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Friday, May 17, 2019

—

Speaker: The Honourable Geoff Regan

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Friday, May 17, 2019

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

• (1005)
[English]

POINTS OF ORDER

PROJECTED ORDER OF BUSINESS

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in a moment, I will be seeking unanimous consent for a motion. I looked at the projected order of business for today in the House of Commons, and I am puzzled as to why we are debating anything other than the government's climate emergency motion. Is it an actual emergency, or is it just another PR stunt for the Liberals?

I would like to ask for unanimous consent that the orders of the day be resolved back to government Motion No. 29, which would declare that Canada is in a national climate emergency.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member is aware that the government, of course, has the discretion to make these decisions, but nonetheless, I will ask if there is unanimous consent for the hon. member's motion.

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, from the moment it was clear that the member was seeking unanimous support, I started to say "no" out loud, yet the member was able to continue. All I am asking for is consistency with the Chair, who might want to review this.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Deputy Speaker: Order. We are not getting off to a good start here today.

I thank the hon. parliamentary secretary for his additional comments. Members should be reminded that certainly members can stand and raise points for the consideration for unanimous consent. Members should be advised not to use those occasions to enter into debate. These are not opportunities.

It is known to be common practice of the House to use the unanimous consent motion approach when there is known agreement

among parties for the acceptance of these motions. Nonetheless, I would ask members to refrain from using those opportunities for debate. It is not what they are for. Members should quickly go to their point, put the motion before the House for unanimous consent consideration and then we will see what the House decides.

I thank both the hon. members for their interventions, and now we will go to orders of the day.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE ACT

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (for the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.) moved that Bill C-98, An Act to amend the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Act and the Canada Border Services Agency Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by stating that I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Scarborough—Guildwood this morning.

The Deputy Speaker: In that this is the first round of speeches for the bill, in the normal case, the members of parties wishing to split their time in those spots must seek the unanimous consent of the House in order to share their time.

Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety.

[Translation]

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: Mr. Speaker, since the fall of 2016, our government has been dramatically reshaping Canada's security and intelligence apparatus to ensure that it has the authorities and the funding it needs in order to keep Canadians safe. At the same time, we have been ensuring that those agencies, which we trust with tremendous power, have strong and robust independent review mechanisms so that the public can be confident that they are using their powers appropriately.

*Government Orders**[English]*

These mechanisms instill confidence in the public that these agencies are using their powers appropriately. Since 2018, following the passage of Bill C-22, the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians, or NSICOP, has been reviewing classified national security information. The committee, which is formed of three senators and eight elected members of Parliament, recently released its first annual report. This brings Canada into line with all four of our other Five Eyes alliance allies when it comes to parliamentary or congressional review of national security activities.

Bill C-59, which is currently awaiting third reading debate in the Senate, would create a national security and intelligence review agency. This would be a stand-alone review body that would incorporate the existing Security Intelligence Review Committee, or SIRC, which reviews the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, CSIS, and the Office of the Communications Security Establishment Commissioner, which reviews the Communications Security Establishment, CSE.

The agency would also have the powers and authorities to review any department with a national security function. Some academics and experts have dubbed this idea a “super SIRC”. They have argued for years that such a body is needed so that it can follow the thread of evidence from one department to another rather than ending its investigation at the boundaries of a single agency. The Federal Court has also suggested that this kind of super review agency needs to be created. We have done all of this so that Canadians can be confident that our security and intelligence community has the tools it needs to keep Canadians safe.

This brings me to Bill C-98. The one piece missing from this review architecture puzzle, should Bill C-59 pass, of course, is an independent review body for non-national security-related reviews of the Canada Border Services Agency, or CBSA. Bill C-98 would fill in that gap by creating PCRC, or the public complaints and review commission.

The new agency would combine the existing review body for the RCMP, known as the Civilian Review and Complaints Commission, CRCC, with the yet to be created review body for the Canada Border Services Agency. It would add a mandatory new deputy chair position to the new agency. Budget 2019 has provided nearly \$25 million over the next five years to ensure there is enough staff to take on this new important role.

I would now like to walk members through how the PCRC would work in practice. A Canadian who has a complaint about the actions or behaviour of a CBSA member would lodge a complaint with either the Canada Border Services Agency itself or the PCRC. Regardless of where it is filed, one agency would alert the other to the complaint. There will be no wrong door for Canadians to knock on. The system will work for them in either case.

●(1010)

The CBSA would then be required to investigate every complaint, much like the existing CRCC does for the RCMP. If the chair believes it would be in the public interest to do so, the PCRC can initiate its own investigation.

The vast majority of complaints to the CBSA are already handled to the satisfaction of the complainant. For those who are not satisfied, complainants would be informed that they can request a subsequent complaint review from the fully independent PCRC. The review agency would have full access to documents and the power to compel witnesses in order to ensure it can undertake a thorough investigation. If, upon review, the PCRC were not satisfied with the CBSA's investigations and conclusions, it would make a report with any findings and recommendations.

[Translation]

There are several areas that the CCRC would not be able to investigate because there are already existing bodies which could handle those types of complaints. For instance, officers of Parliament like the Privacy Commissioner and the Commissioner of Official Languages are best suited to deal with complaints that fall within their jurisdiction.

●(1015)

Should someone file a complaint with the CBSA or the CCRC that falls within those realms, either body would decline the complaint but inform that individual of the proper course of action.

[English]

The chair of the new PCRC would be able to conduct reviews of CBSA activities, behaviours, policies, procedures and guidelines not related to national security. National security reviews would, of course, be handled by NSIRA. The Minister of Public Safety could also ask the agency to undertake such a review.

In addition, the PCRC would be notified of any serious incident in which the actions of a CBSA officer may have resulted in serious injury or death. This includes immigration detainees who are being held in provincial corrections facilities on behalf of the CBSA. Further, the Minister of Public Safety or the president of the CBSA may deem that in incidents of such significance, the PCRC must investigate.

Government Orders

Bill C-98 would complete the review architecture for the public safety portfolio by creating a review body similar to the Civilian Review and Complaints Commission for the RCMP, or the Office of the Correctional Investigator for Correctional Service Canada. This is another important step that would ensure Canadians have confidence in our border agency. However, it is far from the only improvement that our government has made over these past four years.

Let us take, for instance, the new immigration detention framework and its focus on best rights of the child, increased resources to combat gun and opioid smuggling at the border, and new money for detector dogs that will help to ensure African swine fever-contaminated meat does not enter Canada and decimate the stock of pork producers.

There is the new entry-exit legislation, which closes a major security gap by allowing us to know when someone is leaving the country, and the new Preclearance Act, which allows for the expansion of pre-clearance sites in all four modes: air, land, marine and rail. In addition, this act provides cargo pre-clearance to reduce wait times at the border.

[*Translation*]

Our government takes the security of Canada's border seriously and knows that it not only needs to be secure from threats that would enter, but also be open to the legitimate travel and trade that drives our economy.

[*English*]

The time left in the 42nd Parliament is, unfortunately, growing short, and I am convinced that this piece of legislation would be, by leaps and bounds, an improvement over the status quo. There is a reason we committed to doing this particular action. We know that having independent oversight bodies will make a difference. We have worked hard to make that happen with the RCMP, and now our other national security agencies have the same kind of mechanisms. It is all about instilling confidence in the public that the powers our national security agencies have are being used appropriately and that their privacy, rights and freedoms are being respected. At the same time, our national security agencies are working hard to keep them safe.

One of the most significant steps forward was the implementation of Bill C-22 and the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians, because now we have representatives from Parliament actually having access to classified security information and making judgments about where we should go, what the priorities are and what the major threats are, and the committee members can share that information among themselves in a non-partisan way.

The chair of the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians went before committee and talked about the work it does. It has issued its first annual report. The chair talked about the ability of this committee of parliamentarians to act in a non-partisan nature. That is what allows it to do the kind of work we need it to do. There are three senators and eight elected members of Parliament, and it is working. The other Five Eyes alliance countries have a parliamentary or congressional review body, and now Canada does too.

Bill C-59, which we have talked about, would create the national security and intelligence review agency. This stand-alone body would incorporate the existing Security Intelligence Review Committee, which reviews CSIS, and the Office of the Communications Security Establishment Commissioner, which reviews CSE. Having this review function under one single umbrella would give it the flexibility and ability to focus where it believes it needs to be done. It would also have the power and authority to review any department with a national security function.

• (1020)

I like the name super SIRC. I think it is representative of what we are trying to do, which is create an oversight organization that has the bandwidth and authority to review any national security agency's work to make sure that it is being done in terms of the legal authorities it has and that also has the ability to go across national security agencies if it needs to find information that pertains to a particular issue.

We have argued for years that we needed such a body that could follow a thread of evidence from one department to another, from one national security agency, across boundaries, to another. Even the Federal Court agrees that this kind of review agency needs to be created.

It comes back to having national security agencies that have the confidence of their people. I believe that now, with these independent oversight agencies that have been put in place, Canadians can be confident that our security and intelligence community has the tools to keep them safe while at the same time respecting their privacy, respecting their freedoms and respecting their rights.

The Canada Border Services Agency was the last piece. In Bill C-98, we would create the public complaints and review commission, the PCRC. This new agency would combine the existing review body for the RCMP, known as the Civilian Review and Complaints Commission, with the yet to be created review body for the CBSA. It would add a mandatory new deputy chair position to the new agency.

I would like to walk the members through how the PCRC, the public complaints and review commission, would work in practice.

A Canadian who had a complaint about the actions or behaviour of a CBSA member would lodge a complaint with either the CBSA itself or with the public complaints and review commission. There would be two options to file a complaint. The system would be designed so that once a complaint was filed with one agency, it would automatically be transferred to the other agency. Both would know what was going on, and both would be responsible for addressing the particular complaint. On top of that, even if a complaint had not been issued, if the chair of the public complaints and review commission believed that it was in the public interest to do so, the public complaints and review commission could initiate its own investigation.

Government Orders

If one submitted a complaint to the CBSA and was not happy with the result, one could request a subsequent complaint review by the fully independent public complaints and review commission. This would give the agencies two opportunities to address complaints from the public. This review agency would have full access to documents and the power to compel witnesses to ensure that it could make a thorough investigation.

I am convinced that this piece of legislation is, by leaps and bounds, an improvement over the status quo. While some may want to improve some parts, I think most of us would agree that Canadians would be better off if this bill were to receive royal assent before we rise this summer. As we all know, Parliament can move quite expeditiously when we are all of a mind to do something in the public interest. If any of my colleagues in this chamber, on either side of the aisle, would like to discuss the prospects of this bill's passage, I would be pleased to have that conversation with them.

• (1025)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech. I can see that the government is in a hurry to pass Bill C-98.

Can my colleague tell us why the government waited nearly four years to introduce this bill? It introduced the bill at the eleventh hour, even though it was a 2015 election promise.

I would also like to know why the government did not consult the Customs and Immigration Union while drafting this bill.

[*English*]

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: Mr. Speaker, if we look at the list of bills that have come forward on public safety, it really is quite substantial. Yes, after the 2015 election, the mandate letter given to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness was quite significant. We believe that we tackled the most difficult and contentious issues first and fit those pieces of the puzzle together. We had to create a framework within which this particular initiative would fit. That is the reason behind the order with which we brought legislation forward to this House.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to start off by acknowledging the incredible work CBSA officials do on behalf of our country every day. They are often in very difficult situations and have to make difficult decisions at our ports of entry. However, overall, they do a fantastic job.

I want to follow up on the question from my Conservative colleague about the timing of this bill. I do not think the parliamentary secretary is going to find any opposition in the House on the merits of this bill. I look forward to sending it to committee. Of course, we do not know what will happen in the other place. That is the big question. We only have four weeks left.

Back in 2014, my colleague, the member for Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, when he was our party's public safety critic, raised this issue. It was an issue raised by the 2015 Senate Standing Committee on National Security and Defence and again in a 2017 report by the standing committee of the House of Commons.

With all the vast resources that a majority government has at its disposal, why only on May 7 did we see this important oversight bill brought forward with so little runway left? I would like to understand the process that was involved and why the government could not have brought something in far sooner for us to consider and hopefully pass.

• (1030)

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier, if we look at the minister's mandate letter and the amount of work that needed to be done to improve our national security agencies and independent oversight, there was quite a bit of work to do, and we felt that we needed to put the most significant pieces of that puzzle together first.

If we could get buy-in from this House and the other place on the most substantive pieces, based on the principles that underlie those pieces of law, people could say that the government explained, up to now, why we needed these kinds of oversight bodies and they could agree. We felt that we had to build the case for these kinds of oversight bodies incrementally.

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with all due respect, this is a last-ditch effort to get a piece of legislation through that was promised over three and a half years ago. It is incomprehensible for me, being from Oshawa, why the Liberal government did not even bother to consult the union and union members who this piece of legislation would be affecting.

My colleague from the NDP was quite right. We owe a debt of gratitude to the men and women who stay at our borders to keep us safe and who make sure that it is run efficiently. This is a testament to how poorly the current government is running. At this stage of the game with our government, there were 50% more bills passed. In other words, right now, the Liberals have about 63 bills that have received royal assent, and at the same time, we had 97. Here they are bringing this important piece of legislation in at the last minute.

First, why did the Liberals not bother to consult with the union? Second, if this is not passed, who is it going to help before the next election, because the timeline is very short?

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: Mr. Speaker, as I said, we had a very ambitious timetable. We knew we had to make some substantive and really challenging changes to our national security agencies and the way they operate. We committed to Canadians to do just that. Piece by piece incremental change was the approach we decided to take to bring Canadians along. It was also to explain, educate and consult on how we are actually making our national security agencies work better for them, which is going to keep them safe and at the same time respect their rights and freedoms.

Government Orders

The member is right. We have been having these discussions for three and a half years. However, now I think we are at the point where people understand what the strengths and opportunities are. Of course, people always want to do more, and so do we, but it was important to do this in an incremental way to get the buy-in from Canadians, and that is the approach we took.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was listening to members in the unholy alliance of the New Democratic Party and the Conservative Party asking why the government did not bring in this legislation earlier. The first thing that came to my mind is that we have had a very busy government, as the parliamentary secretary indicated, from day one when we brought in Bill C-2 dealing with the tax cut for Canada's middle class. However, no matter what piece of legislation this government brings in, the opposition always believes it has to talk more about it. The difference between the Liberal government and the opposition, the combined opposition, is that we actually believe in working, and there are still 20 days left.

My question to my colleague is this: Would she not agree that 20 days still allow us to continue to work hard, as we have done from day one, on an important piece of legislation? Just because there are only 20 days does not mean that everyone gets a break. We work to the end. Would the parliamentary secretary not agree?

• (1035)

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: Mr. Speaker, we have been having these discussions for three and a half years. We have laid out what we believe the principles are that would underpin this kind of independent review committee. People understand why we see the need for this kind of agency, and why the agency has to work in concert and similar to the agencies that review other national security agencies. There should not be any surprise in this bill. It really should be quite straightforward, because we have done the work of explaining our approach, our priorities and the principles that underpin it.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government says it took quite some time to draft the bill, but the witnesses who appeared before the committee said there was not a lot of consultation during the drafting process. That does not add up. Now here we are with a bill that has been rushed to the House of Commons.

Does this mean the Liberals will also be using time allocation? In addition to not consulting, will they limit debate in the House on this important bill?

[*English*]

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: Mr. Speaker, as I already mentioned, we believe that incremental changes needed to be done this way, but the principles that underpin this particular independent review agency are exactly the same principles that underpin the review agencies for CSIS, CSE or the RCMP. They are similar. They are designed to be serving Canadians, making sure that their freedom, rights and privacy are protected, but at the same time give them the tools they need to bring complaints forward. Therefore, there is no surprise here. There is no substantive difference. All these oversight

agencies are designed to do the same kind of work on behalf of Canadians.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin my speech with this thought: a government that is constantly embroiled in scandal cannot be effective. That is why we need to examine Bill C-98 at the last minute.

I am pleased to rise in the House to speak to Bill C-98, an act to amend the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Act and the Canada Border Services Agency Act.

This bill renames the Civilian Review and Complaints Commission for the RCMP. It would henceforth be known as the “public complaints and review commission”. It would also be responsible for reviewing complaints filed by the public against the Canada Border Services Agency.

This bill delivers on a Liberal campaign promise that there would be an oversight body for all Canadian law enforcement agencies. The Prime Minister will then be able to say that he kept the promise he made in 2015. However, the only thing the Prime Minister will be able to do is claim that he kept his promise.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness was just practically on his knees begging the opposition to hurry up and pass the bill. The end of this Parliament is quickly approaching, and it will obviously be impossible to get the job done properly. Unfortunately for the Liberals, they will be unable to keep their promise because they did not manage their time properly.

We are not opposed to Bill C-98, but there is still work to do. Right now, the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security is stretched to the limit because, as the parliamentary secretary mentioned, it is currently examining a number of public-safety-related bills. The committee is still studying C-93. I do not see how the committee will be able to examine Bill C-98 on top of everything else it still has to do.

We need to get serious if we want the job to get done properly. The problem the Canada Border Services Agency is currently dealing with was caused by the Prime Minister's infamous tweet of January 2017. The Auditor General looked into the matter and, regardless of what the government says, he confirmed that the Prime Minister's tweet resulted in a huge influx of people at the border. Nearly 40,000 people have crossed our border illegally over the past two years. That has caused major problems for border officers on the ground and for the Canada Border Services Agency, which has had to deploy an incredible number of resources. They are still permanently deployed to Roxham Road.

The border management system is overloaded, and that is causing problems. Our border officers are doing their best. However, this type of situation, which was created by the Prime Minister, sometimes makes it difficult for them to do their job properly because of the higher-than-normal volume of border crossers.

Government Orders

The government is having a hard time making progress because it has to deal with scandal after scandal. We cannot forget the infamous trip to India, when the Prime Minister made Canada a laughingstock for a week. We never understood, and still do not understand, why the Prime Minister brought his wife and kids on that totally meaningless trip. Canada was humiliated, and that is what sparked the scandal. In India, the Prime Minister was photographed with a known terrorist who spent time in prison and was the invited guest of our government. The Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security had to spend a lot of time managing that file and had to meet with former national security adviser Daniel Jean.

Sometimes the government wants to rush things. The Liberals tell Canadians that they are there for them, but let's not forget what happened in the past three and a half years.

Quebeckers will not forget what the Liberals did to Davie. Today, both Liberal MPs from the Quebec City area are claiming that they awarded a \$700-million contract to Davie, but the opposite is true. The PMO's first decision was to do everything it could to cancel the contract given to Davie by the Conservative government in July 2015.

• (1040)

The news spread. Fortunately, as a result of the pressure we applied, the government finally signed the contract. Technically, this government gave Davie the contract, but it was the Conservatives who awarded it. Let us remember that the Liberals did everything they could to cancel it. Fortunately, they failed. Had the Prime Minister succeeded, 1,000 jobs at Davie shipyard, in the Quebec City area, would have been at risk.

The Liberals are now trying to smooth things over. They are trying to find contracts so they can say that they are looking after Davie and they believe in the company. However, we must never forget what happened. Let's never forget that Vice-Admiral Norman, Commander of the Royal Canadian Navy, paid the price for the government's political games. His career was destroyed.

This unbelievable mess has been playing out for three and a half years. Now, the Liberals are asking us to support Bill C-98. They are telling us that this is very urgent, and they are asking us to help them get this done before the end of their term.

Why should I rush and cut corners, like they do all the time? Why should the NDP cut corners? Why should we agree to help the government, which does what it wants and now needs our help?

There are certain things that could be done for the benefit of Canadians, but in this case, I see no need. They waited four years to act. On October 22, the new Conservative government will be able to get this done right.

The worst part is that we actually support Bill C-98. It is an administrative measure that is consistent with our complaint handling system. We have no problem supporting it. What we do have a problem with is the government's approach. We are certainly not about to run interference for a government that has lurched from one scandal to another and has tried in various ways to hurt Quebec, my home province. As I said, we are certainly not about to cut corners to help them.

Another issue is that Bill C-98 is being introduced to allow members of the public to file complaints about services provided by the Canada Border Services Agency. As I said at the beginning of my speech, if there are any problems with our officers in the field, it is because the Prime Minister did not help the situation. He created a huge problem, and for the past two years, it has been utter chaos.

The agency does everything it possibly can to keep our borders safe. We certainly do not want to suggest that we need to pass this bill quickly so that people can file complaints against our CBSA officers. That would send the wrong message.

The message we do want to send is that there are so many problems related to officers that people need to be able to file a complaint, and if any officers are having problems, if they are having difficulty doing their jobs, it is because of this government's decisions and the way in which it is managing our country and our borders.

We are not willing to cut corners. We are not willing to concede that this is such an urgent matter that we need to cancel the committee meetings that are already under way and set aside the other bills being studied in order to fast-track this one.

There is another reason we cannot get on board with this even though we support the principle of Bill C-98. For two years, every time we asked questions about the border, they hurled every insult in the book at us. They called us racist and accused us of fearmongering. They said we slashed budgets by \$300 million and blamed us for management and resource problems, but the reports my colleague found put the lie to that. Yes, there was rationalization. Yes, there were changes at CBSA under the Conservative government, but it was all at the administrative level and had no impact whatsoever on the work of front-line officers.

On the contrary, one important decision the Conservatives made at the time was to bring back land border offices. Before that, there was a night officer on duty, which is crazy when you consider the kind of danger that poses to officer safety. Now there are always at least two people at each post. The Conservatives also decided to arm customs officers.

Conservatives do not just talk about security; we take concrete steps to ensure security. The laws we passed to crack down on criminals were undone by the Liberals.

• (1045)

I can support the bill, but I cannot support a government that says one thing and does another, a government that attacks us for trying to earn back the esteem of Canadians, while everyone knows that the problems we are having are due to this government's mistakes and terrible decisions.

I would not want Canada Border Services Agency officers to hear that we need to pass this bill right away in order to allow people to file complaints against them when the union has not even been consulted. The union should at least have been consulted. The Liberals had four years to get their ducks in a row. They did not even bother to consult the union to say that they were moving in this direction. There was no consultation. These are the things we have a hard time understanding.

Government Orders

As an hon. NDP member said in his question, given the vast resources at the government's disposal, it is hard to believe that the task was simply too daunting. It is obvious that this is a simple administrative measure, and a carbon copy of the one involving the RCMP, to boot. As such, I believe this is all just political rhetoric in an attempt to once again rush through an important bill.

A few weeks before the end of the parliamentary session, the Liberals are trying to make Canadians believe that passing Bill C-98 is a national emergency, when that is not true. They did nothing for four years. There was another national emergency yesterday but now it seems to have passed. Now there is a new emergency, and this bill has to pass in a hurry so the opposition needs to be on board.

That is not going to work. There are times when we are willing to collaborate, but we will not be made fools of. There is no cause to treat the official opposition, the NDP, the Bloc Québécois or the Leader of the Green Party like fools. Let us be professional. No one can claim that this file was handled in a professional manner. It was bungled from the start.

What is more, we know very well how this works. Even if we wanted to hastily push the bill through, it still has to go through the regular legislative process and all that that entails. Bill C-93 is still being examined in committee. It is technically impossible to complete the study of the bill in committee, send it to the Senate and have it passed there in the few weeks that remain in the session. It would take until August to complete the process properly.

The government messed up in the case of Bill C-98. The Liberals were unable to get the job done properly in the time allotted. Rather than being professional, this government has been caught up in scandal after scandal. It lost a tremendous amount of time because the Prime Minister was not and is still not ready to govern. Even if we support Bill C-98, it is not so urgent that we need to skip any steps. I am asking the government to do the job properly if it wants the official opposition to co-operate.

• (1050)

[*English*]

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I agree with the hon. member that Canadians would like to see this kind of commission established. I think it is important to Canadians that they know their national security agencies are keeping them safe while respecting their privacy and their rights.

What is it about the bill that concerns the member in terms of the powers of our national security agencies?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question.

One of the main concerns shared by all opposition parties is that the people involved were not consulted in any way through the agency's union. There were no discussions to let them know that legislation was being passed to allow the public to file complaints about their work or to ask them whether certain things should be done differently. No, the Liberals failed to see the importance of consulting the union, the people who will be directly affected by this legislation.

From the outset, that has been one of the reasons why we cannot support this bill without reservation. We need to complete the process properly and, as I said earlier, we definitely will not have enough time to call all the witnesses to appear in committee and complete the study before the end of this session.

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, does my colleague believe that the government will now move time allocation? In addition to not having properly consulted the stakeholders, will it now limit debate in the House?

Perhaps the government never intended to pass this bill. The liberals introduced it at the last minute, and it seems that the only thing they want to do is blame the opposition for mismanaging this file and for its lack of organization. Could my colleague comment on that?

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Mr. Speaker, I thank my NDP colleague for her question. It is actually more of a statement, but I completely agree with her.

They must be desperate, if they are introducing a bill such as this at the end of the session and at the end of their term. The Liberals will try to say that they introduced it, checking off another item on their 2015 list of promises, but that the opposition prevented them from passing it. Everyone knows full well that it is not true. Had the bill been introduced two months ago, we would have had time to pass it.

My colleague is right. This is just another desperate attempt.

• (1055)

[*English*]

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to commend the hon. member for his work as vice-chair on the committee. It has been a pleasure to work with him and the hon. member from the NDP. I would describe it as a high-functioning committee.

Given that there is a general consensus by all parties that Bill C-98 is an important bill and that there has not been a great deal of disagreement among the parties, and given that the committee members work well together, would the hon. member be prepared to deal with this bill in an expeditious manner at committee, and would he be prepared to let the motion for second reading come to a vote today so that it can be referred to the committee and avoid all of the angst that comes with time allocation motions?

It seems to me that in the House there is a fairly significant consensus, so why not let it come to a vote and be referred to the committee? Then I will solicit my hon. colleagues' co-operation in laying on additional meetings for dealing with Bill C-98.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

The committee already has a packed schedule, so I do not see how we could deal with this directly, as he suggests. We have had meetings that demonstrate that our schedule is totally full.

Statements by Members

[English]

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank our hon. colleague for the considerable amount of work that he has done on this file over the course of the last three and a half years.

Our hon. colleague, the parliamentary secretary, stood and said that they had consulted broadly with Canadians from coast to coast to coast, but the one group that they seemingly forgot were the front-line workers of the CBSA.

I want to ask our hon. colleague why he feels that this blatant disregard of the hard-working front-line employees of the CBSA took place. Why were they not consulted?

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Mr. Speaker, I think my colleague from Cariboo—Prince George for that great question.

As I said in my speech, in 2015, the Liberals promised to get this done, but then they waited three and a half years before taking action, with just a couple weeks left in their term. They did not have time to speak to the union and the employees who would be affected. They want to pass a bill that would allow the public to complain about their work, yet they did not even talk to them. I cannot understand that.

That is why I cannot agree to the government's request to pass this bill quickly. The message that sends to Canadians is that our officers are incompetent, that the public wants to complain, and that we have to hurry up so people can file complaints.

The Prime Minister created a mess. His government did not help our officers, and now it wants to allow public complaints as fast as possible. I disagree with that.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles will have three minutes for questions and comments when the House resumes debate on this motion.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

PAUL WILLIAM ROBERTS

Mr. David de Burgh Graham (Laurentides—Labelle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I learned just a few hours ago that one of the most interesting people I have ever met passed away suddenly during the night. Journalist, storyteller, war correspondent, constituent and friend, Paul William Roberts is known for his coverage of the two Iraq wars for Harper's Magazine, as well as his many books, including *Empire of the Soul*, *Journey of the Magi* and *A War Against Truth*.

He was born in Wales, and his career spanned the world, having studied in England and taught in India before working as a producer for both the BBC and the CBC, among others. In 2005, he was the inaugural winner of the PEN Canada Paul Kidd award for courage in journalism.

A humble man, Paul suffered the effects of the many wars he had covered, and about a decade ago, he lost the ability to see. He was

felled by a sudden brain hemorrhage last night and was transferred to Sacré-Coeur Hospital in Montreal early this morning to offer his organs for transplant. It should encourage all of us to know that his enormous heart will live on.

To his wife Kara and his kids, my deepest condolences.

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● (1100)

JUVENILE DIABETES

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for over 40 years, JDRF, the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation, has been a global leader in the search for an end to type 1 diabetes through both research funding and advocacy. One of those helping achieve this goal of a cure is JDRF Edmonton youth ambassador Ava Sexton.

I had the fortune of meeting Ava, her sisters and her mom at my office recently. Ava is an absolute dynamo and when she is not cheerleading or running, she is educating people in Edmonton on type 1 diabetes, sometimes speaking to crowds of well over 100 despite being just nine years old. Ava states, "A cure to me would mean: no more finger pokes...no more having to treat lows and highs and no more having to sit out of my activities."

Ava is an absolute inspiration. I know that, against her, type 1 diabetes does not have a chance. It is because of people like Ava that Edmonton is known as the city of champions.

* * *

JAMES STEWART

Ms. Karen Ludwig (New Brunswick Southwest, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to remember a great man from my riding, James Stewart, also known as "Granddad Jim". Jim was born in Glasgow, Scotland, and trained in Canada as a Royal Air Force pilot. Jim was a catafighter. Catafighters flew one-way missions since there was nowhere for them to land.

For his brave actions during the war, Jim was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross, the 1939-1945 Star, the Atlantic Star and Bar, the France and Germany Star, the Defence Medal and the imperial war medal. Jim never saw himself as a hero because he was one of the lucky ones who came home.

Following the war, Jim emigrated to St. Andrews, New Brunswick. Jim was a pillar of all our communities. He would volunteer to read to elementary school children and deliver for Meals on Wheels. For his many contributions to our country, Jim was awarded the Order of New Brunswick and the Governor General's Caring Canadian Award.

Granddad Jim was a kind man who gave the best of himself to others. He will be well remembered. My deepest appreciation to Jim's family for sharing him with all of us.

*Statements by Members***INTERNATIONAL DAY AGAINST HOMOPHOBIA,
TRANSPHOBIA AND BIPHOBIA**

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today marks the 15th annual International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia. This day calls for an end to the discrimination, hate and violence that still face our communities.

In Canada, discrimination still makes life challenging and unsafe for LGBTQ2 Canadians, especially when discrimination is compounded by racism, colonialism and economic inequality. We know that trans and gender diverse people still face barriers in obtaining equal access to health services, including gender confirmation surgery, gender affirming identity documents and equal access to housing and employment. More than 70 countries still enforce homophobic and transphobic criminal sanctions, and seven have the death penalty. Many more countries remain unsafe for us.

Once again, New Democrats call on the government to create a path to safety for those LGBTQ2 refugees who have no choice but to flee their homes. Let us make sure they can find a path to safety here in Canada.

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PICKERING PUBLIC LIBRARY

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Pickering—Uxbridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak about an incredible place in my riding that encourages my constituents to embrace their ingenuity and creativity, the Pickering Public Library.

I recently had the pleasure of visiting the Pickering library with the Prime Minister, and we were able to see the state-of-the-art technology and services provided to residents through its maker space. It is in this space that Pickering resident Hamayal Choudhry, an engineering student at UOIT, first began 3-D printing. With these new skills, Hamayal alongside his co-inventor Samin Khan won the Microsoft Imagine Cup with their invention of the smartARM.

The smartARM aims to be priced at less than \$1,000, helping change the lives of an estimated one million hand amputees. Hamayal was able to demonstrate this technology to the Prime Minister during his visit.

I look forward to seeing what future creations will stem from the Pickering library's maker space.

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SOVEREIGN'S MEDAL FOR VOLUNTEERS RECIPIENT

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, recently I had the honour of presenting the Sovereign's Medal for Volunteers to local Scout captain, Brian Soehner of Elmira. The Sovereign's Medal for Volunteers is awarded by the Governor General to Canadians, in recognition of their extraordinary contributions to their communities. I can think of no one who deserved this award more than Brian.

On the occasion of Canada's 150th birthday, I was also honoured to award Brian one of Kitchener—Conestoga's Canada 150 awards. The medal was given to 150 constituents of Kitchener—Conestoga who have made a positive contribution to our community.

Since 1970, for almost 50 years, Brian Soehner has been involved in the 1st Elmira Scouts Group, and for the last 10 years he has served as commissioner. Working with young people, instilling important life lessons and sharing his love of the outdoors and the environment have motivated Brian's selfless service. Without Brian's influence, the Elmira Scouts would not be who they are today. It is people like Brian who make our community the very best in Canada. Let us thank Brian.

* * *

● (1105)

[Translation]

COMMUNITY CAFÉ IN HULL-AYLMER

Mr. Greg Fergus (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on May 13, the board of directors of the Dépanneur Sylvestre was awarded the Lieutenant Governor's medal for exceptional merit.

Over the past 17 years, the Dépanneur Sylvestre has served over 10,000 dinners and brunches. It is a citizen-led initiative that serves its community with unconditional inclusiveness and acceptance. People gather there for activities such as community vegetarian dinners, concerts with local artists, workshops and presentations.

I would like to thank the Dépanneur Sylvestre's board of directors and all the employees and volunteers for their dedication. On behalf of the community of Hull—Aylmer, I congratulate them on their success.

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[English]

KIDS HELP PHONE

Ms. Pam Damoff (Oakville North—Burlington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this week marks Kids Help Phone's 30th anniversary. Over the course of three decades, its counsellors have responded to more than 10 million Canadian youth in need of support. In 1989, the founders of Kids Help Phone mortgaged their homes to create this service. That risk has been rewarded many times over, through the thousands of young lives they have saved.

As the times have changed, the organization has added more services. Today, kids who need help are able to call, text or chat 24 hours a day, seven days a week. While technologies have changed, Kids Help Phone's mission has stayed the same. Kids Help Phone promises all of our kids that it will always be there for them. No matter what it is they need to talk about, Kids Help Phone counsellors are there to listen. Regardless of time or day, there is always a warm body on the other end offering confidentiality, no judgment and the space where they can start feeling better.

Kids Help Phone is working toward a country where there will be no wrong door for children who are trying to access mental health services. I, for one, think we should do everything we can to help.

*Statements by Members***GOVERNMENT POLICIES**

Mr. Bob Benzen (Calgary Heritage, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the history books will not be kind to the Prime Minister, who has played a shell game with Canadians. Four long, failure-prone years of broken promises, frequent scandals and controversy has Canadians realizing the Prime Minister sold them a bill of goods.

Where are the sunny ways and transparency the Prime Minister promised to bring to government? They certainly were not on display in the corrupt dealings that brought us the SNC-Lavalin and Vice-Admiral Norman affairs. Where is the balanced budget promised to Canadians by 2019? It is still more than 20 years distant, according to the finance department, as the tax-and-spend government continues to sink future generations into debt.

There is no lack of examples that the Prime Minister played a cynical bait and switch on Canadians four years ago in his bid for power. The good news is that Canadians have a chance, just a few months from now, to say, “no more” to a Liberal Prime Minister who is definitely not as advertised.

* * *

[Translation]

PRIMARY SCHOOL IN PRICE

Mr. Rémi Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I want to acknowledge the wonderful initiative of a primary school, École des Cheminots de Saint-Rémi, in Price.

Over a year ago, Geneviève Giguère, a teacher at the school, was looking for a way to motivate the kids and spark their interest in school. A former student of the conservatory of music, Ms. Giguère approached her pupils and the administration with an idea to develop a guitar enrichment program. Thrilled at the idea, the school immediately got on board.

Well, the program was a rousing success, and it has certainly produced results. On Monday, here in Parliament, the group informed us that it won gold at MusicFest Canada in Ottawa. That is not all. It also won gold at MusicFest Québec, which was held this past week.

I had the chance to welcome and meet with the students. Their passion, commitment and sense of belonging was written all over their faces. They are proud to be part of that group.

I want to congratulate Geneviève Giguère and the school principal. They are setting an example with their willingness to find innovative new ways to enhance education.

Congratulations to the students on their achievement. Keep having fun.

* * *

[English]

FRED KINGSMILL

Ms. Kate Young (London West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, after 150 years, Kingsmill's Department Store closed its doors in downtown London. Everyone who shopped at the beautiful store fondly remembers riding on the old-fashioned manually operated elevator.

They also remember the man at the helm of the store, Fred Kingsmill, who died this week at the age of 90.

I last had the opportunity to speak to this great businessman a couple of months ago. He had a smile that would light up a room and knew how important it was to give back to the community.

Fred was the president of Kingsmill's for 33 years and was the fourth generation to own and operate this historic department store. Fred was a farmer, a businessman, a philanthropist and a true gentleman. Two of his favourite sayings were, “Be of good cheer” and “Do well, doubt not”.

London will miss Fred dearly.

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● (1110)

AFGHAN MEMORIAL

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on this day in 2006, Captain Nichola Goddard was killed in Afghanistan. During the war, Canadians would gather along the Highway of Heroes as fallen soldiers made their final journey home. This public demonstration of pride in our forces was overwhelming.

Veterans, their families and Canadians have been waiting for the Afghan Memorial, which was originally built in Kandahar, to be displayed publicly where we can all, as a grateful nation, remember their sacrifice.

A working group in 2011 considered sanctity to be the most important aspect of the memorial, followed by visibility and accessibility. The opposite has happened. We have learned that the government has chosen to hide the memorial behind closed doors at DND headquarters.

There was a secret dedication service that no one knew about until it was posted on Facebook three days after it happened. Not even family members of the fallen were invited.

Instead of seeing it placed proudly in a public area, family members and the public will have to request an appointment. This is shameful. The Minister of Veterans Affairs and the Minister of National Defence, a veteran himself, must reverse this decision. Veterans and the families of the fallen deserve so much more than the government is giving them.

* * *

FACE EQUALITY WEEK

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Spadina—Fort York, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to bring attention to a very important initiative. Today marks the first day of Face Equality Week, a campaign to raise public awareness on the issue facial discrimination.

People with facial differences want us to know that they have value and deserve our respect.

AboutFace is the Canadian organization that is leading this cause. It will mark May 17 to 24 by addressing issues of bullying, focusing on education, employment discrimination and media bias.

For example, a vital step in the recovery of burn survivors is accepting their changed appearance and gaining confidence in social situations.

Let us take this time to pay attention to the difficulties experienced by burn survivors and others whose faces have their own beauty.

Let us pledge to make our communities more welcoming and to celebrate the diversity of our differences and let us take on this challenge, face on.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to acknowledge 16-year-old Sierra Robinson and the Cowichan Valley chapter of Earth Guardians. They are organizing a youth climate strike for action in my riding today. An environmental consciousness is awakening in Canada's youth, who are increasingly looking at the threat of climate change and to their future on this planet.

Human-caused greenhouse gas emissions are warming our planet, and our current trend will see us arrive at an increase of between three and five Celsius degrees by the end of this century. The ecological and economic consequences of this warming will dwarf anything and everything humans have ever faced during our time on Earth.

Unfortunately, our federal government, through its continued subsidies to oil and gas and its purchase of the Trans Mountain pipeline, is not meeting the expectations of our youth.

We have the skills, the technology and the know-how to make a transition to the renewable energy economy of the future. We just need the political will to make it happen.

* * *

GOVERNMENT POLICIES

Mr. Martin Shields (Bow River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Brooks Bandits hockey team promised a winning season. They set a record for wins, with no losses at home. They are playing for the Canadian Junior A Championship this weekend in the city of Brooks.

The Prime Minister promised openness and transparency, but he delivered the opposite. He shut down two committee investigations trying to cover up his political interference in SNC-Lavalin. His government's shameful handling of the Mark Norman case is just the latest proof that these are the same old scandal-ridden, entitled Liberals.

The Prime Minister promised to make life more affordable for the middle class. What a joke. He has hiked taxes at every opportunity to pay for his out-of-control spending. He is putting a tax on everything with his carbon tax, and a GST tax on top of the carbon tax. It is a scam. It is not an environmental plan.

Oral Questions

The Prime Minister promised an era of collaboration with provinces and territories, but now he is fighting them in court over his carbon tax.

The list of broken promises goes on. Canadians have had enough. They have buyers' remorse. This Prime Minister is not as advertised.

* * *

[Translation]

ELECTION ADVERTISING IN ONTARIO

Mr. Francis Drouin (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, just under a year ago, in Ontario, we were treated to a trailer for the Conservative Party. We were told not to fear because the French-language university would really take off. Parents of autistic children were told to trust the Conservatives to find innovative solutions. We were told that they would never make cuts to health care. As it turns out, the trailer was for a horror movie.

• (1115)

[English]

If we fast-forward to today, we are seeing the same movie trailer by Doug Ford's best friend and his Conservatives.

They told us a price on pollution would increase the unemployment rate. "Have a little faith" said we, and 100,000 more jobs in a month shuts down that debate.

They told us not to invest in infrastructure, that it is bad for the future. Have no fear: we now see one million more jobs and the lowest unemployment rate in 40 years.

What Doug Ford's best friend and his Conservatives do not realize is that our policies are having a positive impact in people's lives, and they are much better than advertised.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

JUSTICE

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, despite the House seeing it fit to apologize to Vice-Admiral Norman, the Liberals on the defence committee refused to invite him to tell his story. Today The Globe and Mail is reporting that the Prime Minister is the one who angrily launched the RCMP investigation that identified Mark Norman.

The charge against Vice-Admiral Norman has been stayed. A judge said that he is a free man, but the Liberals will not let him talk.

Why are the Liberals doing the Prime Minister's dirty work? What are they trying to cover up?

[Translation]

Mr. Serge Cormier (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague knows very well that committees operate independently from the government. I know it is difficult to understand in light of who controlled committees under the former government.

Oral Questions

With respect to the trial of Vice-Admiral Norman, the Public Prosecution Service of Canada noted that no other factors were considered in the decision to stay the charge against him, nor was there any contact or influence from outside the PPSC, including political influence, in either the initial decision to prosecute Mr. Norman or in the decision to stay the charge. Any statement to the contrary by the opposition is completely absurd.

[English]

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it sounds like the Liberal cover-up is continuing.

Vice-Admiral Mark Norman served this country with honour and distinction for 30 years, yet the Liberals will not even give him 30 seconds at one committee meeting to tell his story. They are covering up and protecting the Prime Minister and his involvement in this matter.

The Globe and Mail revealed today that the Prime Minister is the one who demanded the investigation. Why would the Prime Minister think it is appropriate to politically direct an RCMP investigation?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member seems to be dumbfounded that as the head of the government, the Prime Minister would be concerned about leaks of cabinet confidence. I would hope that any prime minister would be concerned.

The member should understand that the RCMP is an independent organization and that the decision to launch the investigation was made by the RCMP alone. As the director of the Public Prosecution Service of Canada confirmed last week, the decisions to initiate the investigation, lay charges and stay the charges were made independently and without political interference.

The member might want to listen to what is being said out there.

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister may want to actually think about what actually happened here and that it was the Prime Minister who demanded the investigation to find a scapegoat for his cabinet leaks.

On two occasions, the Prime Minister stated publicly that Vice-Admiral Norman would be charged, even before the charges were laid and the investigation was complete. We now know that the Liberals withheld evidence from the RCMP, the public prosecutor and Vice-Admiral Norman's defence team. Vice-Admiral Norman deserves better than this kind of treatment from the Liberals.

Why are the Liberals tarnishing the great reputation of Vice-Admiral Norman just to protect the Prime Minister?

Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member well knows, the RCMP is an independent body and chooses to investigate and gather evidence on its own, independently of government sources.

With respect to documents, our government fulfilled all requests to the court for third party records applications. In fact, we put together a process with the court to ensure that those documents could be identified and then screened, ultimately by the judge in question. We fulfilled all of our obligations and we were cited by the court for having done so.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the truth is that the Prime Minister desperately wanted to find a scapegoat for the cabinet involving the Davie case.

Twice, the Prime Minister stated publicly, before the end of the investigation, that Vice-Admiral Norman would be charged. The Liberals withheld evidence from the RCMP, the Attorney General and Mr. Norman's defence team.

To make matters worse, the Prime Minister said publicly that the RCMP acted independently.

Does the Prime Minister realize that his actions toward this great military man constitute a serious abuse of power befitting a police state?

• (1120)

Mr. Serge Cormier (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as we have said a number of times, the member should know that all procedures conducted by the PPSC and the RCMP are totally independent of the government. If he is not aware of that, I encourage him to take a law course on the subject.

As the Public Prosecution Service of Canada confirmed last week, no other factors were considered in this decision, nor was there any contact or influence from outside the PPSC, including political influence, in either the initial decision to prosecute Mr. Norman or in the decision to stay the charge.

The opposition members know very well that all of their claims are completely absurd and made out of context.

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will take no lessons from the parliamentary secretary.

In the SNC-Lavalin affair, they tried to lecture us on the law. It is one corruption scandal after the next with this government. We are not making any of this up. According to this morning's Globe and Mail—and I think it was on the front page, so I am sure they checked their facts—it was the Prime Minister who had a little temper tantrum, like a spoiled kid, and wanted to involve the RCMP. That is what the Prime Minister did regarding the Davie shipyard matter.

Since when can a Prime Minister direct the RCMP to investigate a matter because he is upset about something? That is not how it works.

Why did the Liberal members on the committee refuse—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence.

Mr. Serge Cormier (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the member knows, committees work independently of government.

He mentioned lessons. Let us talk about lessons. Let us not forget the procurement process to replace our fighter jets, when the previous government kept two sets of books, one set for the public and a different set for its own party.

The Conservatives like to talk about transparency. How can they even mention transparency? On this side, we believe in following the process. We also respect Canada's judicial process. We respect our judicial bodies, and we will continue to do so.

* * *

[English]

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the cost to taxpayers for the Phoenix disaster is as high as \$2.6 billion, and it will not be scrapped until 2023. Meanwhile, tens of thousands of workers continue to have their lives disrupted. My constituents called the pay centre and were told that it cannot help them. The minister told MPs to bring cases to her office directly. We have done that, and got nowhere.

Budget 2019 will not fix this dumpster fire. More resources will be needed to fix this ongoing debacle.

In what world is this an acceptable way to treat workers?

Mr. Steven MacKinnon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement and Accessibility, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, of course we were left with the other debacle of the Phoenix pay system after 700 public servants were summarily dismissed and tens of millions of dollars were cut from the federal budget to pay our public servants.

This government is committed entirely to paying our public servants on time and accurately. That is why we put in place the technological, human and other resources necessary to do it. That has yielded a reduction of approximately one-third in the number of transactions that are in the backlog, and we will continue to work without fail until we get that down to zero.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I still have many constituents who need help.

Jack Layton's climate change accountability act was passed in this House not once but twice before it was killed by the unelected and unaccountable Senate, and former MP Megan Leslie was advocating a green new deal to avert a climate disaster 10 years ago.

When the NDP asked the Minister of Environment to do more on the climate emergency, her response was "I don't get it." The member for Edmonton Strathcona has tabled an environmental bill of rights for all Canadians. We have 11 years to act.

Will the Prime Minister support the NDP's environmental bill of rights?

Mr. Sean Fraser (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member and the NDP for their interest in putting forward a climate plan. However, it is interesting that over the past three years they seem not to have been paying attention to the measures that we are implementing.

The pan-Canadian framework on climate change includes over 50 measures that are going to help bring our emissions down. We have

Oral Questions

put a price on pollution that is going to put more money in the pockets of families. We have made the largest investment in the history of public transit, and by 2030, 90% of our electricity will be generated from clean resources.

With respect to the hon. member's question, we look forward to all kinds of new ideas. I would be happy to discuss with her the next steps when it comes to considering an environmental bill of rights.

• (1125)

[Translation]

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Let us recap, Mr. Speaker. Shortly after the 2015 election, the Liberals went to Paris on a PR junket, but they changed their tune as soon as they got back to Canada.

They kept the Conservatives' inadequate targets, which they will not even meet. Sure, they put a price on carbon, but the biggest GHG emitters are exempt. They bought a pipeline for \$4.5 billion. Plus, this year they will hand over \$3 billion in various subsidies to the oil and gas industry.

Then they had the nerve to vote against our motion calling for real action and went ahead with their own motion, which amounts to little more than lip service.

When will they stop taking Canadians for fools?

[English]

Mr. Sean Fraser (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with respect, the hon. member, and in fact the entire NDP, have good intentions when it comes to climate change, but the question just put on the floor of the House of Commons demonstrates that they do not bring the thoughtfulness required to develop policy that is going to meaningfully reduce our emissions.

For example, he has just cited the fact that big emitters are somehow exempt from our plan. Let me be unequivocal on this point: Big emitters are going to pay a price on pollution, and that is why families will be better off and eight out of 10 will have more money in their pockets at the end of the day.

With respect to the motion that he has just referred to, they have called for the immediate end to all fossil fuel subsidies. Had they consulted with indigenous people, they would have realized it would—

* * *

[Translation]

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, one-third of the municipalities in my riding, or 13 out of 39, have little or no cellphone coverage. While big cities salivate at the thought of getting 5G service, some regions are still fighting to get 3G.

Oral Questions

The 2019 budget provides funding for high-speed Internet, which is perfect, but once again, there is zero money for cell coverage. This is not the first time this issue has been raised in the House, but the Liberals always sidestep the question.

I am talking about cell service, not high-speed Internet.

Why do the Liberals treat people in the regions like second-class citizens?

[*English*]

Hon. Bernadette Jordan (Minister of Rural Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for Pontiac, who raised this important issue in his motion, Motion No. 208, which the House supported.

We know it is important for rural communities to have access to broadband and cellphone coverage. It is a safety issue and an economic issue.

With our fall economic statement, we made sure, through the accelerated capital cost allowance, that there are telcos investing in cellphone coverage.

We will continue to do everything we can to make sure that Canadians have that access.

* * *

JUSTICE

Hon. Diane Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when the former attorney general spoke truth to power and refused to allow the law to be broken, she was fired. However, when Ben Chin abused his position of power to inappropriately put pressure on that same attorney general, he was given a promotion. When CBC reporter James Cudmore was revealed to be at the centre of the Norman scandal, he got a job with the Minister of Defence.

Why is it that the Liberal government punishes those who tell the truth and promotes those who try to cover it up?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it seems as if the Conservatives have finally woken up and realized it is important that we talk about jobs, so let us talk about jobs.

This government has been investing in Canadians, in skills development. By investing in Canadians and in communities across this country, Canadians have created over a million jobs. We are talking about almost four years in government, and we have been able, by having better relationships with provinces and municipalities, investing in infrastructure, investing in Canadians, lowering taxes on middle-class Canadians, lowering taxes on small businesses—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Calgary Midnapore.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister continues to prove that he does not care about right or wrong, as long as he gets his way.

When he tried to interfere in the criminal prosecution of SNC-Lavalin, his then attorney general got in the way, so he fired her. Ben Chin was one of the Prime Minister's conspirators in his attempt to undermine justice. Ben Chin got a promotion.

The message is clear. Those who do the Prime Minister's dirty work get rewarded.

What self-respecting parliamentarian would tolerate and defend this corruption?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was proud to be elected to represent the good people in the riding of Waterloo to ensure that in government and in the House of Commons, we represent the voices of Canadians.

Under 10 years of Stephen Harper, Canadians became tired of only Conservatives being represented. We made a commitment to ensuring that all voices would be represented. By ensuring that we work with all Canadians from coast to coast to coast, today we have an economy that is working.

That economy, by Canadians, has created over a million jobs. Today we have almost 300,000 children lifted out of poverty because of the tax-free Canada child benefit. Over 800,000 Canadians are better off today, but—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix.

● (1130)

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with little to speak of in terms of achievements over the past four years, the Prime Minister is racking up scandals and appalling behaviour from members of his entourage.

By promoting Ben Chin, the staffer who tried to circumvent the rule of law in the SNC-Lavalin scandal, the Prime Minister is confirming that he endorses this kind of totally unacceptable behaviour.

How would the Prime Minister explain to Canadians why such behaviour was rewarded with a promotion rather than a dismissal?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said, Canadians will always be our priority. We are here to work for them. That is exactly why we made investments and that is exactly why we are working with the provinces and the communities.

Through the investments we made, Canadians have created more than one million jobs to date. That means there are more Canadians working today, which is better for the economy since they will continue to make investments and have better communities. The Conservatives have no plan, so they are not going to—

The Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. member for Lévis—Lotbinière.

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, one of the key players in the SNC-Lavalin scandal was a minister's chief of staff who also did everything he could to get the attorney general of Canada and her employees to bend the law. He was even brazen enough to threaten them.

The more crooked one is, the better chance they have of moving up in the Liberal Party. Why does the Liberal government reward those who interfere in the judicial process?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, obviously, the Conservatives are engaging in petty politics because they do not have a plan for either the economy or the environment.

We on this side of the House will keep working for Canadians. We know that we can strengthen our economy by investing and working with Canadians.

That is exactly why Canadians have created over one million jobs during our four years in office. The Conservatives had 10 years in office.

[English]

They had a really bad economy, is what they had.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when Ben Chin tried to interfere with the justice system, he moved up to the Prime Minister's Office. When the former attorney general upheld the justice system, she was fired, booted out of caucus and kicked out of the party. For the Liberals, if one does the Prime Minister's dirty work, one gets promoted. If one upholds the rule of law, one is out. Why do the Liberals not understand that this is wrong?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have a justice system that is intact in Canada. We have officers of Parliament we can have confidence in, as well as an independent judicial system. What is clear is that we have confidence in those institutions, and that is what Canadians can also have confidence in. Unfortunately, the Conservatives will always undermine them, and they will continue to mislead Canadians.

Let us talk about this fiscal situation that we inherited when we took office four years ago. We had, under the Conservatives, the lowest growth since the Great Depression. What we did is to work with Canadians. We invested in Canadians, and guess what? Canadians have created over a million jobs, better than advertised.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let us talk about job losses under the Liberals. Here are the facts. The SNC-Lavalin scandal resulted in the firing of two respected and competent ministers. The SNC-Lavalin scandal resulted in the resignation of two top advisers to the Prime Minister. Long before these terminations and resignations, Ben Chin, the finance minister's chief of staff, was attempting to undermine the independence of our justice system. Was Ben Chin fired or forced to resign? No. He was promoted to the Prime Minister's Office. How is it even possible that Chin gets promoted and cabinet ministers get fired?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we see now that this is the sixth question in a row, and what do the Conservatives do? The Conservatives sling mud and they focus on us.

What will we do? We will focus on Canadians. That is exactly why, by focusing on Canadians, lowering taxes on middle-class Canadians and increasing them on the wealthiest 1% of Canadians, Canadians are better off today than they were under 10 years of

Oral Questions

Stephen Harper. By bringing forward the tax-free Canada child benefit, almost 300,000 children have been lifted out of poverty and over 800,000 Canadians are better off today than they were under 10 years of Stephen Harper. Guess what? We will continue to work for Canadians and focus on Canadians—

• (1135)

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke.

* * *

HEALTH

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is clear now that there are two keys to ending the HIV/AIDS epidemic: everyone knowing their status, and those who are HIV positive having access to treatment. However, many Canadians still lack access to both testing and treatment.

Following up on a question that I asked the Prime Minister last December, and in view of the imminent Health Canada approval of new home testing kits and point-of-care kits, will the government commit today to a well-funded federal program to make those new testing options available to every Canadian, including those in rural, remote and indigenous communities?

Ms. Pam Damoff (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is deeply committed to addressing HIV/AIDS and supporting the Canadians who live with it. That is why we are investing \$87 million annually to tackle it and are the first country in the world to support the principle that undetectable is the same is untransmittable. We remain committed to expanding access to antiretroviral drugs and other crucial medications that help to address HIV.

* * *

HUMAN RIGHTS

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, our “say the right thing and do nothing about it” government is at it again.

[Translation]

Three years ago, the then foreign affairs minister, Stéphane Dion, was at an event sponsored by my colleague from Windsor—Tecumseh, where he announced with great fanfare that Canada would be signing the optional protocol to the Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. That was in 2016. It is now 2019, and there has been no progress on that front.

[English]

Will the government at long last walk the talk and ratify the protocol, or is it only for show, as usual?

Oral Questions

Ms. Pamela Goldsmith-Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs (Consular Affairs), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government has been unequivocal in our stance on human rights. They are an integral part of our foreign policy because they are an integral part of who we are as Canadians. We use every opportunity to promote and protect the fundamental freedoms enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Canadians can be proud of the strong principles our government has taken in promoting and protecting human rights at home and abroad.

* * *

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, four years ago, the Conservative government announced the creation of an Afghanistan war monument to mark the service and sacrifice of Canadians in the longest engagement our forces have ever been in. The Liberals cancelled that project. This week, the government quietly announced an Afghanistan memorial that is not even accessible to the public. The families of the fallen have to book an appointment to see it.

Will the Minister of Veterans Affairs apologize to Afghanistan veterans, to military families, for failing them once again?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Serge Cormier (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we truly appreciate the service of our men and women in Afghanistan over many years.

The monument for soldiers is private, but it can be opened for families upon request. Our government is currently in the planning stage of a project to build a monument that would be open to the public.

Once again, we have the greatest respect for our men and women, including those who served in Afghanistan and on different missions around the world. We will ensure that the monument is open to private individuals and families.

[*English*]

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when the Liberal government cancelled plans for the Afghanistan war memorial, the MP for Kanata—Carleton, a veteran herself, promised that a new monument would be built quickly and would be accessible to Canadians. This week, we see that despite four years to get this done, she broke her promise to veterans yet again.

Will the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, the MP for Kanata—Carleton, stand in this House and apologize to Afghanistan veterans for failing to deliver this monument over the last four years?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, commemorating the service of the men and women of the Canadian Armed Forces and those who made the ultimate sacrifice is extremely important to our government.

That is why intend to build the monument. It will reflect the needs of the community, veterans, the Canadian public and families. Veterans and their families will be invited in due course to visit this beautiful monument, which will be public and open to everyone soon.

[*English*]

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on Monday, a secret dedication service was held for the Afghanistan Memorial Hall, tucked away in National Defence headquarters. The public was not invited and are not allowed to visit in the future. Veterans and families of the fallen were shut out of the ceremony. What a despicable lack of respect for those who made the ultimate sacrifice on the battlefields of Afghanistan.

Afghan veterans and veterans' families want to know who of the last four ministers of veterans affairs let them down, or was it all of them?

• (1140)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, those who serve Canada are a priority for our government. We do not play political games when it comes to our responsibilities or paying tribute to our veterans. The memorial will be built. The commemoration will occur. The families will have access. I assure the House that we care about commemorating this event, which is so important for Canada.

[*English*]

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals have had four years to get this right, and in another shocking display of disrespect towards our veterans, the Liberals refused to invite Canadian soldiers who put their lives on the line in Afghanistan, or families of Canadians who died for our country, to the dedication of the memorial. No one even knew about the event until pictures were posted on Facebook three days later. Even worse, the memorial is, get this, not open to the public or families of the fallen without an appointment.

Are families of Canadian soldiers who died in Afghanistan not entitled to a public memorial, or does the Prime Minister consider that to be more than he can give them right now?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Serge Cormier (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as we just said, we are going to plan and build that memorial.

It is rather ironic to hear the opposition talking about veterans, when the Conservatives completely abandoned them for 10 years. They shut veterans' offices, cut help for veterans and made cuts to the Department of National Defence.

How can they stand up in the House and defend veterans after ignoring them for 10 years?

We will always stand up for veterans, and we are going to build that memorial, which will be open to the public, to the families and to everyone in this country.

* * *

[English]

SENIORS

Ms. Sheri Benson (Saskatoon West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals promised to do politics differently, but on the ground, for many seniors, life is still unaffordable. It is positive that we have a Minister of Seniors, but people in my community still cannot afford to pay for the care they need as they age. We must do better for people who built this country.

The GIS increase is a small drop in the bucket, and many people never see that increase. Saskatoon seniors are struggling. Will the government ensure that seniors in Saskatoon can afford the care they need to age with dignity?

Mrs. Sherry Romanado (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Seniors, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government values the contributions our seniors have made, and continue to make, to our communities.

We have taken action to combat seniors' poverty since the day we were elected. Budget 2019 supports low-income seniors who work by increasing the earnings exemption for the GIS from \$3,500 to \$5,000. We have restored the age of eligibility for OAS and GIS to 65, preventing 100,000 people from falling into poverty. We increased the GIS for the most vulnerable single seniors to up to almost \$1,000 more a year. That is helping 900,000 seniors. In fact, in my riding alone, 4,000 seniors are receiving that increase.

* * *

[Translation]

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, thousands of public sector employees are still dealing with the consequences of the Phoenix fiasco and the Liberals' inaction.

The Parliamentary Budget Officer indicated yesterday that it would be cheaper to replace the pay system than to fix it.

The Liberal government's mismanagement of this file is insulting to our public service employees.

Why this stubbornness? When will the government put an end to the Phoenix scandal?

Mr. Steven MacKinnon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement and Accessibility, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, of course we are working very hard. Our hearts go out to all the public servants affected by the problems with the Phoenix pay system. We inherited it from the Harper government, which had the utmost contempt for our public servants and axed 700 public service positions from the system, so it could put savings on the books that were never achieved.

We, on the other hand, are investing the resources needed to fix the system. We have cut the wait-list down by a third and we will not stop working on this.

Oral Questions

GOVERNMENT APPOINTMENTS

Mr. William Amos (Pontiac, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on Wednesday, the Prime Minister announced a new process for Supreme Court of Canada appointments. This process will enable Quebec to be a full participant.

Could the Minister of Justice tell the House about this new process and how it differs from past approaches?

Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are delighted to have signed a historic memorandum of understanding with the Government of Quebec to create an advisory board for Quebec.

This board will reflect the province's unique legal tradition and ensure greater participation by its government in the selection process for Supreme Court judges from Quebec.

The memorandum of understanding reflects the government's commitment to adapting the composition of the advisory board in order to fill the three Supreme Court seats reserved for Quebec.

With this agreement, we have resolved a long-standing dispute with Quebec. As Minister of Justice—

* * *

● (1145)

[English]

CARBON PRICING

Mr. Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon—Grasswood, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this Victoria Day long weekend, as people in my province of Saskatchewan are driving to the lake, they are going to be paying higher gas prices, thanks to the Liberals' cash-grabbing carbon tax.

The Liberal carbon tax, as we know, is a plan to fight carbon change; absolutely not. This is a tax grab. All it does is make life more expensive for hard-working Canadians. When will the Liberal government support Canadians and cancel, once and for all, this carbon tax?

Mr. Sean Fraser (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have to point out that the hon. member seems confused. The province of British Columbia simply does not have the federal system apply, and in fact, the B.C. government's plan to price pollution has added one cent to the cost of gas in that province.

In respect to provinces where our plan applies, I direct the hon. member to read the Parliamentary Budget Officer's report that confirms that eight out of 10 families will have more money in their pockets at the end of the year as a result of our plan that will also reduce emissions.

Oral Questions

If he is finally concerned about affordability, I would invite his constituents to write him and ask why he opposed the increase to the Canada child benefit, why he opposed the tax cut for middle-class families and why he opposed support for low-income seniors.

* * *

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, British Columbia is drowning under the highest gas prices on the continent, and the Liberal government simply does not care. Because of the government's failure to expand pipeline access from Alberta, B.C. must buy American gasoline at a premium. This is unacceptable in a country rich in energy like ours.

B.C. needs the pipeline, and it needs it now. When will the government do the bare minimum to support B.C. and approve this desperately needed pipeline?

Mr. Paul Lefebvre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, since day one, our government has taken action to support our energy sector and the jobs it creates by making market access a priority. The Conservatives spent a decade failing our energy sector and failing Canadians. We are working each day to fix those failures. We are taking action now and making sure that good projects move forward, create jobs for Canadians and grow our economy. This is what Canadians deserve.

Our government approved the Line 3 replacement project. We have always supported Keystone and we are moving forward on TMX in the right way, through meaningful consultations, something that is not even an idea for the Conservatives.

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has just awarded a former Tides Canada executive a position in his office as director of policy. Tides poured millions into targeting campaigns aimed at influencing the 2015 election. Tides created and funded the tar sands campaign aimed entirely at shutting down Canada's oil and gas industry. Tides has funded organizations that have waged war against Canada's forestry, fishing and agriculture industries. Tides has funded comprehensive and targeted campaigns aimed at discrediting and shutting down Canada's natural resource sectors.

Who does the Prime Minister work for, Canadians or his foreign-funded friends?

Mr. Paul Lefebvre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is quite clear that we are working for Canadians. We have created over one million jobs and have lifted 300,000 kids out of poverty, and we are continuing to work with Canadians.

We have approved the Line 3 project. We are supportive of Keystone and we are working on TMX in the right way, something that is not the way the Conservatives operate. For them, negotiating or actually having consultations with indigenous peoples is not even a thought. For us, making sure that we are working for Canadians in the right way is a priority.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for years the Liberals have hired anti-energy chiefs of staff and policy advisers in the ministers' offices of Natural Resources, Environment and others, and now the Prime Minister has just appointed a former vice-

president of Tides Canada as his director of policy. The Tides Foundation helped run the anti-oil sands campaign. One group it funded says, "From the very beginning, the...strategy was to land lock" Canadian oil. With nearly 200,000 Canadian oil and gas workers out of their jobs and two cancelled pipelines under the Liberals, obviously it is working.

Why on earth is the Prime Minister helping foreign-funded activists shut down Canadian energy?

Mr. Paul Lefebvre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that is far from the truth. We have actually approved the Line 3 project. We are supportive of Keystone and we are moving forward on TMX in the right way. We have eight teams on the ground right now making sure that we are properly consulting with indigenous peoples, something, again, that for the Conservatives is only a suggestion. We realize that it is a legal obligation. We take our obligations very seriously. That is what Canadians deserve, and that is what we are delivering.

* * *

● (1150)

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, public servants across the country have been suffering under the Phoenix pay system fiasco since its inception. People have been underpaid, overpaid and not paid at all, and T4s are inaccurate, creating a whole host of nightmares with the Canada Revenue Agency.

This has been widely acknowledged by the government, but what is actually happening to support federal employees suffering under Phoenix? Constituents like Mr. Forester-Stone, in my riding, want to know why they are still receiving the same responses about unknown timelines, with no resolution in sight, for resolving their pay issues.

Mr. Steven MacKinnon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement and Accessibility, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, of course, we are in complete solidarity with the public servants who are labouring and suffering under the Harper-inspired Phoenix pay system, where they cut 700 qualified public servants, cut tens of millions of dollars in phony savings, and left us without an alternative pay system.

We are moving to develop a next generation pay system. We have opened a client contact centre, which is experiencing high levels of customer satisfaction, and we are, of course, going to continue to get those transactions down and get to zero.

*Oral Questions***THE ENVIRONMENT**

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we have a climate crisis before us, with current global warming trends predicting a global increase of between 3°C and 5°C by the end of the century. Canada's youth are looking to us, the elected officials, to embrace the crisis that is putting their futures in jeopardy with the same urgency they are feeling.

The government claims to understand that there is a climate emergency, but it refuses to debate the issue today, and it voted against the NDP's motion earlier this week. When will the government put some action behind its words and treat this crisis with the urgency it deserves?

Mr. Sean Fraser (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the fact is, climate change is real, the consequences are serious and we are facing an emergency today. We do not need to look to the end of the century to understand that people are feeling the consequences in our communities. We can look at the storm surges on the east coast, floods in New Brunswick, heatwaves in Quebec and Ontario, forest fires in the west and glacial melt in the north. We are feeling the impact today, and it is costing us dearly.

We have put forward a plan with more than 50 concrete measures that is going to bring our emissions down, strengthen communities, make life more affordable and do right for the next generation.

With respect to the NDP's motion, there were fatal flaws in it, because those members did not do their homework and understand that the consequences would shut off electricity to—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Mégantic—L'Érable.

* * *

[*Translation*]

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal government's management of the China crisis is a total disaster.

The Minister of Agriculture is improvising, and more and more farmers are being affected. First it was canola, pork and genetics. Now we have learned that two containers of soybeans were rejected by Chinese authorities. Sales have dropped by 95% since January, and farmers still do not have access to the advanced payment program, even though they need help now.

Rather than pointing fingers, when will the Prime Minister stand up and defend Canadian farmers?

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have been behind our canola farmers and all of our farmers from the very start.

We are taking action on multiple fronts. We are working on this. I visited the Prairies and met with my provincial colleagues. We set up a working group with the industry and farmers. I went to Japan. I spoke with my Chinese counterpart. We have implemented a much more generous advanced payment program. We are working hard on this file. My colleague, the Minister of International Trade Diversification, will also be undertaking trade missions focusing on diversification.

[*English*]

FINANCE

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on Tuesday, the Auditor General told the public accounts committee that as a result of inadequate funding “we have no choice but to decrease the number of performance audits”.

Yesterday the President of the Treasury Board refused to commit to provide the necessary resources to the Auditor General so that he could do his job, so I will give her another chance today. Will she commit today, now, to provide the Office of the Auditor General the \$10.8 million it requested, yes or no?

Mr. Greg Fergus (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board and Minister of Digital Government, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to working with and supporting the Auditor General, as we would support all officers of the Parliament of Canada. When an officer of Parliament, such as the Auditor General, identifies a need for additional resources, we consider such a request quite seriously to ensure that that office and all offices of agents of Parliament can continue their important work on behalf of the Canadian people.

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that sounded an awful lot like no.

On Tuesday, we learned that the cancelled audits included cybercrime, Arctic sovereignty, public service training, heritage services and the government's travel system. The Auditor General said that these were important areas that needed to be audited. One can imagine what these audits would reveal if they were completed.

We know that the government prefers cover-ups to accountability, but stopping the Auditor General from doing his job is inexcusable. Why are they so afraid to be accountable?

• (1155)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Greg Fergus (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board and Minister of Digital Government, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me reiterate that our government fully supports officers of Parliament. We take their work seriously. When an officer of Parliament, such as the Auditor General, identifies a problem with the budget, we take that seriously.

That is exactly what we are going to do.

*Oral Questions**[English]***FAMILIES, CHILDREN AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT**

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos (London North Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for months, the Leader of the Opposition has been vague about the Conservative plan. This week we heard the so-called details, and they are terrifying. He wants to mix the worst of Harper with the worst of Ford. He says his cuts will not hurt kids or families, but as we are seeing in Ontario, when Conservatives make such promises, middle-class families suffer.

Could the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families please tell this House how this government has indeed helped families and the middle class prosper?

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing and Urban Affairs), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when it comes to Conservatives, they have a lot of silly slogans, and they amuse themselves with stickers and all kinds of little cartoons, but the reality is, when it comes to children, the Ford government has declared war on Ontario's children. The cuts to stem cell research yesterday are absolutely appalling and put at risk premature babies. It is a wrong cut. It is a bad cut, but it layers on top of the cuts to vaccines, the cuts to school lunch programs, the cuts to libraries and the cuts to education.

When the Conservatives talk about children, what they do not tell us is that they are coming for our kids, they are coming to hurt kids, and they cut services to kids. They just do not care. When it comes to Ford's cuts, they are—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Calgary Shepard.

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HOUSING

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals' one-size-fits-all mortgage stress test has blocked 147,000 Canadians from the dream of home ownership. To fix their big-government mistake, they are proposing a big-government solution of shared equity mortgages.

The finance department claims that up to 100,000 Canadians will be helped. They said that CMHC told them so; CMHC says the department gave it that number. The CMHC boss says this program will work on the margins; Liberal MPs keep claiming it will be transformational.

Will the Liberals admit that when it comes to housing affordability, they are making it up as they go along and young Canadian families are paying the price?

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance (Youth Economic Opportunity), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when it comes to the issues that young people are facing, they certainly do not look to the Conservatives for solutions. After 10 years, we saw what that meant.

When it comes to housing affordability, all the Conservatives want to do is allow young people and families in first-time home ownership opportunities to take on more debt. What we are committed to is actually allowing more people to get into the housing market; making their monthly costs go down; increasing

affordability for Canadians so they have more money to spend on things that matter, like their families; and making sure that they can invest in communities.

The Conservatives have no plan. We continue—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Rivière-des-Mille-Îles.

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*[Translation]***SCIENCE**

Ms. Linda Lapointe (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, earlier this week, Ontario's Ford government announced it will cut funding to the Ontario Institute for Regenerative Medicine. The institute has funded research on many debilitating and fatal diseases, and its mission is to advance important stem cell research.

The Ford government has taken over Stephen Harper's anti-science crusade, but our government is taking action.

Would the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Science and Sport tell the House about our commitment to science and research?

[English]

Ms. Kate Young (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Science and Sport and to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement and Accessibility (Accessibility), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again a Conservative politician is trying to shut down discovery that has long-term benefits.

We have seen this before. Ten years of cuts, the muzzling of scientists and overall mismanagement by the Harper Conservatives had researchers protesting on Parliament Hill. Our government, unlike the previous government and the Ford government, actually believes in science, research and evidence-based decision-making.

We are the government that has invested over \$10 billion into research, and we will continue to support our researchers.

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IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, under the Liberal government, many Canadian families who are adopting children abroad face long delays and zero transparency on their case. For example, after initially being told by the Liberals that the process would take two weeks, the Moran family have been separated for nine months. They were just told it could be as long as another year before a decision is made, with no reason given as to why.

Will the minister agree to meet with the Morans and explain to them why they cannot get a straight answer?

Oral Questions

• (1200)

Mr. Marc Miller (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this government has taken historic measures to reunite families, and it is a little rich for the member opposite, whose party had two options when dealing with files: pressing the delete button or the alt-right button. It is a disgrace for the member opposite to stand up and talk about family reunification.

It is this government that has made historic investments in budgets 2019, 2018, 2017 and 2016 to make sure that people are welcome in Canada and that immigration files are processed in a systematic fashion.

Of course there are extremely complex files, and the element that the member mentioned is a very particular file. We are glad to take it—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Terrebonne.

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[Translation]

INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS

Mr. Michel Boudrias (Terrebonne, BQ): Mr. Speaker, this week, Quebec got to witness a road show, a piece of political theatre in bad taste about extending Highway 19. The people of Terrebonne are pleased, because this is the good news they have been waiting for for years.

However, it is Quebec that builds highways, not Ottawa. Not one centimetre of road is built in Quebec without the authority and approval of the Government of Quebec.

Why did the Minister of Infrastructure and Communities organize a press conference in our backyard, without Quebec, when there is no real announcement to be made because Quebec has the final say?

Does it have something to do with the election?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a great deal of respect for my colleague. However, I have none for the Bloc Québécois' hypocrisy.

How can someone claim to work on behalf of Quebeckers and be against an historic investment to reduce congestion in the suburbs north of Montreal? Only a Bloc Québécois MP could be against Quebeckers who want to reduce congestion on Montreal's roads. The people of Terrebonne have been waiting for that since 1970.

We are proud of our investment in Highway 19. We are working with the Government of Quebec and we are funding that road with our colleagues from Quebec. All the mayors were there. The people were pleased that, for once, a government is keeping its word and investing in reducing congestion in the suburbs north of Montreal.

Mr. Michel Boudrias (Terrebonne, BQ): Mr. Speaker, working for Quebec and in Quebec's best interests means complying with the agreements between this government and Quebec. The agreement on infrastructure makes it clear that Canada's role is limited to contributing financially, period. It will not be involved in the implementation stages. Essentially, according to the agreements, the only two things Ottawa can do with regard to Quebec are sign a

cheque and get out of the way. Quebec wants Ottawa to transfer this infrastructure funding as a lump sum, with no strings attached, in accordance with the agreement.

Could the Minister of Infrastructure and Communities stop stirring up artificial quarrels and just cut a cheque instead of putting on a show for the cameras?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is all a show for the cameras. Respecting Quebeckers means more than asking two questions a week in the House. It means taking action for Quebeckers. The people watching us at home are seeing a Bloc Québécois member objecting to reducing congestion in the suburbs north of Montreal.

We are proud to be investing \$345 million for the residents of the suburbs north of Montreal in partnership with the Government of Quebec and in partnership with the municipalities, while creating jobs. We will continue to invest in Quebec because that is part of what it means to respect Quebeckers.

* * *

JUSTICE

Mr. Michel Boudrias (Terrebonne, BQ): Mr. Speaker, that is just a sham and a gong show.

I want to move on to something else. Vice-Admiral Norman is the victim of both the Conservatives' pettiness and the Liberal government's incompetence. The Conservatives hid the fact that they mandated Admiral Norman to talk to Davie about the *Asterix* so that they could continue their partisan attacks at his expense—and at the expense of Davie, in particular. The Liberals are no better. They referred this matter to the RCMP, as if it were no big deal, without checking and validating the facts, which is what led to this shameful investigation. The entire Canadian establishment is now implicated.

Will the government launch a public inquiry to get to the bottom of the situation regarding Admiral Norman and the contracts—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice.

Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the member knows, the RCMP conducts its own investigations.

The decision to collect evidence and to go see the Public Prosecution Service was made completely independently from the government. The PPSC is another institution that is completely independent from government.

If the opposition members had any relevant information, they should have given it to the RCMP long before this.

Routine Proceedings

● (1205)
[English]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Environment. We are part of a very important agreement—and full credit to the federal government and the government of B.C.—as well as an indigenous partnership to protect an iconic species, the southern mountain caribou.

I am afraid. I am hearing reports that the consultations of the B.C. government seem to be stirring up opposition to protecting the species instead of solidifying what is a groundbreaking model agreement.

I wonder if the federal government is concerned, as I am, that we not let this deal get unstuck.

Mr. Sean Fraser (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind this House that it is Endangered Species Day and that our world is facing a global crisis when it comes to the protection of our wildlife. Since the 1970s, we have seen 60% of our wildlife disappear, including iconic species in Canada.

With respect to the southern mountain caribou, we have seen local population units that have been around for thousands of years wiped off the face of the planet forever. We have achieved a groundbreaking conservation agreement with the Province of British Columbia and the Saulteaux and West Moberly First Nations. We intend to keep the commitments that we made, but we want to work with communities to ensure that we do so in a way that respects their way of life and local economies. However, we simply cannot let this iconic species disappear from our great country.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

Hon. Robert Nault (Kenora, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1), I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, two reports of the Canadian Section of ParlAmericas, one respecting its participation in a bilateral visit to Mexico held in Mexico City from February 10 to 12, 2019, and the other respecting the 47th board of directors meeting and the fourth gathering of the ParlAmericas Open Parliament Network held in Quito, Ecuador, from March 11 to 14, 2019.

* * *

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

Mr. Bryan May (Cambridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 17th report of the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities, entitled “Labour Shortages and Solutions in the GTHA Construction Industry”.

Pursuant to Standing Order 109, the committee requests that the government table a comprehensive response to this report.

While I am on my feet, I have a second report. I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 18th report of the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities, entitled “Main Estimates 2019-20”.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank our clerk, Stephanie Feldman, whom we lost yesterday. She is moving to Journals. On behalf of the entire committee, I would like to wish her all the best in her future endeavours.

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INCOME TAX ACT

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-452, An Act to amend the Income Tax Act (gift in virtual currency).

He said: Mr. Speaker, again it is an honour to stand up on behalf of the good people of Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola.

We all know that Canadians are a kind and generous people, and the government should and can encourage charitable giving any way that it can.

Current tax law in Canada exempts the sale of assets from capital gains taxes if those gains are given to charity. This bill would extend that exemption to the sale of virtual currencies, such as Bitcoin. Virtual currencies should not be treated differently from any other asset, and this bill would help address that divide. It would also allow the minister to declare a certain virtual currency ineligible from the exemption if there is a public interest in doing so.

We know how generous Canadians can be when it comes to charitable giving. We want to ensure that prohibitively high taxes do not get in the way of the next generation of charitable giving. This is a simple and positive legislative change, and I hope that all parties will support it.

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

* * *

● (1210)

PETITIONS**AUTISM AND SPECIAL NEEDS**

Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to present a petition signed by 5,000 parents. It calls for a national autism and special needs strategy in the presence of many of the parents today.

Across Canada, services for about 500,000 people with autism spectrum disorder and other disabilities remain inconsistent, depending on the provincial or territorial jurisdiction. Supporting an individual with ASD is beyond the financial means of most Canadians, and our school systems provide little assistance for those currently in schools and those transitioning into adulthood. Hence, we need a national autism and special needs strategy.

FIREARMS

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition signed by Canadians from the ridings of Kitchener Centre, Cambridge, Waterloo, Cloverdale—Langley City, Burnaby South, Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lethbridge, Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, Edmonton Mill Woods, Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskasung and Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke.

Petitioners call on the House of Commons to respect the rights of law-abiding firearms owners and reject the Prime Minister's plan to waste taxpayers' dollars on banning firearms that are already banned.

MEDICAL INTERPRETERS

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

The first petition is an e-petition signed by 631 petitioners. The petitioners note that other countries, such as the United Kingdom, the U.S. and Australia, use trained interpreters and that this is strictly enforced by law. They do this, particularly in the health care system, to ensure that proper interpreters are available so that there is no misunderstanding or miscommunication with respect to someone's health care.

The petitioners call upon the Government of Canada to create an action plan for training and recruiting qualified medical interpreters, institute a federal-level policy enforcing the use of trained interpreters in health care settings and ensure mandatory training for health care providers on how to effectively work with interpreters.

EYE HEALTH

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my second petition is on eye health.

The petitioners note that the number of Canadians with vision loss is expected to double in the next 20 years, and that the emerging crisis in eye health and vision care affects all segments of the Canadian population, with Canada's most vulnerable populations, which include children, seniors and indigenous people, at particular risk. It also notes that just 1% of the total expenditures on vision loss is invested in post-vision-loss rehabilitation therapy.

Petitioners call on the government to commit to acknowledging eye health and vision care as a growing public health issue and respond to it particularly regarding Canada's vulnerable populations, which include children, seniors, diabetics and indigenous peoples, through the development of a national framework for action to promote eye health and vision care, which will benefit all Canadians.

MIGRATION

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, petitioners within my riding of Saanich—Gulf Islands, one of whom

Routine Proceedings

has extensive personal experience on the ground with the refugee crisis on Samos Island, Greece, where thousands of people without adequate shelter and care have taken refuge and are in need of help and basic services, ask the Government of Canada to intercede and engage directly with the Government of Greece and offer concrete aid and assistance in all the ways Canada can help this humanitarian crisis.

• (1215)

HUMAN ORGAN TRAFFICKING

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition on behalf of several hundred people from my riding that calls on the government to amend the Criminal Code to prohibit Canadians from travelling abroad to acquire human organs, removed without consent, as a result of a financial transaction.

* * *

QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURN

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if Questions Nos. 2362-2370 could be made orders for return, these returns would be tabled immediately.

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Text]

Question No. 2362—**Mr. Guy Caron:**

With regard to project recommendations submitted by Infrastructure Canada during Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the Investing in Canada Plan, since March 2016: (a) how many project recommendations have been submitted to the Office of the Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, broken down by (i) year, (ii) project name, (iii) project financial value, (iv) province, (v) constituency; (b) of the project recommendations in (a), which recommendations were approved by the Office of the Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, broken down by (i) year, (ii) province, (iii) federal constituency; and (c) of the recommendations in (a), which project recommendations were not approved by the Office of the Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, broken down by (i) year, (ii) province, (iii) federal constituency?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 2363—**Mr. Mark Strahl:**

With regard to the March 2019 leak of information related to the Supreme Court nomination process: (a) what investigative process, if any, is the government conducting to find out who leaked the information; and (b) did any current or former employees of the Office of the Prime Minister leak the information to anyone and, if so, who?

(Return tabled)

*Routine Proceedings***Question No. 2364—Mr. Michael Barrett:**

With regard to the testimony by the former Attorney General at the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights that Mathieu Bouchard and Elder Marques from the Office of the Prime Minister's said that "they understand that the individual Crown prosecutor wants to negotiate an agreement, but the Director does not": (a) how did Mr. Bouchard and Mr. Marques acquire that information; and (b) how many times has anyone from the Office of the Prime Minister or the Privy Council Office met with a Crown Prosecutor or the Director of Public Prosecutions since November 4, 2015, and what are the details of all such meetings, including (i) date, (ii) individuals involved in meetings, (iii) topics or cases discussed?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 2365—Ms. Sheri Benson:

With regard to all federal initiatives related to housing since the fiscal year 2010-11, including proposed measures presented by the government for the fiscal year 2019-20: (a) what are all the programs, services, grants, transfers, contributions, and other federal initiatives related to the construction, purchase, upgrading and maintenance for all forms of temporary and permanent housing; (b) for each element in (a), what are (i) the rationale, objectives or goals, (ii) the year it was publicly announced, (iii) the year it was implemented or is scheduled to be; (c) for each element in (a), is it a modification, replacement or renaming of an existing program, or an entirely new initiative; (d) for each element in (a), is it a standalone federal initiative and, if not, what other partners are part of the initiative (provincial, municipal or Indigenous governments, private owners, renters, investors, contractors or operators, not for profit organizations, individual or household, other); (e) for each element in (a), what is the amount spent, or projected to be spent, annually; (f) for each element in (a), what is the minimum and maximum individual entitlement; and (g) for each element in (a), what is the end date or scheduled end date?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 2366—Mrs. Rosemarie Falk:

With regard to the effect of the federal carbon tax on the price of groceries: (a) does the government have any projections on how much the carbon tax will raise the price of groceries and, if so, what are the projections; and (b) what is the projected increase in the cost of groceries each year for an average family in each of the next five years?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 2367—Ms. Rachael Harder:

With regard to the decision by the Prime Minister to have Anne McLellan deliver a report to him by June 30, 2019: (a) what compensation is being offered to Ms. McLellan for her services; and (b) what specific resources are being made available to Ms. McLellan for her study?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 2368—Mr. Todd Doherty:

With regard to statistics related to Canadian Coast Guard mid-shore patrol vessels based in Nova Scotia, broken down by month since January 2016: (a) how many ships were in service; (b) how many days was each ship (i) tied to the dock, (ii) operating out at sea; and (c) for each day that the ships were docked, was the docking due to weather conditions or other factors, specifying what the other factors are?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 2369—Mr. Mel Arnold:

With regard to the Small Craft Harbours program, since January 1, 2016: (a) what are the details of all grants and contributions made from the program, including for each the (i) recipient, (ii) amount, (iii) project description, (iv) start date and duration of project, (v) type of contribution (repayable grant, loan, etc.), (vi) location of recipient including municipality and province; and (b) what is the total amount which has been paid out from the program, broken down by province?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 2370—Mr. Blaine Calkins:

With regard to the establishment of an Interim Management Advisory Board for the RCMP: (a) who is responsible for selecting board members; (b) what is the criteria for board membership; (c) when will the board members be selected; and (d) who has been selected for the board to date?

(Return tabled)

[English]

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

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: The Chair has received notice of a request for an emergency debate from the hon. member Cowichan—Malahat—Langford.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to give notice under Standing Order 52(2) that I am seeking leave to propose an emergency debate on the urgent need for Canada to declare that the country, and indeed the globe, is in a state of environmental and climate emergency.

I am not sure that there has ever been a more obvious need for such a debate, as the members of this House, along with the preponderance of the scientific community, as well as everyday global citizens, agree that the planet is in crisis and that governments need to step up and address the situation with a much greater sense of urgency.

We know that NDP members, through our motion that was tabled this week, believe that the declaration of an environment and climate emergency is necessary. Our motion also includes tangible action, prioritizes reconciliation and commits to making sure no worker or community is left behind.

We know that the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands, the members of the Bloc Québécois and the member for Nunavut all supported that motion as well.

We know that the Conservatives have put forward a motion this week that reads, in part, that "climate change is a real and urgent global problem".

We also know that the Liberals have put forward a motion that claims, much like the Conservatives, that climate change is a real and urgent crisis. The motion goes on to have the House declare a national climate emergency, but again, much like the Conservatives', without much in the way of tangible action nor an increase in the tepid ambition of the Liberal government's approach.

We also know, somewhat bizarrely, that in the government House leader's Thursday statement on the upcoming business of the House, there was zero mention of the government's climate emergency motion coming back before the House. She said that today's debate would be on the CBSA oversight bill, which the NDP believes is important and will support, but it makes us wonder how much of an emergency the climate motion really is for the government. Furthermore, the government House leader made no mention of the motion coming back for debate and vote after next week's constituency week.

Government Orders

Finally, we know that the Liberals have a rich history of talking a big game on environmental action. Exhibit A in this case is the admission of chief of staff to former prime minister Chrétien, Eddie Goldenberg, that the Liberals' decision to sign the Kyoto accord was a publicity stunt.

Faced with the facts about the seriousness of the climate crisis, I believe it is essential that Canada declare that we are in an environmental and climate emergency. Given that the government seems intent to leave its motion on the sideline, to debate matters of greater urgency to it, I believe that the House, through you, Mr. Speaker, should grant this emergency debate request to affirm the level of urgency that is required.

As always, I thank the Speaker for the careful consideration of this request.

• (1220)

The Deputy Speaker: I thank the hon. member for Cowichan—Malahat—Langford for his request and for bringing attention to a matter that the House has been quite seized with as of late. Certainly, the limits of the requests for emergency debates are outlined and prescribed in the Standing Orders. In this case, the member's request does not meet the requirements of the Standing Orders.

Being mindful of the fact that, as the member mentioned, there is still a motion that is before the House, which will presumably be taken up at some point in time, there will be opportunities to take up consideration of the subject that the member proposes.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, had it been possible to catch your eye, I had hoped to join in and support the request just made by the member for Cowichan—Malahat—Langford. Obviously now that the Speaker has ruled, it is not possible for me to make that point.

Perhaps under the Standing Orders, the Speaker could advise me of how best to make sure that, when a request for an emergency debate comes forward, there is more opportunity for other parties in this place to speak to that request.

The Deputy Speaker: I thank the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands for bringing attention to this. In fact, it is a good opportunity to remind hon. members about how these things generally work.

On requests for emergency debates, it is generally the convention that only a brief statement would be given by the member who has in fact proposed the request or put forward the request. It is a brief opportunity for the member to explain the request and the reasons for it, after which the presiding officer would indicate his or her decision in that matter, unlike questions of privilege or points of order, where the Chair will often see and invite other members to participate, should the need be.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-98, An Act to amend the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Act and the

Canada Border Services Agency Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Deputy Speaker: When the House last took up debate on the question, the hon. member for Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles had three minutes remaining in the time for questions and comments, so we will now go to that.

Questions and comments, the hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one of the first initiatives that the government had taken after the last election was to invest much of the money that was actually cut from Canada border control as the Harper government had made some serious deep cuts to that agency, which had a fairly negative impact.

Second to that, we also then are bringing forward this legislation. We know that there are 20 days left to go, but I think it is fairly widely well-received. Ultimately, I would be interested in my colleague's thoughts in regard to whether the Conservative Party would see the next 20 days as an opportunity to actually get behind the legislation and its passage.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

As I reminded the minister in committee, and as I have repeatedly reminded the House, I must remind him that the Library of Parliament produced a document that clarifies the budget issue.

The Liberals say we cut \$300 million, but none of that was cut from services for front-line officers. They were administrative measures, and they did not hurt our officers, so the members can stop bringing that up.

Now, it is not the opposition's problem if there are only 28 days left in this parliamentary session. It is the government's problem, because it mismanaged its legislative agenda from the start. It got bogged down in scandal after scandal. We are going to do what needs to be done. The Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security still has way too much on its plate. It is still studying Bill C-93. It has not finished studying the bill or the cybersecurity report, for starters. I do not see how the committee can get this done in the time it has left. Committee meetings still need to happen, and the Senate still has work to do, so it will be impossible to wrap this up before the end of the session.

The Deputy Speaker: We have time for a brief question and answer.

The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister.

Government Orders

•(1225)

Mr. Peter Schiefke (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister (Youth) and to the Minister of Border Security and Organized Crime Reduction, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague just asked that we stop mentioning that the Stephen Harper government stripped the people who work at our borders of hundreds of millions of dollars. I wonder whether he can stop insulting Canadians' intelligence by saying that a tweet from the Prime Minister is what is causing asylum seekers to arrive at our borders. Instead, would he agree that tens of thousands of migrants around the world are looking for a safe place for themselves and their families? That is the reality. That is also why people are arriving at our borders.

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Mr. Speaker, I know that we are short of time, but it would be great to have at least 10 minutes to answer my Liberal colleague.

He just said that, ultimately, opening our borders and inviting the whole world to come and settle here would be a good idea. However, this government is currently trying to amend the safe third country agreement because it clearly sees that the agreement makes no sense and cannot work. I think my hon. colleague needs to go back and do his homework.

[English]

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to finally have the opportunity to contribute to a long-awaited debate on an oversight body for the Canada Border Services Agency. It has been over a decade since Justice O'Connor recommended that there be an independent oversight for the CBSA. Since then, a chorus of voices have consistently and persistently called for accountability for the CBSA.

I will state very clearly that the NDP supports Bill C-98, as this is something the NDP and stakeholders have been calling on the current Liberal government to act on for a very long time.

In fact, back in 2014, the BC Civil Liberties Association, the Canadian Council for Refugees and the Canadian Association of Refugee Lawyers, issued a joint press release and called for an independent review of all of CBSA's national security enforcement and border policing activities.

The CBSA is the only major federal law enforcement agency without external oversight. CBSA officers have a broad range of authority. They can stop travellers for questioning. They can take breath and blood samples. They have the ability to search, detain and arrest non-citizens without a warrant. They can interrogate Canadians. They also have the authority to issue and carry out deportations on foreign nationals. Many of these authorities are carried out in an environment where charter protections are reduced in the name of national security. However, despite these sweeping powers, it is astounding that there is no independent external civilian oversight for complaints or allegations of misconduct for the CBSA.

Without a doubt, the overwhelming majority of CBSA officers carry out their duties with the utmost respect for the individuals they engage with and recognize that the authority provided to them is to be used responsibly. However, stories of horrific misconduct have also come to light, and the complaint mechanism is anything but open and accountable.

Joel Sandaluk, a Toronto immigration lawyer, said, "CBSA, for many years, has been a law unto itself."

Mary Foster of Solidarity Across Borders said, "We have enough experience to know that making a complaint to the CBSA about the CBSA doesn't really lead anywhere."

It is my understanding that between January 2016 and the middle of 2018, the CBSA investigated around 1,200 allegations of staff misconduct. The alleged misconducts are wide-ranging. They include things like neglect of duty, sexual assault, excessive force, use of inappropriate sexual language, criminal association and harassment.

In 2013, there was a case where a woman, reportedly fleeing domestic violence, died in the CBSA's custody. An inquest into the death concluded that there is "no independent, realistic method for immigrants to bring forward concerns or complaints."

In 2016, two more people died in the CBSA's custody within a span of just one week.

With incidents such as these, it is vital that there is accountability and transparency to ensure that procedures are respected and that there is no abuse of power. That means it is critical that there is an independent oversight body in the event that complaints are lodged.

Right now, if there is an incident where travellers, whether Canadians or foreign nationals, feel something is not right, be it harassment or use of force, the only recourse is to submit a complaint to the CBSA, which undergoes an internal review. We must keep in mind that the nature of the power imbalance that exists between border authorities such as the CBSA, and travellers, especially those in a foreign country, makes lodging any sort of complaint very difficult. Some people elect not to file a complaint. There are real fears, especially if the process is not well known and the body looking into the complaint is not an independent body. People fear, for example, that future travel could be impacted. People are afraid that by speaking out against mistreatment, they may be punished the next time that they try to travel.

•(1230)

We should keep in mind that for some, such as temporary residents and visitors to Canada, they simply are not around long enough to file a complaint or to see it through. We have a responsibility, especially as a nation that welcomes millions of tourists a year, has our own citizens exploring the world and welcomes hundreds of thousands of newcomers who immigrate here each year, to ensure that people feel safe, respected and protected by our border officials. This is why it is critical that there is a public, independent, civilian oversight body for the CBSA.

Government Orders

The BC Civil Liberties Association has studied this issue closely and has done a report on it. From its report, "Oversight at the Border: A Model for Independent Accountability at the Canada Border Services Agency", it has recommended "two separate accountability mechanisms for the CBSA, one charged with providing real-time oversight of CBSA's policies and practices, and one charged with conducting investigations and resolving complaints."

I would be very interested to hear what it and witnesses say about this proposed bill, and whether or not they feel it meets the call for independent oversight and accountability measures for the CBSA.

I must note that while we debate Bill C-98, another bill, Bill C-59, is currently moving to third reading stage at the Senate. We expect we will see that bill return here in the near future.

Bill C-59 introduces a review agency, the national security and intelligence review agency, or NSIRA. This new body would replace the Office of the Communications Security Establishment Commissioner and the Security Intelligence Review Committee, as well as the national security review and complaints investigation functions of the Civilian Review and Complaints Commission. This means that the new body would have jurisdiction over activities that fall under the umbrella of national security. As for what remains as the Civilian Review and Complaints Commission, it will continue to have the external investigative body that reviews complaints from the public about RCMP conduct. However, the bill before us today would rename the Civilian Review and Complaints Commission to the public complaints and review commission and expand its mandate to have a similar review function to the CBSA.

As a result of these changes, depending on the nature of the complaint against the CBSA, a different body with different authorities will be the reviewer of conduct. This will undoubtedly cause confusion at times. Therefore, one wonders why this approach was taken and why it is being done in two separate bills.

However, more concerning is the lack of lack of consultation and the last-minute nature of this proposed legislation. Too often we have seen the government consult and consult, and then do nothing, but then in areas where consultation and study are vital to ensuring that the legislation is what it needs to be, the process is short-changed.

The Customs and Immigration Union, which represents over 10,000 Canadians working on our borders, was not consulted on Bill C-98. This makes no sense to me. Why would the government not be seeking out the views of those individuals on the front lines who are doing the work and who would now have a new body reviewing them and their representative organization? This is not a good way to proceed.

Sadly, as the NDP critic for Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, I have become incredibly familiar with the Liberal government's failure to follow through on its promise on good governance.

As we have seen in Bill C-97, the budget implementation act, the Liberals have decided to ram through dangerous changes to Canada's refugee determination system and put vulnerable lives, especially women and girls fleeing violence, at risk. I suspect that the Liberals are feeling the pressure from the right and want to be seen as being tough on asylum seekers. With an election six months from now,

they are jamming draconian changes through in an omnibus budget bill.

I suppose, at least in this case with Bill C-98, while the measures for the changes for the CBSA complaint process were announced in the budget, they at least are tabled in a separate stand-alone bill, Bill C-98.

• (1235)

That is more than I can say about the changes to the refugee determination system, which are being rammed through with minimal study in the omnibus budget bill. In a rush to look tough on borders and caving to pressure and misinformation campaigns by the Conservatives, the Liberals again, without consultation, made very sweeping changes to the asylum system in the budget. Experts immediately called for the provisions to be withdrawn or, at the very minimum, to table them as a separate stand-alone bill. The Liberal government refused.

Some 2,400 Canadians wrote to the Prime Minister calling for the same action. That too fell on deaf ears. Its advice, as recently reported by the Auditor General, was that the 1.2 million calls to the IRCC last year did not get through to the government. I will say that Bill C-98 is at least a stand-alone bill.

With that being said, it must also be recognized, given that the Liberals have failed to take action until the eleventh hour, that there is a chance this bill might not receive royal assent prior to the election. If that occurs, this would then represent yet another broken promise by the Liberal government, another broken promise through its failure to act.

I do wonder what took the government so long to table this bill. Why did it wait until there are only five weeks left in the sitting of the House to bring Bill C-98 forward? I suspect that the Liberal government would employ time allocation measures to limit debate, a tool that Liberals consistently spoke against when the Conservatives were in government. I fear that they will once again have our debate in this place limited because the government could not get its legislation in order in a timely fashion.

The risk that this represents with a bill of this magnitude cannot be ignored. The government, in the rush to table it before the session ends, has failed to properly consult the experts on what the bill should look like. Now, in a race against the clock, the Liberals, if they want to be able to claim that they followed through on their promise, will need to limit the democratic debate of this bill. That is what I expect will happen.

Government Orders

This is not a good recipe for good legislation. In fact, it is quite the opposite. The government has stated that in 2017 and 2018, over 96 million travellers were engaged by CBSA employees, which is over 260,000 per day. They processed more than 21 million commercial shipments, which is over 57,000 per day. They processed over 46 million courier shipments, which is over 126,000 per day. This is a serious matter and deserves thorough debate.

It is our hope that the government will allow for a thorough study of this bill at committee. I also hope that the government, upon hearing from stakeholders and experts at the committee stage, will be amenable to any amendments that expert witnesses put forward. I hope that the government will allow for that work to be done in a proper fashion and is open to input by stakeholders.

This bill has been long awaited for by the community. I regret that the government has waited this long, until the eleventh hour, with only six months until the election and only five weeks of sitting in this place, to table Bill C-98. Canadians deserve to have an independent, external civilian oversight process for the CBSA. The government should have done this work much earlier to ensure that the proper process is in place for all Canadians.

● (1240)

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me ask a blindingly obvious question. The Liberal government agrees with the bill. The official opposition agrees with the bill, and the NDP agrees with the bill.

Why, therefore, are we not simply allowing debate to collapse rather than there being an almost express invitation to have time allocation? It seems that the time would be much better used by voting to send the bill to committee. This is a good committee. It works hard. It is open to amendments. It listens to witnesses. There is good co-operation, particularly from her NDP colleague from Beloeil—Chambly. It is an obvious case where the committee could do its work, do it expeditiously, and move this bill to the next stage, which is back to the House after committee stage. Why not proceed and let us get on to other business?

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Mr. Speaker, I do not know about the member, but I suspect that there may be other members in this House who may want to speak to this bill. An oversight body for the CBSA is a very important topic. Community stakeholders have called for changes for a very long time. In fact, Justice O'Connor made this recommendation some 13 years ago.

If this was such an important issue for the government, why did it not table this bill much earlier? Why did it wait until there were only five weeks left in this sitting for this bill to be tabled? We now run the risk of not seeing it pass or go through all the various stages, including the stage in the Senate, which is very prone, as we have seen, to delaying decisions made by elected officials in this Parliament. We saw that with Jack Layton's bill. In fact, the climate change accountability act by the late Jack Layton went to the Senate twice and then was killed by the Senate. Those are the risks we run.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it seems to me that in four years, a government that does basically nothing but consult and consult might have consulted with the people who work at the CBSA, but apparently, that was not done. What does my hon. colleague think about that?

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Mr. Speaker, I do not often agree with the Conservatives, but in this instance, the member is exactly right. This bill would impact thousands of CBSA workers who do due diligence every day on our behalf. The vast majority of them do an exceptional job, but from time to time, there are issues that surface. Canadians deserve a proper external, independent oversight process.

However, the government, which claims that it is for the workers and advocates on their behalf, does not even have the wherewithal to consult with them on a bill that would impact thousands and thousands of workers. That is astounding to me. That is the Liberal hallmark on many issues. The Liberals will consult until the cows come home and then take no action. On a priority issue, they will leave out the people they need to consult and pretend that they are going to take action.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals are arguing that if we are all in support of the bill, we should just stop our speeches, stop giving voice to some of the concerns we have, and let it go, even though the government saw fit to introduce it during the first week of this month, which is very much at the end of the 42nd Parliament.

I have seen this pattern before. The Liberal government had a series of justice bills aimed at cleaning up the redundant and inoperable sections of the Criminal Code. It let those sit at first reading, in purgatory, and then eventually rolled them into Bill C-75, which was a gigantic omnibus bill full of problems. If it had just gone through with simple amendments to the Criminal Code, we could have put them through very quickly.

My concern is not so much about support in the House. It is about what is happening in the other place. The Senate does not seem to be a very friendly place for government bills these days. I am worried that we simply do not have enough time for the other place to send it back here if it makes amendments and for the bill to receive royal assent. This is on a very clear Liberal promise that was made in 2015.

● (1245)

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Mr. Speaker, my colleague is exactly right. The government has left this bill sitting there, even though it was one of the top priorities of communities, which called on the government to act. In fact, the minister promised that there would be action. Lo and behold, there are five weeks before this place adjourns before an election, and the government finally brings this bill forward.

Government Orders

The Senate is notorious. The unaccountable, unelected Senate has done its level best to block bills that have been passed in this House. One example is my colleague's bill, Bill C-262, regarding the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. We advanced that bill. It went through this House and on to the Senate, and it was just yesterday that it was finally referred to committee. We do not even know whether it will come back from committee in time for it to receive royal assent. It is absolutely atrocious.

When the government does not plan its legislative agenda carefully and thoughtfully, this is what can happen. It is absolutely outrageous. We should not stand for it.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I certainly support Bill C-98. I share the views around this place that it is lamentable that it has come forward now.

I just wanted to share a brief experience, which chilled me to the bone, of how this country can treat people. This was in the 41st Parliament.

Richard Germaine is an indigenous man who was born in California and lived his whole adult life on Penelakut, in Nanaimo—Ladysmith. He is married. He is a community leader. Right before Christmas, with no warning that his citizenship papers were in any sort of disarray and that he should take steps, CBSA officials showed up at his home. They put him in leg irons. They took him away, in front of his wife, who is a residential school survivor, traumatizing her, their children and their grandchildren. In leg irons, they took him in a van to a detention centre in Vancouver, where he was ordered to be deported as quickly as possible.

Fortunately, he was working with an ethnobotanist from the University of Victoria, who contacted my office. I contacted the former minister, Chris Alexander. We stopped the deportation and got his citizenship. What was really chilling was that as Richard left there, everyone around him said, “We have never seen anyone get out of here. Everyone gets deported.”

We need a citizen overview agency for CBSA. I agree with my hon. colleague that we needed this bill sooner. It is a gap in Bill C-59, but I commend the government for fixing the gap. Let us get this bill through the House and to the Senate. If there is any way at all we can get unanimous consent to get this bill through third reading and report stage by unanimous consent, let us get it to the other place and then keep our fingers crossed.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her comments and for sharing the story. We have heard those stories in different iterations from different people. I know, for example, that people who are refugees and people who are asylum seekers often are faced with untenable situations, and then they have run into CBSA and have been mistreated. There are issues of abuse of power they have experienced.

Many of those individuals do not even have the wherewithal to file a complaint. Even if they do file a complaint, people say that basically, they may as well not file a complaint, because it is not public and not accountable and the oversight is absolutely atrocious.

As I mentioned, Justice O'Connor said more than a decade ago that we needed this to be done. The Conservatives did not act on it. We knew that this needed to be done, that we needed independent

civilian oversight of the CBSA. The Conservatives did not do it, and now the Liberals have waited to table this bill until there are five weeks left until the House of Commons adjourns before an election. It just goes to show the lack of priority that both the Conservatives and the Liberals have given this file. It is not acceptable.

● (1250)

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have just seen a classic example of people not being able to get out of their partisan lanes.

We now know that the Liberals, the Conservatives, the NDP and the Green Party agree that Bill C-98 is a good bill and that it should move forward. However, what are we going to do? We are going to spend the rest of today, and possibly into the next sitting of the House, talking about a bill that we all agree is a good bill.

Every day that we talk about it here is a day we cannot talk about it in committee, which means that we cannot hear witnesses on the very issues the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands raised. We cannot deal with the issues the previous speaker raised, and we cannot bring in witnesses who have useful things to say about the operation of this bill.

This is a classic example of some dysfunctionality in this place at a level that is really quite distressing. Everyone agrees that this is a bill that needs to be passed. This is a bill that needs to hear witnesses. It is going before a committee that I have the great honour of chairing and that functions at a very high level. The member for Beloeil—Chambly is a very helpful and co-operative member, as is the member for Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles. Both are vice-chairs of the committee who help with getting legislation through. I daresay that there is not a great deal of distance between the government's position and the opposition parties' positions. The situation continues to evolve.

As the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands said, this sounds like an egregious set of facts for which there is no oversight body. That is why we are here. It is to get an oversight body put in place for the CBSA.

The CBSA apparently interacts with between 93 million and 96 million people on an annual basis. That is about three times the population of Canada on an annual basis. Some are citizen interactions, some are permanent resident interactions, some are visitor interactions and some are refugee claim interactions. I daresay that with 93 million to 96 million interactions on an annual basis, not every one will go well. That is something we are trying to correct.

Government Orders

There is something in the order of 117 land border crossings, some of which are fully staffed, such as at Toronto Pearson International Airport, Montréal-Trudeau International Airport or wherever, but others are simply a stake in the ground. There are about 1,000 locations across this long border over four time zones. The CBSA facilitates the efficient flow of people and goods, and it administers something in the order of 90 acts and regulations. It administers some of those acts and regulations on behalf of other levels of government.

In addition to having 93 million to 96 million interactions on an annual basis, the CBSA collects about \$32 billion in taxes, levies and duties over the course of the year.

This is an enormous organization. It has enormous numbers of interactions with people, services and goods, and I dare say, not every one of them goes the way it should, as much as we would like to say otherwise. Hence the bill before us as we speak.

I heard the other speaker say that we have not had enough consultation, and the speaker before that said that all the government does is consultation. They cannot have it both ways. Either there is too much consultation or there is too little consultation.

● (1255)

All I know is that we have very little legislative runway left. We are speaking on a Friday afternoon about a bill that we all agree on, and by speaking on it, we are in fact preventing the bill from proceeding to committee, where it could be dealt with. I would be absolutely delighted to give up my time in order to let debate collapse and allow us to go to the vote, but there does not seem to be a huge amount of enthusiasm. Therefore, regrettably, members are going to have to listen to me talk for the next 15 minutes about a bill that we all agree on.

The unusual part of the situation in which we find ourselves is that unlike the case with the RCMP, unlike CSIS, unlike various other security services, there is no actual oversight body. That is a clear gap in the legislation.

Bill C-59, which I had the honour of shepherding through the committee, is an extraordinarily complicated piece of legislation.

I know, Mr. Speaker, that you love flow charts and appreciate the way in which legislation proceeds, and I commend you. The flow chart produced by Professor Forcese on Bill C-59 shows that Bill C-59 is extremely complicated in making sure that there are enough supervisory bodies for the various functions of CSIS, the RCMP, CSE, etc., spread over quite a number of agencies. There are at least three ministries responsible, those being defence, public safety and global affairs. It is an extraordinarily complicated piece of legislation. We anticipate and hope that it will return from the Senate and receive further debate here—though hopefully not too much—because it is really a revamping of the security architecture of our nation.

One of the gaps, as has been identified by other speakers, is the absence of an oversight body with respect to the activities of the Canada Border Services Agency. I expect to have an interaction with the Canada Border Services Agency in about two hours. Many of my colleagues will similarly be having interactions with the Canada Services Border Agency within a very short period of time, and I am

rather hoping that my interaction and all of their interactions will go well, as I dare say they probably will.

The committee is now in place, and I want to talk about one further piece of legislation that has passed and is functioning, Bill C-22, which established the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians. In addition to its reporting function to the Prime Minister, there is a reporting function to the public safety committee. I know you, Mr. Speaker, were present as the chair of that committee presented his first report to the public safety committee. I have to say that while listening to the interactions with the chair of that committee, I felt that the questions by the members of the public safety committee were of quite high calibre and gave very pointed and useful insight into the work of that committee.

Bill C-98 fills a gap. It is being strengthened and renamed the public complaints and review commission, or the PCRC, and will have, in effect, a joint responsibility for both the RCMP and the CBSA. If the PCRC were to receive a complaint from the public, it would notify the CBSA, which would undertake an initial investigation. I dare say that this would resolve a great percentage of the complaints the public may have. In fact, 90% of RCMP complaints are resolved in this way.

The PCRC would also be able to conduct its own investigation of a complaint if its chairperson was of the opinion that it would be in the public interest to do so. In those cases, the CBSA would not start an investigation into the complaint.

● (1300)

Therefore, in effect, there is an ability on the part of the CBSA to say it is not going to refer it to mediation or some further investigation, but to simply assume the jurisdiction and move forward with it. To make that request, the complaint would have to be made within 60 days of receiving notice from the CBSA about the outcome of the complaint. The idea here is that the complaint does not just languish.

When the PCRC receives a request for a review of a CBSA complaint decision, the commission would review the complaint and all relevant information and share its conclusions regarding the CBSA's initial decision. It could conclude that the CBSA's decision was appropriate, it could ask the CBSA to do a further investigation or it could assume the jurisdiction and investigate the complaint itself.

The commission can also hold public hearings as part of its work. At the conclusion of the PCRC investigation, the review body would be able to report on its findings and make recommendations as it sees fit, and the CBSA would be required to provide a response in writing to the PCRC's findings and recommendations.

In addition to its complaints function, the PCRC would be able to review, on its own initiative or at the request of the minister, any activity of the CBSA, except for national security matters. I think that is an important thing to take note of, because we do not want national security matters dealt with in an open and public forum, if at all possible. Then it would be reviewed by the national Security Intelligence Review Committee, under Bill C-59, which hopefully by then will be passed and brought into force.

Government Orders

PCRC reports would include findings and recommendations on the adequacy, appropriateness, sufficiency or clarity of the CBSA policies, procedures and guidelines, the CBSA's compliance with the law and ministerial directions, and the reasonableness and necessity of the CBSA's use of its power. On that latter point, the members previously have indicated instances where one would reasonably question the use, reasonableness and necessity of the CBSA's interactions with members of the public. Hopefully, with the passage of this bill and the setting up of the PCRC, those complaints would be adjudicated in a fashion that is satisfactory to both the service and members of the public.

With respect to both its complaint and review functions, the PCRC would have the power to summon and enforce the appearance of persons before it and compel them to give oral or written evidence under oath. It would have the power to administer oaths and to receive and accept oral and written evidence, whether or not the evidence would be admissible in a court of law. That provides a certain level of flexibility. As this is not a criminal case, we are not asking for a standard of beyond reasonable doubt; rather, by passing this legislation and giving these authorities, we are trying to create an environment in which issues can actually be resolved.

It would also have the power to examine any records and make any inquiries that it considers necessary. However, beyond its review and complaint functions, Bill C-98 would also create an obligation on the CBSA to notify local police and the PCRC of any serious incident involving CBSA officers or employees. That includes giving the PCRC the responsibility to track and publicly report on serious incidents, such as death, serious injury or Criminal Code violations involving the CBSA. Hopefully, we could reasonably anticipate a reduction in these incidents by virtue of just the very existence of this entity because, as has reasonably been said by speakers previously, there is nowhere to go when one has a complaint with the CBSA.

•(1305)

Operationally, the bill is worded in such a way as to give the PCRC the flexibility to organize its internal structure as it sees fit, and to carry out its mandate under both the CBSA Act and the RCMP Act. The PCRC could designate members of its staff as belonging either to the RCMP unit or the CBSA unit. Common services, such as corporate support, could still be shared between both units. There are several obvious benefits that can be generated by operating in this fashion. For example, expertise could be shared between the RCMP and the CBSA. Hopefully, by doing so, the agency would be strengthened. Clearly identifying which staff members are responsible would also help with the management of information.

In addition, a vice-chair and chair will be appointed to the PCRC, which would be mandatory. It would ensure that there will always be two individuals at the top who are capable of exercising decision-making powers.

Under Bill C-98, the PCRC would establish and publish an annual report covering each of its business lines, the CBSA and the RCMP, and the resources devoted to each. The report would summarize their operations throughout the year, such as the number and types of complaints and any review activities, and would provide information

on the number, type and outcomes of serious incidents. I am hopeful that this will be a readily accessible report, transparent to all, so that those who follow these issues can operate from the same set of facts.

The annual report would be tabled in Parliament by the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness. Presumably, the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security would be able to review that report, call witnesses and examine the functionality of the entity.

The new public complaints and review commission proposed under Bill C-98 would close a significant gap in Canada's public safety accountability regime.

As I said earlier, the number of interactions we have with Canadians, visitors, landed folks, refugee claimants and others is quite significant, because Canada is open to receiving not tens of thousands or hundreds of thousands, but millions of people crossing the border on an annual basis. The legislation is long overdue.

I would urge my colleagues to get out of their partisan lanes and let the bill move to committee. The complaint seems to be that the bill is last minute and will therefore never see royal assent. Well, the bill will certainly never see royal assent if the chamber holds it up. All parties are responsible for House management, and I would urge all party representatives who are responsible for House management to let the bill move to committee sooner rather than later.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, one of the concerns I have with the legislation has to do with the length of time it would take to respond to a complaint. As I understand, it can be many months, if ever, before a person gets a response to a complaint about CBSA. By putting in place a parallel system, allowing for two different ways to complain, with two different trees, so to speak, that have to stay in communication with one another so everyone knows what is going on, I am concerned that it could take even longer to get an answer.

Is there a service standard today for response time regarding complaints about CBSA? If so, how does the government expect the new proposed system to improve that length of time?

•(1310)

Hon. John McKay: Mr. Speaker, that is a very good question. Service standards have not always been met, and this is true throughout a variety of agencies across all governments. The member's representative on the committee, the member for Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, should, as his number one concern, raise that very issue.

Government Orders

I would like to answer the question for the member directly, but I cannot, for the simple reason that we have not heard from witnesses, the officials, and, in particular from the minister, on that point.

Again, my core suggestion is to move the bill out of the House and into the committee.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my colleague would prefer to skip over the debate and send the bill straight to committee.

I would remind him that we were both in opposition during the last Parliament. At the time, opposition members often rose to speak to bills that had unanimous support. We did it so we could voice our concerns.

It is not like the bill is at third reading stage. This is only second reading. I think it is in the best interest of the members of the committee who will be studying the bill to hear what others are saying about the concerns that are out there, even if we do end up voting in favour of the bill.

I would like to know if my colleague is asking to skip the debate and jump ahead to the next stage because he believes that the comments and concerns raised in the House, in this debate, are not useful to the committee's work, knowing full well that there are concerns and reservations on all sides.

[*English*]

Hon. John McKay: Mr. Speaker, as I have listened to several hours of speeches thus far, there have been significant concerns raised by the hon. member, such as the concern raised previously about time standards and service standards.

Much of the debate, however, has been taken up with how ineffectual or whatever either the government or the opposition parties are. There has been a lot of partisan stuff, back and forth. What I regret about this place is that the time allocated for debate does not actually result in debate about significant concerns to be raised about this bill itself. Rather, we spend endless amounts of time talking about how bad the other parties are.

In this particular instance, I would urge my colleague that if there are concerns that his very able representative has, the member for Beloeil—Chambly, those are best dealt with at committee.

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Scarborough—Guildwood did bring up a little bit of an issue with regard to the partisan environment here in the House. That is the way it works, but he seems to be really frustrated that we in the opposition are not even able to ask questions and debate in the House, which I think is a fundamental principle that we have here. The reality is that the member has been here a long time, or as some of his constituents would say, “a very long, long, long, long time”, so he knows how it works. He knows that it is the House leader who brings this forward.

Frankly, the member makes it sound as if the government is very busy, but at the same time in our mandate our previous Conservative government had passed over 50% more bills. To put it bluntly, as far as getting bills that receive royal assent is concerned, the Liberals

have passed 63, while at the same time in our mandate it was 97. That tells us that the government is not very efficient.

Why did the Liberals wait three and a half years to put this through, and put it through with less than 20 days? We do have the right to debate this legislation, and I do have a concern about it. The union was not consulted in the drafting of this bill. They were not even consulted about the conceptualization, and I have to say that I think Canadians really respect those men and women with Canadian border services.

My question to the member is this. If the Liberals have not listened to the men and women on the ground who are going to be affected by this, at this stage of the game, how are they going to allow them to have input in this very important piece of legislation if he just wants to push it through and the voices of their representatives cannot be heard here in the House?

● (1315)

Hon. John McKay: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is right; I have been here a long time. For some bizarre reason the people of Scarborough—Guildwood keep sending me back here. I am rather hoping that they will do it one more time.

My comments are directed to the issue of House management, and House management is an all-party function. When we take up endless amounts of time over what is perceived to be party positioning or party advantage, we actually waste House time. Possibly one of the reasons that the number of bills passed is not up to the previous Harper standards is that the opposition has spent a lot of time talking about partisan issues rather than getting to the issue.

The issue itself about the unions is a legitimate point. I expect that the unions will be before the committee, if not as the number one witnesses, then certainly as the number two witnesses. I cannot really comment on whether they were consulted because this is not the forum in which to address that issue. The forum to address that issue is at committee itself. If the hon. member wishes to send me, as chair of the committee, the name, address and location of the union people whom he thinks need to be heard from, I am more than happy to have them come as witnesses.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, being a distant part of the House management team to a certain degree, I am very sympathetic to what my colleague is talking about.

One thing I would point out is that on many occasions when there is political will and consensus, we have seen bills pass at all stages in one day. The potential of the House to pass legislation is fairly significant.

Government Orders

Like the member, I also have been listening to the debate and everyone in the chamber seems to recognize the true value of this legislation for Canadians as a whole. There is always the opportunity and it is never too late. We still have 20 more sitting days after this. There is plenty of time. If there is the political will on the opposition benches, it is truly amazing how quickly this bill could go through.

There have been NDP and Conservative initiatives that have also sped through the system. House management includes all political parties.

Hon. John McKay: Mr. Speaker, I have absolute confidence in the hon. member's contribution to the flow of legislation through the House.

We are getting to the end of a Parliament and frankly, we should be looking in the mirror. There are times that this place is thoroughly dysfunctional. It is even dysfunctional on things that we agree on, which is really quite sad.

Moses came down with the Ten Commandments. I am sure that we could have at least four weeks' worth of debate, whether it should be 10 commandments, or 20, or two, for no particular advantage to the Canadian people.

I wish that the bill would come to our committee sooner rather than later. I would urge hon. colleagues over the course of this afternoon to reflect on the fact that if we are to have any chance of seeing Bill C-98 receive royal assent, the bill needs to move along and it needs to move along today.

The Deputy Speaker: Before we resume debate, I will let the hon. member for Durham know that there about 10 and a half minutes remaining in the time for Government Orders this afternoon. That is of the 20 minutes he would normally get and we will give him the usual indication when we get close to 1:30 and the interruption.

The hon. member for Durham.

• (1320)

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege to follow my friend from Scarborough—Guildwood, who has had millions of minutes in this chamber. However, I am at a loss to ascribe any real substance to those minutes, despite the fact that I hold him in great affection. He has been very helpful on some projects related to veterans, and on that matter, maybe he can help get the Afghan monument finally done.

I share the comments from a lot of people today in that I have frustration with when the bill is being put forward. I think all members of this chamber have tremendous respect for the men and women who wear the uniform of the RCMP or wear the uniform of the Canada Border Services Agency, CBSA, who would be impacted by the bill. Nothing shows a lack of priority like introducing bills when the tulips are coming up here in Ottawa. This is when we are in the final weeks of the parliamentary sitting, and so when the government introduces something in this time period, it shows how much it has prioritized it. If the Liberals are doing that in the fourth year of their mandate with literally a few weeks left in the session, it actually shows disdain for the underlying issues of the bill when they have had four years related to it.

My friend from Scarborough—Guildwood was suggesting that we needed to stay in our partisan lane and was bemoaning the fact that we are decrying the lack of consultation and lack of prioritization by the government, but the Liberals have left us no choice. We do not even think, at the pace things are going, that this will be substantially looked at in committee, despite his nice offer to take phone numbers of union members who were ignored in the preparations behind the bill. We will not even be able to get time to hear from them, and that is amiss, because our job as an official opposition is to hold the government to account, critique and push for better. I should remind my friend, the Liberal deputy House leader, that better is always possible, and this is an example.

The bill was introduced on May 7, 2019, literally in the final weeks of Parliament, much like Bill C-93, another public safety bill, which was introduced in the same month. What is shocking is that these are areas the Liberals have talked about since their first weeks in government. In fact, the marijuana pledge is probably the only accomplishment of the Prime Minister in the Liberals' four years in government, and they are putting the cannabis records suspension bill to the House in the final weeks. Who have they not consulted on that? It is law enforcement, which is really quite astounding.

Canadians might remember that in the first few months of the Liberal government, back in 2015-16, the Liberals were fond of consultations, which I think my friend from Sarnia—Lambton and others have made note of. In fact, there were little vignettes created saying, "We're going to consult. We're going to have public consultation." I guess after that the Liberals stopped doing it entirely.

My real concern in the matter of public safety and security bills is that the CBSA alone will be swept into elements of Bill C-98 and the 14,000 people in that department, including the almost 7,000 uniformed people at 1,200 locations across this country, should be consulted on a substantive piece of legislation that would impact them. They were not. In fact, the Customs and Immigration Union has been demanding to be consulted, and not at the committee stage in June, a few days before Parliament may rise and go into an election. They should have been consulted prior to drafting the legislation. That is the real problem I have with this.

It is the same with the cannabis record suspension legislation, which is another public safety bill being thrown into the mix in the final weeks. The Canadian Police Association was not consulted. Tom Stamatakis, the president, had this to say:

Were we directly consulted? Not in an extensive way. We had some exchanges, but we didn't have a specific consultation with respect to this bill.

• (1325)

It is the same now with Bill C-98. The underlying people impacted by it, including members of the Customs and Immigration Union, were not consulted on the bill.

We also see other important pieces of public safety legislation still lingering in the legislative process. For example, Bill C-83, legislation to amend the Corrections and Conditional Release Act, is now at committee. That committee is already charged with other legislation from the final year of the government.

Private Members' Business

A lot of us are watching Bill C-59 as well, a quite comprehensive, almost omnibus bill on national security. It is in the Senate committee. I have been advocating on that bill with regard to the no-fly list, supporting the good work done by the families of the no-fly list kids to make sure that we can have a system to remove false positives and remove children from this list, which is ineffective in terms of public safety if it has tons of erroneous and duplicative names on it.

It is also substantially unfair to Canadians, especially young children, when they are impacted by being on the no-fly list. We need a mechanism for them to take themselves off the list. That is in Bill C-59. I am publicly urging Senate colleagues to make sure they do a proper review, but get it done quickly.

As we can see, there is already a backlog of public safety and security legislation in Parliament now, not to mention a number of other bills being introduced in May.

Stepping out of the public safety area for a moment, it should also concern Canadians that some of the signature issues for indigenous Canadians also had to wait until the final months of the government. They include child welfare legislation, which I think I spoke about in this place maybe 10 days ago, and the indigenous language bill, which was also tossed in at the end of the year when the flowers are coming up here in Ottawa.

That is a lack of respect. It shows there is a priority given to speech, imagery and photos with the Prime Minister, and a lack of priority given to action on public safety issues and on issues related to reconciliation. Governing is more than lofty language. It is delivering on the priorities for Canadians and the things they need.

To review, I would like to see substantive committee time for Bill C-98 so that the Customs and Immigration Union can be properly consulted. The same goes for the RCMP. In fact, I was the public safety critic before I took a little diversion and a national tour to get into a leadership race. We actually worked with the government on Bill C-7, which was the RCMP union bill. We have tried to work with the government, particularly when it comes to uniformed service members. In fact, we pushed for amendments to Bill C-7 so that there would not be a hodgepodge approach to workers' compensation for our RCMP men and women and so that there would not be different standards in different provinces. These are important bills, and people should be consulted.

I would also urge the former chair who spoke, the member for Scarborough—Guildwood, to make sure that adequate time is given. Despite the government's claim that it would never use time allocation and never use omnibus bills, we have seen it use these measures literally by the week. The government House leader appears to relish it now. My friend the deputy House leader wishes he could erase all the speeches of outrage he gave in opposition about the use of time allocation and omnibus legislation, because now he is part of the government House leader team that the member for Scarborough—Guildwood blamed for the delay that we have with these bills, and he uses it with relish.

Let us make sure we have the proper committee time to look at the changes to the RCMP Act and the CBSA Act to make sure we are doing a service to the people who will be impacted by them, whether

it is on a public complaints process or other elements in Bill C-98. The consultation should have been done first, but to do this properly, the committee debate time cannot be rushed. We will work with them, but we want to make sure the people impacted are part of the committee review process.

● (1330)

The Deputy Speaker: There will be nine and a half minutes remaining in the speech by the hon. member for Durham when this bill is next debated in the House and an additional 10 minutes for questions and comments.

It being 1:30 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*]

NATIONAL PHYSICIANS' DAY ACT

The House resumed from April 8 consideration of the motion that Bill S-248, An Act respecting National Physicians' Day, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House to speak to Bill S-248, an act respecting national physicians' day.

This bill designates May 1 as national physicians' day. It seeks to recognize the importance of the 125,000 resident and student physicians across the country.

In coming to my decision to support this bill, I considered the following points.

[*English*]

Members who have been here for four years have seen a number of days, weeks and months of various sorts to recognize great things across the country, but what could be more important to recognize than our doctors? Doctors save our lives. Every one of us is going to need a doctor at some point in our life, and usually all the way throughout, from the time we are born to the time we go into palliative care and pass on from this life. It is definitely worthy to have a day to talk about doctors and all the things they do.

Private Members' Business

From the time people decide to go into medicine, it is an incredibly long journey. We know it is difficult to get into med schools, and once they are there, they study for extremely long hours. It is a very competitive field. Once they have finished their studies, they have to do their residency. This involves extremely long hours of work, very interesting work, when they get real experiences. My nephew is a doctor. He did undergraduate work in Michigan, but got his medical training in St. Martin, which sounds like a wonderful place to get medical training. He did his residency in the U.S., so he had the opportunity to work in Detroit and Long Island. One can imagine the excellent training he got in the emergency departments there. He and so many other doctors go through all of that, and at the end of their studies and just beginning their careers, many of them have racked up between \$200,000 and \$300,000 worth of debt in student loans.

It is really quite a commitment to embark on becoming a doctor in the first place, and one of the problems in Canada is graduating enough doctors. There is a certain number of spots for residents. When I became the shadow minister of health, I became aware that there was an issue with the matching of residents to positions and, in fact, some of them were unable to get a position. We can imagine, after all the training doctors have gone through, how devastating that would be not to be able to pursue their life's dream. I was able to work with the health minister to address that gap.

That being said, there is a huge doctor shortage right across the country. I have been able to go from coast to coast to coast to see the state of the nation in terms of doctor shortages, and I can say there are some very dire situations. Cape Breton is missing 52 emergency room physicians and a vascular surgeon. Individuals who cut an artery there would lose a limb or die because they cannot get to Halifax in time. In Ottawa, the wait time for a family physician is six years. In B.C., there is a huge shortage of doctors. There is an incentive system there that has resulted in having more emergency room doctors than family doctors. Rural and remote spots across the country are in dire need of doctors.

I have a list of the types of doctors missing in my own riding of Sarnia—Lambton. We are missing 10 family doctors, two geriatricians, one rheumatologist, three psychiatrists, one rural emergency physician and two other ER physicians, one plastic surgeon, two anaesthetists and an otolaryngologist, though I am not sure what that is.

The government should definitely be taking a leadership role. We recognize that, while health care is executed by the provinces, the federal government has a responsibility to address this gap. We have an aging population. One in six seniors right now will become one in four seniors in six to 10 years, so we are going to need even more doctors. We are short 600 palliative care physicians and innumerable doctors for seniors.

• (1335)

It is time to work alongside the provinces and territories to figure out how to address what is really a disastrous shortage. Without a doctor, how is someone going to stay healthy or deal with chronic disease?

It is worthwhile having a day to celebrate doctors, but it is a bit hypocritical for the Liberal government to be bringing this forward.

It was a Senate bill originally brought forward by Senator Eggleton, but the Liberals have brought it forward. As a government, Liberals have not been kind to doctors. Remember, it was the Liberal government, under the finance minister, that called doctors tax cheats. It did not recognize that when doctors have their corporations and run their medical practices, they need to accumulate passive income to buy the equipment they need to run their practices. The government wants to tax them at a 73% rate. Again, the Liberals have not treated doctors well.

If we look at the medical assistance in dying legislation that was brought forward, it was the Liberal government that did not protect the rights of conscience of doctors in this country, even though it was brought to its attention. Most recently, the Ontario court has not allowed for doctors to have freedom of conscience with respect to assisted suicide in Ontario. That has never happened anywhere else in the country, in the world, and it was the Liberal government that began that path.

When doctors are becoming doctors, it is a very long and arduous process. However, once they become doctors, they face very strenuous working conditions with very long hours. They may be working 80-hour weeks, depending on whether they have someone helping them out in their practice. As well, the Standing Committee on Health is doing a study right now about the violence that health care workers experience. I was astounded to learn that more than 60% of health care workers, including doctors, are experiencing violence from patients, frustrated family members and people who suffer from mental health and addiction issues or dementia. There is a real and serious problem that we need to address on behalf of doctors.

Many people know that I am a passionate advocate for palliative care. While we are talking about having a national doctors' day, I send thanks to the doctors at the palliative care at St. Joseph's Hospice in Sarnia—Lambton. I thank them for everything they do. I also thank the palliative care physicians across the country and those who work in that area. With the aging population we have, we need to do more to make sure that Canadians can choose to live as well as they can and for as long as they can. There are 70% of Canadians who do not have access to palliative care today.

The palliative care framework brought in under my bill, Bill C-277, has certainly helped to advance the cause. I have worked with the health minister and the parliamentary secretary, who I see is here today, to try to make sure we have training for health care workers in palliative care and the infrastructure we need in terms of hospices and broadband Internet to access virtual palliative care. As well, we need to take the innovative ideas put in place across the country, with the paramedics, for example, learning palliative care and taking that to rural and remote places, and that we take all of those ideas and make sure we build our palliative care capacity in the country.

Private Members' Business

In summary, there is more to be done. There is more to be done to support doctors, and not just their rights of conscience or the tax laws that allow them to operate here. We have to also listen to the doctors when they provide advice. The Canadian Medical Association provided a lot of input on the cannabis regulation, and it was largely ignored. While having a day for doctors to celebrate is great, there is a lot more that we could and should do to celebrate how important doctors are to each one of us. They save our lives and help us throughout our lives. I am certainly happy to stand here today with Bill S-248 and say that I will support this bill. Happy national doctors' day.

● (1340)

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I rise in this House today to speak in support of Bill S-248, an act respecting national physicians' day. This bill would designate May 1 as national physicians' day across Canada.

I appreciate and find it fitting that May 1 is also the birthday of the first woman selected to practise medicine in Canada, Dr. Emily Stowe.

As the member of Parliament for Vancouver East and someone who has been an elected representative at all three levels of government in Vancouver, I know just how important is the work and leadership of doctors in my riding, across Vancouver, throughout British Columbia and across the country.

Let me address an urgent health issue that is gripping communities across the country. As we know, Canada is dealing with a national opioid crisis, and the Downtown Eastside of Vancouver is the epicentre. While the government has been slow to act on this crisis and continues to refuse to declare a national health emergency, doctors in B.C. have been showing leadership on this issue for years.

Dr. Bonnie Henry was appointed B.C.'s provincial health officer in 2018. She is B.C.'s first female provincial medical health officer. Last month, Dr. Henry spoke to the CBC to reflect on it being three years since the previous provincial health officer, Dr. Perry Kendall, declared a public health emergency in response to the opioid-related overdose deaths in British Columbia. When asked about policy changes that have helped, she cited great strides in changing naloxone from a prescription-only drug to something available over the counter to it now being available and free everywhere. She also stated:

one of the other really important things is we've been able to change the public discourse about people who use drugs and about addictions. People understand that these [people] are our community. It's not just "those others."

Dr. Henry, in an earlier statement, also called for more and bolder actions to continue improving the situation and taking concrete steps to end this national health emergency. She stated:

We need options to provide people at risk of overdose with low-barrier access to a regulated supply of opioids, and we need to connect people who use drugs with the supports they need rather than sending them to the criminal...system.

In fact, she went on to call for the decriminalization of all drugs. She made it clear that a safe supply and the treatment of addictions is a health issue, not a criminal issue. Her work is a continuation of that of her predecessor, Dr. Perry Kendall.

Dr. Kendall recently retired as a long-time advocate for harm reduction. He has been one of B.C.'s most outspoken voices on the

ongoing opioid overdose crisis. He led the way in our country and declared the situation a public health emergency in 2016 in B.C. Dr. Perry Kendall was there when the first supervised injection site in North America opened in Vancouver. Since that day, he has continued to ensure the discussion about the safe site is evidence-based. Dr. Perry Kendall is not alone in this effort.

Dr. Mark Tyndall, formerly with the BC Centre for Disease Control, has been a vocal advocate for addressing the opioid crisis. He was the lead of research and evaluation for the PHSA Opioid Overdose Response Team and was co-lead investigator on the evaluation of Insite, North America's first supervised injection facility. While he has recently left the organization, he continues to be a leading voice on this important issue.

Then there is Dr. Julio Montaner. He was the leading physician on the North American opiate medication initiative, known as NAOMI, and the study to assess longer-term opioid medication effectiveness, SALOME. These clinical trials were instrumental in saving lives, and his research was pivotal in the 2011 Supreme Court decision against the Harper Conservative government to shut down Insite.

There is also Dr. Patricia Daly, the chief medical officer at Vancouver Coastal Health. Like those mentioned, she and her predecessors at VCH have been showing true leadership on this crisis. In January of this year, she issued an update on the overdose crisis. This update concluded with four recommendations moving forward: establish a system of care for people with addictions to implement treatment standards and monitor outcomes; expand access and remove barriers to opioid agonist therapy; establish a safe, regulated supply of drugs; and expand programs that can prevent addiction, which focus on vulnerable youth, indigenous peoples and people living with physical pain.

● (1345)

It is clear there remains much work to be done in Vancouver, throughout British Columbia and across Canada to truly end the opioid crisis we are facing.

From January 2016 to September 2018, there were more than 10,300 lives lost in opioid-related deaths in Canada. Ninety-three per cent of these deaths were considered accidental or unintentional. From January to September 2018, there were 3,286 deaths with 1,155 of them occurring in B.C. Seventy-one per cent of those deaths were attributed to fentanyl.

Thanks to the doctors I have mentioned and the many others I do not have time to name, we have started to see a reduction in deaths. We also know that without their work, advocacy and leadership, our communities would have lost thousands more of our loved ones.

We as elected officials must take their advice seriously. We must act. Lives are at stake. The work of these doctors and countless others has helped provide other front-line service providers with the tools and information to help reduce the devastation of this crisis.

While this bill is about recognizing National Physicians' Day, I feel that given the work that physicians do and its far-reaching impacts, it is also important to recognize who their work supports and who supports their work. That is the front-line doctors, nurses, first responders and community service providers such as Sarah Blyth at the OPS, working tirelessly day in and day out to save lives.

Backing up the work of physicians are public health policy-makers. I would like to highlight the work of Dr. Steve Morgan, director of the UBC Centre for Health Services and Policy Research. Dr. Morgan and his team at Pharmacare 2020, including Dr. Danielle Martin, MD; Dr. Marc-Andre Gagnon; Dr. Barbara Mintzes; Dr. Jamie Daw; and Dr. Joel Lexchin, MD, have shown us clearly that the best path forward for Canadians is a public universal pharmacare plan. Their research leaves no doubt. They state:

Evidence from across Canada and around the world shows that Pharmacare is the best system for achieving:

- universal access to necessary medicines
- fair distribution of prescription drug costs
- safe and appropriate prescribing, and
- maximum health benefits per dollar spent.

This report explains why this is the case and therefore why Canadians deserve Pharmacare by 2020.

Even under conservative estimates by the Parliamentary Budget Office, had a program like this been in place in 2015, Canadians would have seen savings of over \$4 billion. Physicians across Canada know all too well about the barriers high prescription drug costs have on their patients.

According to a 2018 Canadian Medical Association survey, 46% of physicians said patients without drug coverage were not filling their prescriptions.

I have heard far too many heartbreaking stories. It is time for the government to act. I believe that we must match our words with actions. That means recognizing the strain we put on doctors by failing to eliminate the barriers that patients have in accessing the treatment regimes they prescribe. That means investing in harm reduction. That means a universal pharmacare program.

We can all do this. We should recognize and thank doctors for their work, but equally important, let us make policies and take action to realize what the doctors hope to achieve for all Canadians.

Ms. Pam Damoff (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to be here today to speak to Bill S-248, an act respecting national physicians' day.

The hon. Art Eggleton introduced this bill in the other place prior to his retirement. I would like to thank him, as well as the member for Vancouver Centre, who is herself a physician and the bill's sponsor in the House, for bringing this forward.

Bill S-248 seeks to designate May 1 of each and every year national physicians' day. During debate in the Senate, Senator Eggleton indicated that this date is significant for physicians,

Private Members' Business

because it is the birthday of Emily Stowe, the first woman to practice medicine in Canada and a leading suffragette in her time. How appropriate that the bill is being sponsored in the House by the member for Vancouver Centre, the longest serving female member of the House and a trailblazer both as a physician and an elected official. There are few people in this country who have done as much for those living with HIV/AIDS than this member, who is now focusing her efforts on the opioid crisis. Canada is a better place for her service, both as a physician advocate and a member of Parliament.

Should this bill receive royal assent, the federal government would replicate nationally the actions of Ontario and Nova Scotia, which at the provincial level already designate a Doctors' Day at the beginning of May. In designating such a day, Canada would join a number of other countries, including the United States and India, which already set aside similar days for the recognition of physicians.

The bill's intent is to acknowledge the contributions of physicians to the health of Canadians and to increase public awareness of the role they play in providing high-quality care. As is well known, it is a point of pride among Canadians that we live in a country fortunate enough to have a world-class medical system. Clearly, physicians are integral to the viability of this system.

In 2017, there were over 86,000 physicians in Canada, representing 234 physicians per 100,000 people. It is interesting to note that in recent years, the profession has become increasingly female and multicultural. Women now account for 41% of physicians in Canada, while those who acquired their medical degrees elsewhere constitute 26.5% of all physicians in this country.

I recently met with a group of medical students, led by Stephanie Smith, a former army nurse who twice served in Afghanistan and just days ago graduated as a doctor from medical school. Stephanie and her colleagues are the future of medicine, and these future physicians give me great hope.

Everyone in this chamber has at one point or another been touched by the compassion and the professionalism of a physician. Just last month, when I fainted in this House, we saw three physicians jump into action to attend to me. Speaking today to this bill gives me the opportunity to publicly thank the members for Toronto—St. Paul's, Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Heddingley and Markham—Stouffville for their prompt attention, care and concern.

Physicians, going back to Hippocrates and the foundations of the modern medical profession in ancient Greece, are guided by a set of ethics whose central tenets are to do no harm, to show respect for the patient in all situations and to always help when help is needed.

Private Members' Business

Physicians affect every stage of life. They are central figures at times of birth and death. They are the specialists we seek out during periods of crisis, and they are the family doctors we rely on to manage day-to-day illness. They work collaboratively with other health professionals, such as nurses, both in and out of the hospital setting, to advance the well-being of their patients. They are often the researchers who are at the forefront of many innovations that are helping us live longer and healthier lives and that give us hope for the future.

I think of people like Dr. Duncan Rozario, head of surgery at Oakville Hospital, whose innovations in Oakville are leading the country in many areas, from changing the way opioids are prescribed to the mental health of the hospital's employees, all of which ensure better patient outcomes.

I have had the distinct pleasure of getting to know Dr. David Malkin, a Terry Fox-funded researcher at Sick Kids, in Toronto. Dr. Malkin's research is focused on genetic predisposition to cancer, specifically childhood cancer, and he is a world-leading expert on Li-Fraumeni syndrome. He has graciously hosted me at Sick Kids twice now, and I had the great privilege of joining him for rounds and clinic back in April. What a gift to be able to witness his team of physicians and health care providers attend to these young people and their families.

● (1350)

We must also be aware that the privileged place that physicians hold in our society also brings with it enormous responsibilities and pressures. This is why, in addition to celebrating physicians, the bill also aims to draw attention to the challenges they sometimes face by virtue of what we ask of them. While extremely fulfilling, a medical career can sometimes also entail immense psychological burdens. Physicians operate in an environment that emphasizes self-reliance and resiliency. They work long hours, are frequently on call, and bear an enormous amount of responsibility, often in extremely stressful situations.

As is the case for our first responders, physicians also frequently encounter emotionally draining and difficult situations that can lead to forms of psychological trauma, such as post-traumatic stress injuries.

Given these factors, it is perhaps not surprising that research on the profession has consistently shown that physicians are at a greater risk of suffering from mental health problems than many other professions. For instance, the Canadian Medical Association's "National Physician Health Survey" recently found that although most physicians self-reported their mental health as good, fully 34% reported symptoms of depression and 26% also reported feeling burned out.

Anecdotal evidence also suggests that physicians have a high suicide rate when compared to other occupations. The Canadian Medical Association's health survey also found that 9% of physicians had reported suicidal thoughts within the last 12 months.

The Standing Committee on Health just commenced a study on violence against health care professionals. We have heard from physicians about the violence that they can be subjected to, in particular in emergency rooms and hospitals. I have had the pleasure

of getting to know Dr. Alan Drummond, an emergency room doctor and passionate advocate for saving lives by recognizing the impact of firearms on suicide and intimate partner violence. He is someone who sees every day the impact on physicians of the challenges they face in their workplace and the need to do more to support them.

Senator Mégie, who is herself a physician, said during debate on this bill in the other place, that a career spent in the service of others can make it very difficult to accept the need to ask for help for oneself.

A national physicians' day could perhaps, in a small way, provide an occasion to help and reverse this tendency by allowing Canadians to collectively celebrate and express their appreciation for the extraordinary dedication of these medical professionals. It could also serve as a means for a sort of role reversal, by permitting society to assume the role of the caregiver, signalling that we do not take the contributions of physicians for granted, are interested in their well-being and are in solidarity with the difficulties they face. Possibly through the avenue that a national day would provide, broader discussions could begin on these and other important issues.

The subject is of great interest to the Minister of Health, and the government is very pleased to support this motion. I want to reiterate my thanks to the member for Vancouver Centre for sponsoring this bill, and to the House for the opportunity to reflect on its importance as we move forward with reviewing it in greater detail.

I look forward to further discussion on what a national physicians' day would look like, and appreciate its overall aim to support and express gratitude to physicians in Canada. Finally, I would like to thank physicians across Canada for all that they do for us.

● (1355)

Mr. Ron McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are proud of our publicly funded health care system. It is a central pillar of our national identity. To ensure all Canadians can access the care they need when they need it, our government is making unprecedented health care investments. We have invested a transformational \$11 billion to support home care and mental health coverage for all Canadians at every stage of their lives. Our focus on home care and mental health wellness is in addition to the over \$38 billion already invested through the Canada health transfer this year alone. These investments are evidence of our government's commitment to support, modernize and renew Canada's public health care system.

I would like to thank the hon. member for Vancouver Centre for sponsoring this bill honouring the important role of physicians in the health of Canadians. Bill S-248 proposes to designate May 1 as national physicians' day, a day to recognize and show appreciation for the positive impact physicians make on the health of Canadians and to celebrate the achievements of medical professionals.

Private Members' Business

The hon. member herself practised family medicine at Saint Paul's Hospital in Vancouver for several decades, and she is a leader within the medical community. I would like to acknowledge and thank her for her lifelong commitment to public service, both as a physician and as a dedicated parliamentarian.

It is long overdue that we have a national day to recognize the contributions physicians make to their patients and their communities. Physicians play an essential role in all stages of our lives. They help us maintain positive health outcomes, tend to us when we are ill, support us and our families through chronic and prolonged illnesses and advocate for better patient care. We rely on physicians to care for the health of our children, our partners, our parents and ourselves. Canadian physicians are among the top three most trusted professions.

While physicians enjoy high levels of public trust, they themselves are subject to mounting stress. Research confirms that because of the long hours, high pressure and traumatic experiences physicians face, they are at a greater risk of suffering from mental health issues. Their sacrifices for public health must be recognized and appreciated.

As a member of the Standing Committee on Health, I have had the opportunity to study many issues that intersect with the health care community. I have seen first-hand the resilience of our medical community. Time and time again, physicians are stepping up and stepping in to solve problems, proactively identify issues and develop innovative ways to practise medicine better.

We have just begun a study into the issue of violence against health care workers, and the testimony provided by physician witnesses has proven indispensable in determining how to reduce the regular violence that nurses, paramedics and other health care workers face every day.

Additionally, in an issue that is affecting families across the country and in my community of Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam, physicians are playing an essential role in addressing the root causes and severe consequences of the opioid overdose crisis. While direct support for physicians is limited by provincial and territorial jurisdiction, Health Canada funds a number of national-level programs through grants and contributions. These programs promote collaborative, pan-Canadian approaches.

Choosing Wisely Canada is one such example. This program is a physician-led campaign by the Canadian Medical Association to help physicians and patients engage in conversations about unnecessary tests, treatments and procedures. This is just one example of the many instances of leadership provided directly by physicians.

Physicians are leaders in patient care, research, health policy, education and innovation. They are key partners in our government's

efforts to improve our health care system to reflect the needs of all Canadians.

● (1400)

This bill proposes May 1 as national physicians' day, a date that commemorates the birth of Dr. Stowe, the first woman to practise medicine in Canada. Denied entry to the Toronto School of Medicine, she obtained her degree in the U.S. before returning to Canada as a practising physician in 1871. Dr. Stowe became a lifelong defender of women's rights and a champion for women in medicine. Her medical clinic provided practical clinical experience to the members of the Women's Medical College and provided services regardless of a patient's ability to pay. Her story of selflessness and community activism underpins our Canadian medical community.

Of course, we do not have to go back to the 1800s to find inspiring stories of physician care. In my community of Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam, Dr. Elizabeth Payne received the “My Family Doctor” award from the BC College of Family Physicians. This award celebrates doctor-patient relationships that promote good health. Dr. Payne has served Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam for over 40 years, providing family care of the highest quality. I would like to thank Dr. Payne for her many years of service and continued work in Port Coquitlam.

There are countless physicians in communities across Canada who go above and beyond for their patients, and they all deserve to be recognized. I fully support this bill, sponsored by the hon. member for Vancouver Centre, to make May 1 a day to recognize, celebrate and appreciate the importance of physicians and the medical community.

[*Translation*]

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

Some hon. members: Question.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

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

● (1405)

The Deputy Speaker: It being 2:05 p.m. this House stands adjourned until Monday, May 27 at 11 a.m. pursuant to Standing Orders 28(2) and 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 2:05 p.m.)

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