is certainly to always have paramount the best interests of the child, and it is for that reason that I support the legislation.

It does have some other substantial improvements that are more about logistics. One of them I just referenced, all too briefly. When we used language about custody and access we created, perhaps inadvertently, more of a contested, gladiatorial struggle to win custody, to be acknowledged as, essentially, the better parent. In an emotional context, marriage breakdowns are certainly about the most emotional time in a person's life. The children were often treated as the spoils of war, and the word "custody" tended to fuel that. At least that is what the drafters of this legislation must have considered in changing the language.

A lot of family law experts who testified at the committee said they hoped this would take away some of that notion of winners and losers, of "winning" custody, because we now talk about parenting time. Parenting time is described in ways that suggest that it is shared parenting time and requires responsible behaviour during that parenting time. This is progress. I think it will help take out some of the conflict. I certainly hope so. As I said earlier, at least it might.

Government Orders

Another big improvement in the legislation, and long overdue, is that it allows a judge to access income information about one or the other parent from other government sources. We certainly know that it has delayed these cases. It has cost the court time. It has stressed out already stressed-out parents, particularly where one spouse has more income than the other, which is often the case. Where they are resistant to disclose voluntarily, now the judge has an access to get other information from other government sources. This will help for sure, and it is a win-win-win in a couple of different directions.

It has already been discussed at some length the improvements around a legislated test for the question of one parent moving to another location with a child and how that affects the other parent and access to parenting time. The rules here will, by being legislated, create a lot more certainty than in the past, where we were essentially dealing with the 1996 Supreme Court case of *Gordon v. Goertz*. This effort to legislate the test for mobility is clearly progress.

It is also worth reinforcing that in cases where family violence is not at play, the opportunity to go to mediation is certainly an improvement. Anything that takes the adversarial nature of family breakdown, turns down that temperature and makes it all about what is in the best interests of the child is good.

I was trained as a lawyer. I have mentioned that before. There is no doubt it is an adversarial thing. We are taught to go into courtrooms and win. That is not helpful. If in a family breakdown situation we can avoid lawyers and avoid courts and work through mediation everyone will be better off, except the lawyers, and that is okay. I so hope that the kind of co-operative law we have seen developing across Canada, the access to mediation, which is stressed in this bill, will help families get through this crisis period in their lives with their relationships intact. It certainly is the most helpful thing for the children.

I brought forward a number of amendments. My amendments were not accepted. I wanted to see an amendment that dealt with the issue of maximum access. There was a Liberal amendment that was quite similar. I hope we will see that playing out in a way that addresses some of the concerns raised by legal experts. I also put forward amendments to have more of a focus on the question of the judge turning his or her mind to the specific issues when a child is indigenous.

● (1705)

We have seen far too many indigenous children in this country taken from their families, historically and currently, and we need to pay attention to that and wherever possible ensure that children are in their communities, are in their culture, have access to their languages and have access to other relatives. The indigenous nature of child custody is referenced in the bill, but not as completely as it would have been had my amendments been accepted.

As I have said, though, the bill is a substantial reform of family law in Canada. It is long overdue. I so hope it works. I hope it works to avoid, ever again, the tragedies I have mentioned already. There could be nothing worse for any parents than to lose their children. Losing them in divorce is tough. Losing them forever is unbearable.

I hope and pray the legislation will be followed up with additional funding and more training, perhaps mandatory training for judges to

think through these cases, to read and think about Aubrey and to read and think about Chloe, and about Alison's children, so that when dealing with a case in front of them they think about what the worst thing is that could happen if they get it wrong. That is ultimately the burden judges carry. I would not want to be the judges who said that they did not worry about the Azer children going overseas or the Berry girls going to their father at Christmas.

All of us need to make the best interests of the child the guiding light of all family law. Indeed, I could not agree more with my hon. colleague from Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot. It would have been better had this legislation included an acknowledgement of our obligations under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. However, there is much more that can still be done. We have worked for years in this country, particularly retired Senator Landon Pearson, who led the charge to have a child advocate at the federal level to look at the broad range of issues as they affect our children.

With that, I thank the House for the opportunity to speak to Bill C-78. I look forward to voting for it at report stage and third reading, and seeing it go to the Senate, which potentially may go back to some of the amendments that failed in the House.

Mr. Anthony Housefather (Mount Royal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague from Saanich—Gulf Islands for her contributions at committee and the amendments she proposed, which were always well reasoned and much appreciated. Whether we come down on the same side or not on her amendments, I always enjoy discussing them with her.

My hon. colleague covered multiple aspects of the bill, but I wanted to ask her one question about an area she did not cover. She was present when the committee unanimously adopted an amendment guaranteeing the right to divorce in either English or French in every province in Canada. As my hon. colleague mentioned in her speech, only a certain number of divorces actually go to court. Those are the most confrontational and the most controversial, and people are incredibly emotional. It is often the only time they are actually in contact with the justice system, and it is only right they be able to do this in their own language.

The member did not have an opportunity to vote on those amendments. I would like to know how she would have voted.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for Mount Royal for being such a fair chair in circumstances where, as he will know, I have constantly complained of the process that forces me to bring amendments to committee at clause-by-clause, rather than bringing them forward at report stage in the House, which is the right I would otherwise have had. If anyone is wondering, that is the reason I could not vote. I do not have rights at committee to vote on my amendments. I can speak to them. However, if I had a vote, it would have remained unanimous.

Government Orders

• (1710)

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I acknowledge the horrific cases involving Aubrey and Chloe Berry on Christmas Day of last year and what has happened to the Azer children. Alison comes from St. Albert, and her older children went to school in St. Albert while they were there. I met teachers who taught her kids. I have had the opportunity to meet with Alison many times. She came here to fight for the return of her children. Her incredible determination is inspiring in the face of such adversity. It is so tragic that, unfortunately, she has not been reunited with her children.

I want to ask the member about the issue of changing some of the language in terms of custody and access. On balance, it is a positive, but there was some concern raised by some witnesses about the impact it might have on matters in which there is an international component. For example, for a father who abducted his children in Pakistan, it was said that the court in Pakistan was very insistent, or said it would be very helpful, to have the term “custody”, that the mother had “custody”.

I wonder if the member might speak to that and also to the fact that in terms of child support and immigration domestic legislation, “custody” and “access” are the terms that are used.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, I had not realized the connection the member for St. Albert—Edmonton had directly with Alison Azer and the children in St. Albert. I always thought of them as children from Vancouver Island. It remains heartbreaking, especially when one is close to them. Alison is an amazing woman.

I think we are making progress by calling it parenting time. I had a horrific case of a child who was kidnapped by a non-custodial parent and taken to New Hampshire, where the courts looked at a custody order from the Province of British Columbia as if it had come out of a Cracker Jack box. They did not give a fig what the courts in British Columbia said. They said that the non-custodial father breaking the orders of the Province of British Columbia had no bearing for them.

There are international conventions, and I had B.C. involved with them, on the return of children in this kind of situation. It is very difficult. My point is that I do not think the wording will be definitive. It is a matter of the Canadian government getting behind the treaty and working to get children who have been kidnapped by a non-custodial parent and getting the reciprocal government to recognize that right under the treaty. The clarity the Minister of Justice or the Prime Minister could use in a situation like that would be to say that in the context of our Divorce Act, “parenting time” conveys rights that the other parent does not have.

I think we will work through it just fine. The benefits of not using the word “custody” and “access” in our family law legislation federally far outweigh the risks of another jurisdiction not understanding our law. If we could not get the United States of America to understand that British Columbia’s Supreme Court was actually a responsible court, with jurisdiction, knowledge and clout, and the language at that time was the same, I think we are going to have problems whenever we have transboundary issues with children.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech.

I was happy to vote in favour of most of the amendments she proposed, if only as a symbolic gesture.

I would like to read out a short quote from a woman who appeared before our committee. She was speaking on behalf of the association she represents, but she was also speaking for a large coalition of women's groups. She said:

In addition, we also recommend that a definition of violence against women be added, which acknowledges that it is a form of gender-based discrimination that's experienced by women in multiple ways and shaped by other forms of discrimination and disadvantage. This intersects with race, indigenous identity, ethnicity, religion, gender identity or gender expression, sexual orientation, citizenship, immigration or refugee status, geographic location, social condition, age and disability.

I would like to know what my colleague thinks about the fact that this amendment, which sought to add a clearer definition of violence against women, was rejected. Does she think that including it could broaden the scope of this legislation?

• (1715)

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question.

I completely agree with her. That was a profound testimony. However, I think that Bill C-78 vastly improves the legislation regarding families. We always need to improve and strengthen women's rights, and I think that the definition of family violence will do just that.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I wonder if my colleague could provide her thoughts on custody issues during a family breakup. The costs are becoming fairly prohibitive for family members. Really, the biggest disadvantage is to the children, when so much has to be paid in terms of courts.

From a personal perspective, this is one of the reasons it is good to see this proposed legislation, because it at least starts to deal with the issue in a much broader sense and brings more attention to it.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, when we are looking at the economic impact of family breakdown, especially in light of the last conversation about the impact on women, it is very much the case empirically that women suffer more economically in a family breakdown. Most of the single-parent households in Canada are single-parent households in which the woman is raising the children and is responsible for economic support and has all the additional burdens. If we add to that the spoils of war approach to divorce, with legal bills, court bills, bills for having one's own lawyer, sometimes an accountant, and these costs are large, and, when it is time to actually make court appearances, child care costs, these costs mount up.

Government Orders

One of the advantages the bill attempts to achieve is more efficiency, speedier handling, and wherever possible, moving to mediation. As well, of course, there is the fact that a judge could give an order to force resistant parents to provide information about their financial situations. All of this should reduce the overall burden of costs in a family breakdown.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today for the first time in this new House of Commons. I must admit that it is much bigger. There is a lot of space. It will likely encourage us to give impassioned speeches. All sorts of nice surprises await us over the next 10 years.

I would first like to acknowledge the excellent work that was done by the members of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights. I would particularly like to thank our justice critic, the member for St. Albert—Edmonton, for his work on this file and for the much-needed assistance he provided to each of our colleagues in understanding the issues related to Bill C-78. I thank him for his valuable advice.

For those watching at home, we are talking about Bill C-78, an act to amend the Divorce Act, the Family Orders and Agreements Enforcement Assistance Act and the Garnishment, Attachment and Pension Diversion Act and to make consequential amendments to another act.

I will get into the nitty gritty of the bill a little later on, but I would like to take a moment to share something relevant to this topic. I am very fortunate to have never had personal experience with the Divorce Act. I am so blessed to have had such an extraordinary woman by my side for more than 27 years. We have been through good and not-so-good times. There have been many ups along with the downs.

Caro and I have three children, who have always been our pride and joy. Like most parents, we have tried to make every decision in the best interests of our children. There have been hits and misses, but no one can say that we have not tried to always act in the best interests of our children. The longevity of our relationship can be attributed to communication, dialogue and co-operation. Like many of my colleagues, I plan to keep investing in our family in the years to come.

I understand that, unfortunately, no two relationships are the same and that stories do not always have a happy ending. Children are often at the centre of these stories that end badly. Some divorces can be very difficult. There are fights over the children, domestic violence and children who become fought-after pawns because of the law. Parents fight for custody of their children. Any couple who turns to the courts must embark on this long and difficult process.

Throughout this process, people experience strong emotions. Some are hurt, others are angry. There are all kinds of factors that make it difficult for them to go through this legal process. There is also the whole financial aspect. In the past few years, when the time came to discuss custody and determine who was the better parent, the courts used a win-lose approach. One parent would get custody of the children and the other had to settle for weekends. It was time to overhaul this legislation.

The bill does a number of things. First, it replaces the terminology pertaining to custody and access with terms that reflect the parental role to try to minimize these wars where there is a winner and a loser. The bill establishes a list of criteria concerning the interests of the child. It will create obligations for the parties and legal counsel to encourage the use of family dispute settlement mechanisms. I know that we already have such a process in Quebec, but incorporating it into law will make it official. It is absolutely essential. It is often hard enough to make a marriage work. There is no need to make divorce even more difficult.

● (1720)

It is not always necessary to involve the courts. It is not always necessary to pay exorbitant lawyers' fees and spend weeks, months or years arguing in court. There are other ways. That is what this bill will help with. It will also introduce measures to assist the courts in addressing family violence. I will come back to that. It will establish a framework for the relocation of a child and simplify certain processes, including those related to family support obligations.

Those are the key principles. Based on what has been presented, this bill should help attain certain fundamental objectives.

The first is to promote the best interests of the child, by emphasizing the importance of ensuring that the child's best interests are always the primary consideration in family law when parental decisions are being made.

The second objective is to address family violence by requiring the courts to take into account parental violence, its seriousness, its impact on the child, and future parenting arrangements.

The third objective is to reduce child poverty by offering more tools for calculating child support and for enforcing support orders.

Finally, the bill should make Canada's family justice system more accessible and efficient by simplifying the various definitions and processes, giving provincial child support recalculation services more flexibility, alleviating the courts' workloads by allowing provincial administrative child support services to carry out some tasks for which the courts are currently responsible, and requiring legal professionals to encourage their clients to use means other than the courts to resolve disputes.

As I mentioned, all of these measures seek to put the best interests of the child first. In the case of separation or divorce, children are always the victims of their parents' relationship. As we all know, children do not get to choose what family they are born into. Some are lucky, while others are less so. Unfortunately, in an emotional situation like a separation, life can easily become increasingly difficult for children. We all know of children whose parents went through difficult divorces and who had a lot of problems after that, who took years to recover from the experience and who will always carry the emotional scars of that difficult period.

Private Members' Business

Thirty years on, it makes perfect sense to me that the courts should put the child's best interests first in all their decisions. What makes no sense is why it took so many years to make these changes. Neither the Divorce Act nor any of the other acts I mentioned earlier have been changed to any significant extent in over 30 years, even though the reality of Canadian families has changed a lot in the past 30-plus years. Divorce is more common now than it was when the act initially came into force in 1968.

I would like to share some statistics. According to the 2016 census, five million Canadians separated or divorced between 1991 and 2011. Of those, 38% had a child together at the time of their divorce. I will point out that the act we are discussing today relates only to divorce. It does not deal with common-law partners, only legally married parents. The 2016 census showed that over two million children were living in separated or divorced families. Over a million children of separated families were living in single-parent families, and another million were living in step families.

I want to point out that a separation creates single-parent families. The statistics show that single-parent families, and in particular ones in which a woman is the custodial parent, are more likely to be poor than two-parent families. This is a fact. It is understandable, then, in these cases, that the parent would not have a lot of money to spend on legal fees to assert her rights, for example. We cannot lose sight of this reality in our jobs as legislators.

● (1725)

As I mentioned earlier, one of the reasons we support this bill is that it puts the best interest of the child first. Promoting the best interest of the child, helping to address family violence, fighting child poverty and making Canada's family justice system more accessible and effective are all features that we as parliamentarians must stand up for.

Of course, I hope those folks over there do not expect us to agree with everything in Bill C-78. There are certain items that need a closer look. I know my colleagues on the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights had recommended some amendments to the bill, but they were rejected. There was one that really stood out for me. I would have liked Bill C-78 to provide for the possibility of shared parenting in the consideration of determining factors in the best interest of the child.

This is not always true, but I do know some people who were better at getting a divorce than they were at being married. They exist. This change would make such situations legal, when people can reach an understanding. Shared parenting would give them more flexibility. It can work, although I realize it does not work in every situation. This would have given judges the authority to consider that as a determining factor.

I would be remiss if I did not mention one important amendment to the bill made by the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights. On December 5, the committee unanimously adopted an amendment to include the right to testify, plead, make observations and receive a judgment in the official language of one's choice. I believe this is very important to all Canadians.

● (1730)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The hon. member for Mégantic—L'Érable will have eight minutes to finish his speech the next time we study this bill.

It being 5:30 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's Order Paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[Translation]

CANADA LABOUR CODE

Mr. Simon Marcil (Mirabel, BQ) moved that Bill C-420, An Act to amend the Canada Labour Code, the Official Languages Act and the Canada Business Corporations Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to introduce my bill, Bill C-420, in the House today. This bill would strengthen the rights of workers under federal jurisdiction. First, I must point out that labour relations in Quebec are regulated by Quebec labour laws, except in the case of workers in federal sectors. All workers in ports, airports, banks and interprovincial or international transportation companies, like the STO, are subject to a different set of laws and, as I will show, different standards that are unacceptable in the 21st century.

Essentially, there are two classes of workers in Quebec. I could not tolerate this, as a former union representative, as a father and as a proud representative for the people of Mirabel, who are also workers.

With Bill C-420, the Bloc Québécois wants to fix three major flaws that violate workers' rights and put people in danger.

First, Bill C-420 would prohibit the use of scabs during a labour dispute. It is an anti-scab law like the one passed in 1977 in Quebec and wherever there is social justice. That is obviously not the case here.

Presently, at the federal level, all an employer has to do to show good faith and to have the right to use scabs is to appear as though he is continuing to negotiate with the union. That is appalling. You can say whatever you want, but we know who still has the upper hand. The use of scabs makes labour disputes last two and a half times longer. Not only is that appalling, but it is detrimental to social peace. It makes for more violent and longer disputes.

What happens after these long labour disputes, when everyone ends up hating one another to the point that it is impossible to get along? A special law is imposed on the workers, which is what happened at Canada Post. Hurray for the Liberals who are really pathetic. A special law is imposed on the workers to force a collective agreement down their throats.

Private Members' Business

This is not exactly the first time such changes are being proposed here. This is the twelfth time the Bloc Québécois is introducing a bill on this. In fact, the dean of the House, my colleague from Bécancour—Nicolet—Saurel, introduced anti-scab legislation during his very first term. That was in the 1980s when there was no Internet or cell phones. It was a very long time ago. Even then, he could not get his bill passed. Anti-scab legislation is a big deal. My colleague has been a member of the House for 35 years and the federal government still uses strikebreakers. Quebeckers have been calling for a ban on the use of scabs for 35 years, but Ottawa will not budge. Nothing ever budges around here anyway.

As recently as 2016, the federal government used strikebreakers during the labour dispute with the employees of the Old Port of Montreal. We have not forgotten that.

We are also amending legislation to ensure that pregnant women can use preventive withdrawal when necessary and with decent benefits. We are amending the legislation to ensure that all female workers can avail themselves of Quebec's legislation when they work in Quebec, even if they are working under federal jurisdiction.

That applies to Canada too because Canada's labour law is 40 years behind Quebec's. Canada is a throwback. No woman should ever have to put herself or her unborn child in danger by working too long because she does not have the means to take time off for health reasons. It is a pay issue, but it is also a health and safety issue. Such archaic labour laws in a G8 country—or rather, a G7 country—are outrageous.

Lastly, we will ensure that Quebec's Charter of the French Language applies in federally regulated workplaces. In Quebec, French is the language of work, of culture and of politics. It is our common language, and it should be the language used everywhere, including in sectors governed by Ottawa. We hear from countless people in federally regulated organizations where employees are required to speak English and everything is done in English. These organizations are in Quebec, where the common language is French. Love it or hate it, our language is French.

• (1735)

In short, we want to force the federal government into the 21st century because it is 40 years behind when it comes to labour law. Most people are workers. The Liberals may get around in limousines, but ordinary people are workers. I know that the Liberals have not seen much of that. They have never really had to get their boots dirty.

Quebec has been changing and evolving, but the federal government has not taken meaningful action in decades and is stuck in the past. The gap between Quebec society and Canadian society has not shrunk but widened, and not just on this issue but on many others as well. However, in terms of labour law, the federal government is really 40 years behind. I want to reiterate that because it is truly appalling.

While Quebec was implementing a real parental leave program to allow families to be together when they welcome a new child and while it was setting up reasonably priced child care centres so that women do not have to make the difficult choice between their careers and having children, Ottawa was doing nothing, as usual.

This means that, when people in Quebec take a federally regulated job, they are getting into a time machine and travelling 40 years into the past.

As I said at the outset, there are two classes of workers in Quebec today: those who are subject to Quebec laws and those who have the misfortune of being stuck in the past because they are subject to federal laws. Since there are not two classes of citizens in Quebec, there cannot be two classes of workers. For decades now, Ottawa has refused to correct this injustice. No matter who is in power, whether Liberal or Conservative, nothing gets done.

Even the federalist parties that are never in power, like the NDP, are incapable of offering Quebeckers subject to federal regulations the same rights as other workers. Even they do not have the courage to make all federally regulated businesses subject to the provisions of Bill 101.

It is practically inexplicable that the federal government could be so narrow-minded. It is practically inexplicable that workers are being denied rights as basic as being able to work in one's own language year after year, for decades now. It is practically inexplicable, but it is also a clear reflection of the fundamental differences between our respective societies.

Quebeckers stick together. We did not always have the choice. We had to stick together to keep from disappearing. We had to stick together in order to successfully assert each one of the rights we have. Quebeckers have never had anything handed to them. Everything we have, we had to fight for and defend. That is why we stand in solidarity with our workers, because they are our family, our friends and our neighbours. They are our nation.

We have passed legislation that is more favourable to workers because we want the government to serve us, the workers. We want work-life balance. We want to work with dignity, in our own language, in an environment that reflects us and that we are comfortable in.

We believe that work should never put honest women and children at risk. We also believe that all necessary steps should be taken to ensure that having a family is not an obstacle to our personal ambitions. We want a work environment where we can thrive. We spend a huge portion of our lives at work, so we should do whatever it takes to make sure that work is not a grind.

The federal government clearly thinks otherwise. Someone in Ottawa obviously has a problem with letting people work in French, because the federal government has been refusing to allow this for decades.

Clearly, someone has a problem with allowing preventive withdrawal for women in the absence of hazardous conditions because the federal government has been refusing to allow it for decades now.

Some mucky-muck obviously has an issue with preventing the use of strikebreakers to replace employees during labour disputes, because the federal government has been refusing to deal with that for years.

Private Members' Business

These are not the only times Ottawa has abandoned workers. Here in Ottawa, the parental leave system is called unemployment. What can a person do with 55% of their salary when they are expecting a baby? One would have to be totally clueless to think that is a great plan.

When a woman loses her job when she returns from maternity leave, the federal government tells her that it cannot pay her employment insurance benefits. The woman is wished the best of luck and told to leave. We have seen that. We are not the federal government. The federal government has always been all about the financial interests of our neighbouring country and Bay Street. This is the way it has always been.

When it comes to labour law, workers are not the priority. The priority is to prevent workers' rights from inconveniencing management too much. Workers who stand up for their rights during a strike or a lockout are a nuisance to management. That is bad for business. Pregnant women or new mothers who want to not only take leave but also collect a salary are a huge nuisance to management.

● (1740)

Do not even talk to them about workers who want to work in their own language, those annoying people who demand respect and demand to be treated as equals. How difficult. This is how Ottawa sees ordinary people. Ottawa looks down on them, as usual. This is how the federal government acts, no matter which party is in power. It acts as a dutiful servant to the major financial interests. If someone owes the federal government \$20, the government will put this person through hell to get it back. However, corporations and the banks are able to legally send their money to tax havens. The government has refused to combat tax havens. When it comes to labour and taxation, Ottawa remains always a dutiful servant to the banks.

Ottawa forces taxpayers and businesses to file two tax returns for no reason, since Quebec could take care of it. Quebec has even asked to take care of it. The National Assembly made this request. This would cut accounting bills in half for honest workers who have to file two tax returns. Our small businesses would only have to pay half of what they pay to deal with one extra tax agency every year. Quebecers could demand that the banks be held accountable for the billions of dollars in profits stashed away in Barbados.

You all refused to debate it. You all voted against the motion moved by my colleague from Joliette.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I would like to remind the member that he must address his comments to the Chair and not use the word "you". I am certain that the member's comments do not refer to me.

I ask that he address his comments to the Chair and not to the members.

Mr. Simon Marcell: I was not speaking to you, Madam Speaker. Actually, yes, I was, but since you have a head on your shoulders, you would never have voted in favour of tax havens.

Ottawa would never subject the banks to such an outrage. As we know, the federal government serves the banks. The Bloc Québécois believes that the laws should address the needs of the people and the workers. We believe that workers should be able to work in their

language, that is, in French. We believe that speaking French on the job allows us to create stronger bonds. We believe that the workplace is a key component of living together.

The Bloc Québécois believes that young single mothers deserve the support of their colleagues and bosses, and also that of the state. We believe that, collectively, we must do everything we can to foster work-life balance. We believe that the right to strike is a fundamental right. We believe that people have the right to defend their working conditions. We believe that employers should not be able to replace them at a moment's notice with workers who would be illegal in any other service or company in Quebec, except for those that are federally regulated.

The Bloc Québécois cares about what Quebecers want. We stand with the people, not the pencil pushers who hide behind archaic laws to justify treating their employees like second-class citizens. All Quebec workers are entitled to dignity. They have the right to be represented in Ottawa by Quebec MPs who vote and legislate according to what the middle class and workers want. Whatever Quebec wants is what the Bloc wants. It is as simple as that.

● (1745)

Mr. Anthony Housefather (Mount Royal, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we just debated the Divorce Act.

Liberal, Conservative and NDP members of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights unanimously agreed to amend this bill to guarantee the right to divorce in French or English anywhere in Canada. We want minority language communities to flourish.

[*English*]

This bill does exactly the opposite. It takes away linguistic rights from one community, the English-speaking community of Quebec, the one community the Bloc Québécois could not care less about, the community it believes should not have the same rights as everybody else.

The Official Languages Act states that civil servants working for the federal government have the right to work in English or French across the country. In the eyes of the Bloc Québécois, French-speaking Quebecers should have the right to work in French and French-speaking people outside Quebec could work in French and English-speaking people outside Quebec could work in English; it would be only English-speaking Quebecers in the federal civil service who would no longer have the right to work in their language. What a disgrace.

[*Translation*]

The Bloc wants to take rights away from a minority language community that was there when Quebec was founded.

Why does the member feel that Quebec's anglophone community should be denied rights enjoyed by all other Canadians?

Mr. Simon Marcell: Madam Speaker, that is not even the topic of my bill.

Private Members' Business

The member opposite has it all wrong. What we are calling for is anti-scab legislation. That is what we want. We want our workers to be able to work in French in federally regulated businesses. The member is talking about the previous government bill. That is not what we are talking about. We are talking about an anti-scab bill, the opportunity to work in French, and preventive withdrawal for pregnant women.

If the member had been listening carefully, perhaps he could have asked a relevant question.

Mr. Anthony Housefather: Madam Speaker, I listened very carefully to what the member said. He said that he wants the Quebec Charter of the French Language to apply to federal employees in Quebec. That would mean that the only federal employees governed by the Charter of the French Language would be those working in Quebec. In the federal public service, employees have the right to work in English or in French. They have the right to work in the language of their choice.

[English]

Everyone works in their language: francophones outside Quebec, francophones in Quebec and English-speaking people outside Quebec. What the member is saying is that English-speaking Quebecers no longer have the same rights as every other federal civil servant to work in their language.

[Translation]

What a disgrace. I listened carefully to what the member had to say, and he and his party do not care about the anglophone community in Quebec.

Mr. Simon Marciel: Madam Speaker, I find it shocking that a member from Quebec, where Bill 101 and French as a common language have universal support, would rise in the House to tell me in English that people should not be able to speak French at work. I find that a bit ridiculous.

Mr. Anthony Housefather: Madam Speaker, as a member from Quebec, I am very proud to be Canadian. I am very proud to be part of a country where people can speak in the House of Commons of Canada in English or in French, whether they are from Quebec or any other province.

[English]

I as an English-speaking Quebecker will defend both languages in the same way I did when I ensured that French-speaking people in British Columbia and French-speaking people in Newfoundland would have the right to divorce in French when I chaired the justice committee and brought that amendment to that bill.

I am proud that we stand with the other three parties for both official languages all across Canada. Only your party does not.

• (1750)

[Translation]

What a disgrace.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I would remind the member that he is to address the Chair, not the other members.

The hon. member for Mirabel.

Mr. Simon Marciel: Madam Speaker, I am getting worried.

Could somebody give the member opposite some chocolate? He looks like he is about to have a heart attack. His face is really red. He is way off the mark.

[English]

Mr. Dan Ruimy (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank the House for permitting me to be a part of the debate on Bill C-420, tabled by my colleague the hon. member for Mirabel.

[Translation]

First of all, I would like to remind the House what this bill is about.

[English]

Bill C-420 would amend the Canada Labour Code, also known as the code, in order to accomplish three things.

[Translation]

First, it would prohibit employers from hiring replacement workers to perform the duties of employees who are on strike or locked out.

[English]

Second, it would authorize the minister of labour to enter into an agreement with the government of a province to provide for the application to pregnant and nursing employees of certain provisions of the provincial legislation concerning occupational health and safety.

[Translation]

Lastly, Bill C-420 would amend the Canada Labour Code, the Official Languages Act and the Canada Business Corporations Act to clarify the application of the Charter of the French Language in Quebec.

[English]

Tabling the bill gives us the opportunity to review the Government of Canada's actions in regard to labour relations especially, as well as in regard to working conditions for pregnant and nursing employees.

[Translation]

I want to use my time today to go over some of the actions that have been taken.

[English]

Let us talk first about what Bill C-420 proposes to do with regard to replacement workers and labour relations reform in Canada.

The bill seeks to amend the code to make it an offence for employers to hire replacement workers to perform the duties of employees who are on a lawful work stoppage. Any contravention of this provision would entail a fine of up to \$10,000 for the employer. The bill would also permit an employer to not reinstate any locked out or striking employee at the end of the work stoppage.

We have to keep in mind that amending the code can have an impact on labour relations if it is not done properly. Any proposed amendment requires a broader comprehensive review of part I, as well as a tripartite consultation process that involves the government, the labour movement and, of course, employers. In fact, all concerned parties, including academics and external stakeholders, should be consulted since these reforms would affect a great number of Canadians across the country.

It is a long-standing practice not to amend the code in a piecemeal fashion or without soliciting the input of affected stakeholders. The current provisions in the code are the result of such a review and represent a carefully crafted compromise between the interests of employers and trade unions.

Let me provide an example. In 1995, a working group, mandated by the minister of labour, led an extensive public consultation on part I of the code. Workers, employers and government stakeholders were consulted, as well as external stakeholders, such as academics and others, who could provide relevant insight. The working group's report, entitled "Seeking a Balance", formed the basis of the significant changes to part I of the code that came into effect in 1999.

The consultation process is critical to any legislative changes made to industrial relations at the federal level and our government has always respected that.

Since our government took office, we have been committed to re-establishing a fair and balanced approach to labour relations in Canada. Re-establishing a climate of collaboration and developing evidence-based policies is our objective. The very first step we took in that direction was to table Bill C-4 to repeal Bill C-377 and Bill C-525. We did this because Bill C-377 and Bill C-525 were both adopted without having been through the aforementioned tripartite consultation process typically applied to labour law reforms. This process is an essential part of the foundation that supports free collective bargaining.

Let us talk now about pregnant and nursing employees. The health and safety of all workers, including pregnant and nursing workers, is a priority for our government. Let us not forget that federally regulated workers everywhere in Canada are very well protected by the strong provisions on preventive withdrawal provided for in the code. In fact, the code contains provisions on reassignments and leaves of absence for pregnant and nursing employees. These provisions provide protective measures to help them to pursue their employment in a safe environment.

• (1755)

In addition to provisions already in place, our government has taken a number of actions to ensure the health and safety of all employees, including pregnant and nursing employees. First, we have put forward new compliance and enforcement measures for occupational health and safety standards and labour standards. These measures include monetary penalties and administrative fees for employers who are repeat offenders, the authority to publish the names of these employers, greater power for inspectors, new recourse against reprisals, and improvements in the wage-recovery process.

Private Members' Business

Next, we have introduced amendments to the code to give federally regulated private sector employees the right to request flexible work arrangements. We have also put forward a series of new leave provisions, including a five-day personal leave, of which three days are paid, and five days of paid leave for victims of family violence, out of a total of 10 days of leave.

In addition to these provisions, other recently introduced amendments to the code would provide eligible working parents with improved access to maternity and parental leave once these amendments come into effect.

On top of all that, I must remind everyone that the government supported Bill C-243, an act respecting the development of a national maternity assistance program strategy. The bill is now in the other House for review.

Let us now turn our attention to the Charter of the French Language in Quebec. The 1982 Constitution Act, which enshrines English and French as our country's official languages, provides that both these languages be given equal status in all governmental and parliamentary institutions. Additionally, two separate statutes, the Quebec charter and the federal Official Languages Act, regulate the language of work in Quebec. Active companies in Quebec, including those incorporated under the Canada Business Corporations Act, are already required under provincial law to comply with the Charter of the French Language. That includes being registered under a French name.

Consider also that the labour program has never received any complaints from federally regulated private sector employees in Quebec concerning an inability to work in French. This is backed up by a 2013 government report that concluded that these employees in Quebec seem generally able to work in French in their workplaces. If we look at Quebec's 2016 census, there are, in fact, an increasing number of workers using French as their main language, or equally with English, while on the job. Between 2006 and 2016, the rate of workers whose mother tongue was English and who mainly used French at work rose from about 23% to 25%. Meanwhile, workers whose mother tongue was a language other than English or French and who mainly used French on the job increased from 46.5% to 48% during this same period.

[*Translation*]

As members can see, our government is proactive not only on the issue of labour relations, but also on the issue of working conditions for all Canadians, including pregnant or nursing women, as well as on the issue of language of work for federally regulated employees in Quebec.

[*English*]

In conclusion, I would like to congratulate my colleague, the hon. member for Mirabel, for his important work on Bill C-420.

• (1800)

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to participate in today's debate on Bill C-420, an act to amend the Canada Labour Code, the Official Languages Act and the Canada Business Corporations Act.

Private Members' Business

At the outset, it is important that as we debate the bill it should be with the intent of striking the best balance between workers and employers. That should be our intent when we consider any legislation or policy reforms relating to our labour relation laws. Striking that balance is in the interest of all Canadians.

Bill C-420 would make a number of changes to Canada's labour laws, and I appreciate the opportunity to comment on these proposed changes.

Among these changes are amendments to the Canada Labour Code relating to occupational health and safety for pregnant and nursing employees. While it was before I took my seat in the House, the suggested change in this section of the Canada Labour Code had been debated in this Parliament when it considered Bill C-345. That bill, as does a portion of the bill we are studying today, sought to rectify an imbalance that existed for women working in the same province but under a different jurisdiction.

A woman who is pregnant can request modified work in the event that her job may be putting her health or her baby's health at risk. When a workplace cannot be adapted or modified to allow a pregnant woman to work without risk, it might then become necessary for her to preventively withdraw from work. Some provinces offer pregnant women income during preventive withdrawals, but if women working in that same province are employed in a federally regulated industry, they are not eligible for those provincial benefits.

Employees under federal jurisdiction can still preventively withdraw from their work with job protection, but it is unpaid. I am certain that everyone could appreciate that this would be a difficult decision for an expectant mother to make. There is question of fairness to be considered, given that the employee in a federally regulated position is subject to the same provincial and municipal taxes but is not eligible for the same benefits in such a case.

There is merit to the measure in the bill that would allow the federal Minister of Labour to negotiate an agreement with the government of the provinces in these cases. As I noted, this measure was debated in Bill C-345 and it had the support of the Conservatives in the House.

The bill we are considering today, however, contains much more than just this measure. It includes a measure that would not strike the best balance between workers, unions, employers and employees.

The measure I am referring to is of course the section of this bill that would make it an offence for employers to hire replacement workers to perform the work of employees who are on strike or locked out. This debate is not a new debate. It is one that has been debated before in the House as well as in other jurisdictions.

The only provinces that have adopted and kept this approach to labour laws are Quebec and British Columbia. However, this is not a new idea and it has been studied and evaluated over and over. Empirical evidence would suggest that there are negative consequences to the imbalance created by banning temporary replacement workers in the event of a labour dispute. These adverse effects impact everyone. It impacts unionized workers, employees, employers and investors.

Banning temporary replacement workers creates a significant imbalance in the process. That imbalance is created because without the ability to hire temporary replacement workers, a business could be significantly challenged in its operations or could even be unable to continue operations during a labour dispute. This would result in lost revenue and profits for that business.

• (1805)

Depending on the nature of a business and the competitiveness of the market, a business could even permanently lose customers to a competitor, and despite less productivity, many of a business's costs would remain.

A labour dispute can also be devastating for employees and even their families. However, it is necessary to consider that workers who are not working because of a labour dispute might be provided with strike pay by their union. Alternatively, or even in addition, they could even seek temporary employment themselves.

That is a clear imbalance. It significantly, and arguably unfairly, increases the bargaining power of unions. That increased power would expectedly result in higher labour costs, or in other words, a higher share of a company's profits going to unionized workers.

The other side of that reality is that there is then a lower return for investors. That expected outcome would discourage investment into the business. Decreased investment is not a gain for unionized workers. Investment is in their interest. Among its benefits, greater investment could net better tools, more innovation, a healthier work environment or greater market access. That in turn would lead a company toward greater productivity. Greater productivity would result in greater profits, which could then result in greater wages or even better job opportunities. That is the power of the market.

Unfortunately, this policy that we are considering today in the House would impede that power. It would artificially inflate the wages of unionized workers, resulting in less investment, lower economic growth, fewer jobs and ultimately lower wages. It would create a long-term reality in which there is no real winner.

As I stated at the outset, any reforms to Canada's labour laws should be made with the goal of creating the best balance of interests. Because labour laws that create balance are in the interests of workers, employees, unions, employers, investors and ultimately all Canadians, the measure to make it illegal to hire temporary replacement workers in federally regulated industries in Canada is not a balanced approach. Therefore, it is not a win. It would inevitably result in some lose-lose situations. That is not in the interest of all Canadians, and I would strongly caution all members of the House in going down that path.

[Translation]

Ms. Karine Trudel (Jonquière, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to be able to speak in this new House of Commons. As the NDP's labour critic, I am always pleased to talk about workers. Today, I will be speaking to Bill C-420, which was introduced by the member for Mirabel.

Private Members' Business

In any discussion on the Canada Labour Code, we cannot forget to talk about the health and safety of federally regulated workers, both in Quebec and in the rest of Canada. However, one important aspect has been ignored, and since I returned to the House of Commons, I have been quite worried and upset. No one is talking about protecting good jobs.

Bill C-420 talks about health and safety, but this aspect is part of protecting good jobs. There are federal employees in my riding of Jonquière. We have been home to a taxation data centre since 1983. More than 1,000 workers provide good service to all Canadians. In fact, there is even a taxation services office in Chicoutimi. These are good jobs, and the Bloc Québécois needs to remember that.

I have not seen anything about protecting these good jobs over the past few days in the House of Commons or on social media. This aspect does not seem to be taken into consideration. This is important to a region like mine, to Jonquière. One thousand jobs represents 1,000 families. This is the equivalent of thousands of jobs in Montreal, for example.

Let us return to Bill C-420, which is comprised of three bills introduced by the NDP in this parliamentary session. First, there is Bill C-234, which I introduced and deals with the issue of scabs. There is always a double standard in negotiations. I do not like to say this but, unfortunately, the parties are not on an equal footing in negotiations. I will speak about this more later on in my speech.

The second part of the bill is based on Bill C-345, introduced by my colleague from Abitibi—Témiscamingue, which proposed changes to the Canada Labour Code for pregnant or nursing employees. The third part reflects a bill that was introduced by Thomas Mulcair, but which unfortunately was never debated in the House of Commons. It called for the application to Quebec companies of the provisions in the Official Languages Act with regard to Quebec's particular linguistic characteristics. I will get back to this point in a few moments.

Let us come back to the first part of the bill on anti-strikebreaker legislation. It is time to reform the Canada Labour Code to have it reflect the reality of new technologies, automation, and telework. Why not take the opportunity to include these bills in the modernization of the Canada Labour Code, but also to protect workers during negotiations?

In November, special legislation was imposed on postal workers. Both parties cannot negotiate as equals if the company is able to hire replacement workers every time. The Canada Labour Code does not include any standard prohibiting the use of strikebreakers. It is time to remedy that problem. Labour legislation in both Quebec and British Columbia includes standards on this, so could we not include some in the Canada Labour Code? There is a lot of talk about consultation, but it is important to consult the employers, the government and workers on a set of standards. These are people who wake up every morning and perform miracles across the board.

•(1810)

Why not take care of them and amend the Canada Labour Code?

I could go on and on about this. However, the bill is divided into three parts, and I really want to talk about protections for pregnant or nursing workers.

I was working as a letter carrier when I was pregnant, and there were no protections. I had to work with my mail bag on my back and climb several stories. That was part of my job. However, pregnant women who do high-risk work need measures to lighten their workload, to keep them and their unborn babies safe. It can be really hard. It is normal to have a valid medical certificate. It is also normal for the doctor and employer to work together to come up with ways to ensure the safety of mother and baby. However, the Canada Labour Code does not allow for that.

I think there is room for improvement, like Quebec's preventive withdrawal. The Minister of Labour should make sure that mothers who wish to nurse and return to work are able to do so, as is the case in Quebec. Of course, working conditions must be taken into account to ensure that women are safe and able to nurse.

There is a real push to make it easier for women to access the workforce. Women should never be penalized for deciding to have children. Unfortunately, that is often what happens.

A number of similar bills have been introduced in the House of Commons. When my colleague from Abitibi—Témiscamingue introduced hers, it was summarily rejected. Now we have an opportunity to make amendments, and I hope that, this time, the government will show some consideration for pregnant and nursing women and vote in favour of Bill C-420. At this point, the Canada Labour Code is in dire need of an update.

I would like to spend the rest of my time talking about the part that deals with language of work in Quebec.

Quebec has two different language of work regimes. Each applies to different categories of organizations and workers. One is the Official Languages Act, which governs all federal institutions, that is, all Government of Canada and parliamentary institutions. The other is Quebec's Charter of the French Language, the Quebec charter, which applies to all provincially regulated workplaces. Quebec has about 135,000 federally regulated employees in roughly 760 private organizations.

Often certain companies will send documents in English only. Of course, some employees in Quebec businesses speak English. However, it is not right that they are receiving the documents in English only. Quebec workers speak French and their language is French, so they should be receiving the information in French and being served in French. We need to pay special attention to that. I believe that the Canada Labour Code could include requirements and protect francophone workers in Quebec who fall under federal jurisdiction.

Private Members' Business

As I mentioned several times, the Canada Labour Code is due for a major reform. There have been some bills, including Bill C-65, that have made amendments to the Canada Labour Code. Bill C-420 makes further amendments. I hope that the government will consider a comprehensive reform and modernization of the Canada Labour Code.

• (1815)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is always a pleasure to rise and address the House on what are important issues. There is no doubt we have seen, virtually from day one of this House, a great deal of effort by the Government of Canada to deal with labour-related issues. When I say “this House”, I am also referring to the other House, prior to our coming here, the traditional Parliament building and the House of Commons.

I say that because I can recall offhand talking about some of the first pieces of legislation that we introduced after forming government, which were attempts to recognize the true value of and appreciate the importance of labour and management relationships. That is something we have never taken for granted here on the government benches.

I can recall the days of being the third party in the House, when the Conservatives were successful at changing labour laws. Many members argued, including me, that this was done through the back door, through private members' hour. We had some members virtually taking the Stephen Harper approach to labour relations, which we know were not very successful. In fact, as a whole, organized labour was quite offended by the manner in which the Harper government treated labour relations.

That should not come as any surprise to the members opposite. All one has to do is look at some of the negotiations, or lack thereof, with many of the federal unions. We are talking double digits-plus where agreements were never achieved by the Harper government. Within a couple of years, we were very successful at achieving many different agreements with our national unions. That is something that does need to be noted.

We brought in legislation to reverse some of the wrong-headed legislation that was passed by Stephen Harper in the years prior to our forming government, legislation that made it more difficult to unionize, for example, and called into question the whole issue of democracy within unions, which the Conservatives attempted to paint in a negative light.

Those were the types of things that we were looking at going into the federal election. I am glad to say that as a government we responded very positively to it.

Members across the way talked about labour in general. About a month ago I mentioned the 1919 general strike in Winnipeg. I suspect all members are familiar with that. On I believe May 18, I will be hosting a very special event in the Ukrainian Labour Temple in Winnipeg's north end, on McGregor Street, to recognize that historic building where many of the organizers of the 1919 strike actually met and convened. They talked about the importance of the

working person, how important it was that our labour movement, even back then, recognized the value of looking for ideas on how to improve quality of life for Canadians, not just for the workers but much beyond that.

That is something I think we need to recognize. Often when people talk about unions, they think of union representatives sitting at a table negotiating wages, when it goes far beyond that. They could talk about the labour conditions or working conditions of those employees.

• (1820)

We can also go beyond that and talk about many of the social programs we have today. Whether the programs have been put in place by the national government, provincial governments or municipal governments, unions have been at the forefront of advocating strong, healthy programs. All one needs to do, as a good example, is look at the pharmacare issue. I have had the opportunity to meet with union reps in regard to their concerns about a pharmacare program. This is something one of our standing committees, a few years ago, was looking into. I believe now we have had more discussion and a lot of advocacy on that file and a government, in particular a Minister of Health, that has really taken the issue. We are hoping to be able to see some advancement of it.

When we have legislation that affects labour, one of the most natural questions that could be asked, and unfortunately, I did not have the opportunity to ask, is to what degree the member across the way has worked with unions, not only in one sector but in other sectors, both inside and outside Quebec. Did the member have any discussions? If so, maybe he could share some of the outcomes of those discussions.

My colleague from Mount Royal emphasized quite passionately one of the concerns brought forward in this legislation. The member for Mount Royal is owed a detailed explanation as to why the Bloc would be moving in that direction. Labour legislation should be something achieved through consensus building. We have to work with the union movement and work with management and look at what is in the best interest of providing harmony. If we are successful in doing that, we will have a healthier economy.

I do not take this lightly at all. In fact, when I was first elected in 1988, we had a controversial issue called final offer selection. It was something the NDP provincial government brought to Manitoba in the 1980s. There was a leader of the New Democratic Party who promised to bring in anti-picket or anti-scab legislation. Once the New Democrats got into government, they backed away from that but then brought another form of arbitration, final offer selection. It was a huge debate. I can remember sitting in committees in the Manitoba legislature until two o'clock in the morning. We attempted to salvage that legislation as the Conservatives and the New Democrats fought, one on the management side or the business side and the other not really taking into consideration what the businesses were saying. We actually brought forward amendments that would have saved the legislation. We would still have some sort of final offer selection in the province of Manitoba had they agreed to what the Liberals were suggesting at the time. However, the real core of the problem, whether they were the New Democrats or the Conservatives, was that they did not work with the stakeholders. As a result, their approaches were flawed on both sides.

I have not had the opportunity to go into great detail on the current legislation that has been proposed by my Bloc friends, but listening to some of the debate this afternoon, I suspect that this is not legislation brought forward with a great deal of consensus building. Whenever we attempt to change legislation that would impact labour relations, we should go out of our way to ensure that there is a sense of fairness on both sides, labour and management.

• (1825)

Our government set the stage virtually from day one when we took office. We recognized the injustices that had been put in place by the Harper regime and we made some changes that were very well received.

[Translation]

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for introducing his bill, which is very important. We know that there are more than 200,000 workers who are not subject to the Charter of the French language in Quebec because they work in federally regulated organizations. Contrary to what my colleague stated earlier, there have been complaints. Last week, a worker at a federally regulated private transportation company came to see me. He was unable to work in French. He received documents on safety that were written in English only. He tried to do a whole lot of things about this. He met with several MPs, even some of my Liberal colleagues. He was told that the Official Languages Act did not apply and that they were looking for a solution. Bill 101 aims to guarantee the right to work in French. Quebec is the only francophone state in North America, and it is very difficult to obtain services in French in the rest of Canada. Just about everything operates in English.

Even in federal institutions, where there are enough francophone employees to warrant French services, they are sometimes unavailable. Every census shows the growing assimilation of francophones. This was entirely predictable, given that research on language planning methods around the world demonstrates that systems based on institutional bilingualism and individual rights, like the system imposed on Quebec by the federal government, invariably end with the assimilation of the minority languages. The only places that have

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multiple national languages and no such assimilation employ models based on collective and territorial rights, like the Bill 101 model. Belgium, Switzerland and Israel have very stringent language legislation, more stringent than Bill 101. Bill 101 does not ban people from speaking English or learning a second language. Its purpose is to ensure the future of French in Quebec and the right to work in French, which is very important.

In Quebec, I have encountered a few cases where employees were banned from working in French even in federal institutions. There was even a recent case where a lawyer arguing in immigration court was barred from speaking French. He had to make complaints and raise objections before he was allowed to argue in French, even though he was doing so at his client's request.

• (1830)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I must interrupt the member. He will have seven minutes the next time this bill is before the House.

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

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

[English]

NATURAL RESOURCES

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I am rising in the late show this evening to address a question I first raised on October 3.

It relates not only to the threat of climate change, but also specifically to whether in reviewing the expansion of the Kinder Morgan pipeline, otherwise known as the Trans Mountain pipeline, which Canada now owns, the Government of Canada would not think it was appropriate to ensure that the climate impacts were also studied while the project is forced into overtime hours and a new review because of the failure of both the federal government and Kinder Morgan, the proponent, in the conduct of the first hearing.

We all know that on August 30 of last year, the permits granted to Kinder Morgan were struck down by the Federal Court of Appeal on multiple grounds for failures of the federal government and failures of Kinder Morgan itself.

Now that we are reviewing the project afresh, particularly with regard to its marine impacts and respect for indigenous nations, I asked the Prime Minister whether it would be appropriate for us to do with Kinder Morgan the same thing that the Liberal government did with Energy East, which was to say that we want to look at the upstream effects of the project on our greenhouse gas emissions.

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His response was essentially that we have already done this. He said, “Direct and upstream impacts were reviewed under our interim principles, announced in January 2016.” It is to this so-called inclusion of climate impacts from the interim principles that I will address my follow-up this evening.

Those interim principles, as many members in this place will recall, were to deal with stepping back from a campaign promise made by the Prime Minister as the leader of the Liberal Party in 2015, which was that no project could be approved based on the flawed process of the National Energy Board, a process so flawed that no pipeline could be approved through that process.

The Liberals stepped back from that promise by saying that they were going to go ahead and were not going to restart the process as they had promised, but were going to create interim principles, one of which was to look at the climate change impacts.

In November of 2016, a report was released by Environment Canada. It is around 50 pages. It is not the result of a hearing at which other organizations or other scientists could testify, although written comments were accepted, and it is wholly inadequate to meet the requirements of 2019, when Kinder Morgan is now being reassessed.

It is inadequate for two reasons.

First, it is outdated. It is outdated because it was conducted more than two years before the IPCC issued its special report on the imperative that we hold to 1.5° Celsius and not go above it and the findings of scientists globally that we cannot afford one more additional piece of fossil fuel infrastructure and still hold to 1.5 degrees.

It is also outdated because the Government of Canada now owns this pipeline and is determined to build it. This is directly relevant to the finding on greenhouse gases in the interim study done by Environment Canada, for this reason: It measured it based on market forces. It said that if the price of a barrel of oil was below \$60, money cannot be made on it, so the project will not be built.

Now we are way outside market forces. The Government of Canada inexplicably and monumentally stupidly has bought a \$4.6-billion pipeline that Kinder Morgan paid \$550 million for and is intending to build it whether it makes money or not.

● (1835)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Claude Poissant (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands for her important question.

I listened carefully to her comments. First, I would like to point out that our government shares the member's commitment to fighting climate change. That is why we are implementing our national climate plan, which includes over 50 commitments to address climate change.

With regard to the Trans Mountain expansion project, as the Prime Minister said when he answered the member's original question in early October, direct and upstream impacts were reviewed under our interim principles, announced in January 2016.

In our interim principles for major projects, our government promised to assess the direct and upstream greenhouse gas emissions of such projects. We kept that promise for the Trans Mountain expansion.

Our interim principles were put in place in order to provide more certainty for proponents and restore the confidence of Canadians.

In response to the Federal Court of Appeal's ruling, we asked the National Energy Board, or NEB, to reconsider its recommendations on the Trans Mountain expansion project to take into account the effects of project-related marine shipping. We are acting in accordance with the Federal Court of Appeal's ruling to find the best path forward for this project.

As part of this targeted review, we asked the NEB to consider our government's efforts to protect southern resident killer whales through a \$1.5-billion oceans protection plan.

To ensure that the NEB has the expertise and capacity to consider all of this evidence and to advise the government, we have appointed a special marine technical advisor to support the NEB. As I said, I think this is an important job. He is building on the work that has already been done and is addressing the issues raised by the Federal Court of Appeal. Our objective is to find the best path forward for this project.

● (1840)

[*English*]

Ms. Elizabeth May: Oh dear, Madam Speaker. I do not know whether to laugh or cry.

Did the hon. parliamentary secretary hear my four minutes, when I went through the same things he talked about and explained why they were completely inadequate, completely outdated and completely missed the point?

The point is this: Greta Thunberg, a Swedish schoolgirl, has been trying to wake us up to the reality that our house is on fire. She says to the elder generation, “Don't tell me we should have hope. I want you to panic. I want you to feel the fear I feel when I think about my future and how it's disappearing.”

If there was ever clearer evidence that the current government does not understand urgency, it is this debate tonight.

The urgency is this: we have to hold to 1.5° Celsius. We know that. The scientists have told us that. We pledged to do it in Paris, but the document referred to by the parliamentary secretary is out of tune, talks right past that point, and is deaf, dumb and blind to urgency.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Claude Poissant: Madam Speaker, now that we are just repeating ourselves, let me repeat what the Prime Minister said:

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...the review the NEB will undertake is related to the recent court decision on marine scoping.

That is the main point of this review: fill in the gaps identified by the Federal Court of Appeal. As the Prime Minister also said, direct and indirect impacts were reviewed under the interim principles we announced in January 2016.

Our objective is to ensure that the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion project moves in the right direction, an objective that Canadians and the courts have come to expect of us.

[English]

CANADA POST CORPORATION

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Madam Speaker, I begin my comments by thanking the councils and municipalities in my riding of Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke that contacted me to directly question the federal government's mismanagement of labour relations at Canada Post.

During question period, I asked the minister responsible for Canada Post a very important, clear and direct question regarding the democratic process in Canada. My question related to the municipal mail-in ballot many rural municipalities held in their communities for municipal elections.

In an all-too-familiar pattern that starts with the Prime Minister, the member for Thunder Bay—Superior North chose to insult Canadians, living in rural municipalities and using mail-in ballots, who were expressing their concern through me when I asked my question. In classic Liberal non-sequitur, the government spokesperson on this issue made a confused reference to the collective bargaining process.

The question from Canadian rural municipalities was whether the federal government would use taxpayer-owned resources to ensure the democratic process in municipalities was not disrupted by the federal government's inability to manage the collective bargaining process with postal workers. This is not the first time the member for Thunder Bay—Superior North has insulted Canadians in her role as a Liberal cabinet minister.

Many organizations, secular and religious, in my riding and across Canada were outraged when the member for Thunder Bay—Superior North put extreme ideology ahead of common sense by requiring Canada summer job applicants to sign an attestation requiring Canada summer job program applicants to hold the same views as the political party in power. Ironically, the minister was trying to hide behind the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms when most reasonable Canadians held the view that making organizations, particularly faith-based organizations, sign such an undertaking to qualify for government funding actually contravened the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

The mere fact that the Prime Minister and the Liberal government would force large segments of the Canadian population to be purged from applying to a federal program because they refused to violate their right to freedom of religion, conscience and expression, which includes not being coerced into something they are fundamentally opposed to, neatly sums up why the government must be defeated. That position is an affront to democracy.

By insisting that applicants for student summer job grants sign an attestation in support of abortion, the divisive election campaign the Prime Minister is so eager to engage in, if Gerald Butts' tweets are any indication, has already started. In what reasonable Canadians hope was a major backdown, Canadians will not know if that obnoxious requirement was actually changed until they see the list of successful applicants for the 2019 Canada summer jobs season.

Question period is the only time Canada's official opposition has the regular opportunity to serve our necessary role in the democratic process to make the Government of Canada accountable to Canadians. When the Prime Minister or a representative of his party chooses to avoid accountability, the insult is to all Canadians.

• (1845)

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke made a reference, early on in her comments, to collective bargaining. I know it is somewhat obscure for the member, having gone through 10 years of the Stephen Harper government, who showed nothing short of disdain for organized labour and collective bargaining in this country while they were in power. We saw that time and time again. A record four times they used back-to-work legislation in their last Parliament, and there were two other occasions when they had it on the shelf. They were ready to pull it off the shelf during labour disputes. It was pretty much a template for back-to-work legislation: insert labour organization here and insert date here. We saw it time and again.

We saw bills like Bill C-377 and Bill C-525. Might I add that the government the member was part of did not even have the courage to submit them as a government. Conservatives put them through the back door through private member's legislation and brought them to the House to try to put it to organized labour in this country. Yes, we have a different approach to organized labour and to collective bargaining.

Collective bargaining is something this government believes in, and back-to-work legislation is an absolute last resort. We know that Canada Post and CUPW had been in negotiations for over a year. There was no sign of a settlement. There was no indication that a settlement could be reached. We had time and time again sent in mediators and arbitrators. At the end of the day, we knew that the rotating strikes being undertaken were hurting the Canadian economy, and we knew that we had to take action to make that situation right.

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CFIB identified in a survey that it impacted almost two-thirds of Canadian businesses. During that critical time of the year, I know that in my riding of Cape Breton—Canso, businesses that make their stake between November and Christmas in the export sector were being impacted not just by delays in the mail but by the uncertainty that was being created by the rotating strikes. That is why we ended up taking the initiative, and as a last resort, tabled back-to-work legislation.

We know that the piece of legislation we tabled was considerably different from the legislation tabled by past the Conservative government, where there was a prescription for a resolution. We put in an arbitrator who would look at factors around health and safety issues and gender parity on wages. Those were issues we felt were imperative, and that is where the situation lies now, in the hands of Elizabeth MacPherson. We thought it was the best way forward, not just for the corporation, not just for the workers, but for all Canadians.

• (1850)

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Madam Speaker, I take my role to encourage openness and transparency in the Canadian democratic process very seriously. In fact, as a consequence of my concern about openness and transparency in the democratic decision-making process, I am proud to confirm that tomorrow, during Private Members' Business, the House will be discussing my private member's bill, Bill C-278, an act to amend the Lobbying Act, for greater transparency and reporting on foreign income for lobbyists.

I encourage Canadians watching this debate to tune in tomorrow while Bill C-278 is being debated. I invite the government's representative to take this opportunity right now to apologize to all Canadians, with a promise to do a better job answering their questions and concerns when a member of the official opposition asks a question on their behalf.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner: Madam Speaker, I would have hoped that my colleague, who I have spent a fair amount of time in this House with, might have taken the opportunity to apologize to organized labour in this country for the affront the Conservatives placed on them over the 10 years they were in power, for the disregard they showed collective bargaining in this country over their 10 years in power.

We believe in a tripartite approach to labour relations. We believe in collective bargaining, and that is how we will go about our business as long as we are in government.

[*Translation*]

DAIRY INDUSTRY

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Madam Speaker, 60% of Quebec's agricultural production operates under supply management. Supply management is absolutely crucial to 6,900 dairy, egg and poultry producers who could not work or make a living without it. My riding, Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, is home to many of these farmers.

From an economic standpoint, I have to wonder how the government can unscrupulously turn its back on our local farmers in favour of American megafarms or European or Asian farmers.

The deal with the U.S., the one with the European Union and the Trans-Pacific Partnership combined cede close to 10% of Canada's agricultural market, especially in the dairy sector.

The Prime Minister was in my riding on January 18 and he himself told concerned farmers that he is going to compensate them 100%. I must say, I am very skeptical.

I would remind the House that when it comes to market access, the concessions from those agreements represent losses in milk sales worth \$450 million, or about \$41,000 per farm.

Faced with all this uncertainty, many farmers have put off investments they wanted to make to update their equipment. Young farmers, especially, are telling me that they would rather produce than be compensated for not producing.

With what we gave up to the European Union, we are letting 17,000 tonnes of fine cheese onto the Canadian market. That is 25% of our market. While the government allows European producers to fatten their wallets, our farmers are taking to the streets in frustration. Our farmers are still seething.

Since they do not feel like their voices are being heard, I will relay their comments. Jacinthe Guilbert, a farmer from my neck of the woods who was recently named female farmer of the year, told me that these bad deals will cost her more than a month's wages every year. She said that on top of the losses caused by the Liberals' NAFTA 2.0, the bills keep coming in, and it is tough going. She told me that 6,000 farms in Canada could disappear. They will surely include farms in my riding, Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot. We are hearing this message all over the country.

From a public health perspective, I have to wonder how the government can turn its back on Canadians by letting quality standards fall so far. By failing to demand reciprocity of standards, it is letting in products that do not meet our domestic standards.

For example, the Union des producteurs agricoles identified issues related to growth hormones allowed in the United States, hormones that may lead to serious illness in cows. Given that not all states, let alone all farms, use the same products, how can the government ensure that milk with hormones will not reach the Canadian market? Simply put, it cannot. That is just one example of animal health and welfare standards, and I have not even talked about the environment.

From a social and regional development perspective, I would like to know how the government can fail rural regions so badly. As everyone knows, supply management supports greater land use. It is vital to our regions. Opening up our market means that only a few Quebec farms will be resilient enough to survive. Will the government act to prevent socioeconomic decline in some of our regions?

Private Members' Business

When the member for Laurentides—Labelle says that there is always a chance we could lose agricultural land and farmers, I do not get the impression the government intends to act. So that's it? We resign ourselves to giving up part of our market to the Americans? I look forward to hearing what the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food has to say.

• (1855)

Mr. Jean-Claude Poissant (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, a beautiful riding rich in agricultural diversity.

The Government of Canada fully supports dairy, egg and poultry farmers, as well as the supply management system. Canada's dairy, egg and poultry producers and processors contribute to countless other industries, help support local economies, and create prosperous and dynamic rural communities.

Promoting trade and upholding our supply management system are not mutually exclusive. We just concluded two of the most important agreements in Canadian history, namely the Canada-United States-Mexico agreement and the Comprehensive Progressive Agreement for Trans Pacific Partnership. We have also seen our agreement with the European Union come into force.

All these efforts benefit the Canadian economy, the agri-food sector and farmers. We did all this while protecting our supply management system. The United States tried everything in its power to dismantle our system, but we managed to preserve it, protect it and defend it. The USMCA upholds the three pillars of supply management: production control, price control and import control.

Transparency provisions are common in free trade agreements and do not compromise Canadian sovereignty in any way. They also do not interfere with Canada's ability to change our milk classes as we see fit.

The provisions do not apply only to Canada. The USMCA will require Canada and the United States to inform people and hold consultations regarding various aspects of the milk pricing system.

The government fully supports the dairy, poultry and egg industries, and we are working together to assess the impact that the USMCA will have on those sectors. In order to mitigate the effects of more open access to the dairy, egg, and poultry markets, we have repeatedly said that will we fully and fairly compensate those affected by the agreement.

On that point, the government recently formed working groups with dairy, egg and poultry farmers to discuss the new agreements and collaborate on developing strategies to help them adapt, innovate and remain competitive. These working groups meet regularly and are making good progress. We look forward to meeting with them again to discuss the results of their work. I want to reiterate that the NDP leader said that it was a good agreement given the situation.

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy: Madam Speaker, in their defence, the Liberals are saying that they defended and preserved supply management. Should we be happy that it is all but dead? For crying out loud.

They are proposing to compensate producers for their losses by providing compensation on a lottery or draw basis. Of course producers participated in the working groups, but they had already gone ahead and innovated and made investments. That is already done.

I see this as just more lip service. The reality is that producers are seeing the impact on their farms. Two weeks ago, I attended the agricultural fair. Thousands of farmers converged on Saint-Hyacinthe. I was able to talk to many of them over three days. They are still angry. I believe it is important to realize the extent to which every agreement further undermines our family farms.

Will the government recognize the economic significance of the agri-food sector and provide more compensation?

• (1900)

Mr. Jean-Claude Poissant: Madam Speaker, I repeat, the Canada-United States-Mexico agreement upholds the three pillars of supply management. The government understands how important Canadian agriculture and agri-food trade is for our economy and our jobs. Our negotiators worked hard to defend the interests of Canadian agriculture at the bargaining table.

Supply management is the system our farmers chose for themselves, and it has been working well for many years. It benefits the Canadian economy, and I can assure the House that we have protected and defended it and always will.

The government is committed to working with the dairy, egg and poultry sectors to determine the best way forward in order to keep these sectors strong, dynamic and innovative at all levels of the supply chain and to ensure that farmers are fairly compensated.

We have created working groups with dairy, egg and poultry farmers to develop a strategy for helping them adapt and innovate—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. The hon. parliamentary secretary is out of time.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[*Translation*]

BILL C-421—CITIZENSHIP ACT

VOTE ON THE DESIGNATION OF AN ITEM

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Pursuant to Standing Order 92(4), I declare the vote on the designation of Bill C-421, an act to amend the Citizenship Act in regard to the adequate knowledge of French in Quebec, completed.

[*English*]

The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 7:02 p.m.)

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